



Published Minutes

Economic And Tourism Development Committee Meeting

Tuesday, 19 March 2024

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| Date: | Tuesday 19 March 2024 |
| Time: | 9:00am |
| Location: | Ashburton Hall, Ashburton Avenue, Paraboradoo |
| Distribution Date: | Friday 22 March 2024 |



**Shire of Ashburton
Economic And Tourism Development Committee Meeting**

The Chief Executive Officer recommends the endorsement of these minutes at the next Economic And Tourism Development Committee Meeting.

K Donohoe
Chief Executive Officer
22 March 2024

These minutes were confirmed by Council as a true and accurate record of proceedings at the Economic And Tourism Development Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 19 March 2024.

Presiding Member _____

Date _____

Disclaimer

The Shire of Ashburton warns anyone who has an application lodged with Council must obtain, and should only rely on, written confirmation of the outcomes of the application following the Council meeting, and any conditions attaching to the decision made by Council in respect of the application. No responsibility whatsoever is implied, or accepted, by the Shire of Ashburton for any act, omission, statement, or intimation occurring during a Council meeting.

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1 Declaration Of Opening

The Presiding Member declared the meeting open at 9:01am.

1.1 Acknowledgement Of Country

As representatives of the Shire of Ashburton Council, we respectfully acknowledge the local Indigenous people, the traditional custodians of this land where we are meeting upon today and pay our respects to them and all their elders past, present and emerging.

2 Announcement Of Visitors

Nil

3 Attendance

3.1 Present

| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| Elected Members: | Cr M Lynch Cr A Sullivan SP A Smith Cr B Healy | Deputy Shire President (Presiding Member), Tom Price Ward Paraburdoo Ward Shire President Tom Price Ward (Deputy Member) |
| Observers | Cr R De Pledge Cr K White Cr M Gallanagh Cr L Rumble | Ashburton-Tablelands Ward Onslow Ward Pannawonica Ward Paraburdoo Ward |
| Employees: | K Donohoe J Sangster R Wright I Bishop D Kennedy P Hanlon A Johnston A Furfaro J Watson | Chief Executive Officer Deputy Chief Executive Officer Acting Director Community Development Acting Director Infrastructure Services Director Corporate Services Manager Business and Economic Development Manager Media and Communications Governance Officer ICT Systems Officer |
| Guests: | Nil | |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Members of Public: | There was one member of the public in attendance at the commencement of the meeting. |
| Members of media: | There were no members of the media in attendance at the commencement of the meeting. |

3.2 Apologies

Nil

3.3 Approved Leave Of Absence

Nil

4 Declaration By Members

4.1 Due Consideration By Elected Members To The Agenda

Elected Members noted they have given due consideration to all matters contained in this agenda.

4.2 Declaration Of Interest

A member who has an Impartiality, Proximity or Financial interest in any matter to be discussed at this meeting must disclose the nature of the interest either in a written notice, given to the Chief Executive Officer, prior to the meeting, or at the meeting immediately before the matter is discussed.

A member who makes a disclosure in respect to an interest must not preside at the part of the meeting which deals with the matter, or participate in, or be present during any discussion or decision-making process relative to the matter, unless the disclosing member is permitted to do so under Section 5.68 or Section 5.69 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

The following declarations of interest are disclosed –

| 6.2 Small Business Friendly Council Initiatives | |
|---|--|
| Name | SP A Smith |
| Nature of interest | Direct Financial |
| Interest description | I am a small business owner. My catering/food business operates within the Shire of Ashburton and recently became a member of the Pilbara Inland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PICCI). |

6 Public Agenda Items

6.1 Shire of Ashburton Economic and Demographic Analysis Report

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| File Reference | ED01 |
| Applicant or Proponent(s) | Not Applicable |
| Author | P Hanlon, Manager Business and Economic Development |
| Authorising Officer | K Donohoe, Chief Executive Officer |
| Previous Meeting Reference | Nil |
| Disclosure(s) of interest | Author – Nil |
| | Authorising Officer – Nil |
| Attachments | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shire of Ashburton Economic and Demographic Analysis Report 2023 2. Shire of Ashburton Economic and Demographic Analysis Report 2023 Overview Presentation |

Report Purpose

Council is required to consider the Shire of Ashburton (the Shire) Economic and Demographic Analysis Report 2023 (Attachment 1) and the overview presentation (Attachment 2).

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with in-depth analysis of the economic and demographic trends within the Shire over the past 20 years.

Council is requested to note the findings in the report to inform future decision making and adopt the report and overview presentation as key evidence tools to inform and support advocacy initiatives.

Background

This report provides insights into the Shire's economic dynamics, workforce characteristics, population trends, and the impact of major projects on its development trajectory over the last twenty years. It concludes with an analysis of potential opportunities for growth going forward and challenges that may inhibit growth or diversification.

The report was prepared by .id Consulting, a demographic and data analysis firm, that work with clients across local and State governments as well as the private sector to display relevant data within defined boundaries.

The Shire currently has a subscription to .id Consulting's online economy id and community id platforms. The content of the report has been produced using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) including Census information and National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) data. The sources of the data provide a credibility to the report and include:

- Australian Business Register, GST Registration (2023)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Building Approvals (2023)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth (2023)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 estimates
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia (2023)
- Department of Employment, Small Area Labour Market (2023)
- NIEIR (National Economics), Small area estimates of employment and economic value (2023).

Comments

The Shire's Economic and Demographic Analysis Report 2023 and overview presentation provide a number of key findings including the below for consideration:

Economic and Demographic Overview

- The economy is dominated by extractive industries and supporting construction.
- Worker productivity is four times higher than the average for regional Western Australian workers.
- The workforce in Ashburton is characterized by a younger and predominantly male population.

How is the economy performing?

- Employment levels in Ashburton have decreased rapidly in recent years, particularly following the completion of major gas projects like Gorgon and Wheatstone. The workforce has dropped from a peak of over 26,000 workers to an estimated 16,357 workers in 2022.
- The Shire consistently maintains one of the lowest unemployment rates in Australia, hovering around 1% for over a decade.

What is driving conditions?

- The construction industry played a pivotal role in Ashburton's economic growth, driven by major projects.
- However, upon project completion most workers left. Worker numbers rose from an estimated 2,000 in 2011 to almost 10,000 in 2016 before falling back to 1,854 in 2022.
- Productivity has experienced exceptional growth as the operational phases of gas and iron ore projects are far less labour intensive.

Industry competitive analysis

- Ashburton's economy is highly concentrated, with 66% of local employment in the mining industry. While it is more diverse than East Pilbara, it is less diversified than Karratha and Port Hedland.
- Even when compared to the Pilbara region, Ashburton's specialisations in oil and gas, heavy and civil engineering and metal ore mining come through.

- Smaller specialisations in terms of job numbers include agriculture (livestock farming), real estate/property management, and administrative services (mostly employment services).
- The Shire's economy is considerably under-represented in terms of health and social assistance services employment.

What are the demographic drivers?

- Since the boom in resource projects, Ashburton has consistently had a much higher level of people being present in the LGA (enumerated population within the Census) than the resident population would suggest.
- The region has a very non-local workforce and the share of the workforce residing locally has fallen between censuses. In 2016, an estimated 1 in 3 workers resided in Ashburton. In 2021, this had fallen to 1 in 4. This highlights the increasing nature of the fly in fly out (FIFO) work practices.

Future growth prospects

- Ashburton's future is still tied to the resource based industries with short to medium term demand for gas and iron ore to continue and longer term growth in critical minerals.
- Risks from global competition, potential downturns in China, regulatory changes, and competition for investment in the Pilbara region are challenges to navigate.
- Renewable energy developments offer opportunities to decarbonize high emission industries.
- The Shire's small and dispersed population base limit its capacity to compete with larger towns like Karratha and Port Hedland for commercial investment and larger essential facilities.
- Decommissioning oil and gas infrastructure presents employment opportunities for the construction sector.
- In tourism, infrastructure upgrades, nature-based/ecotourism development, indigenous tourism expansion, and targeted campaigns for FIFO workers/families present growth avenues.
- In agriculture, the exploration of irrigated agriculture in alluvial floodplains, technology adoption, and native food crops present growth opportunities.
- In education, the region has the potential for remote learning facilities, and leveraging major employers for new training facilities, focusing on relevant emerging course.
- Other areas that have the potential to support employment and economic diversity opportunities include the space and marine sectors.

Consultation

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Leadership Team

Council – A representative from .id Consulting provided a 30 minute presentation on the key findings to Council at a briefing session held in Onslow on 20 February 2024.

Strategic Community Plan

Shire of Ashburton Strategic Community Plan 2022-2032

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Strategic Objective | 3. Prosperity - We will advocate and drive opportunities for the community to be economically desirable, resilient, and prosperous. |
| Strategic Outcome | 3.1 Coordinated delivery of economic services and projects for the community |
| Strategy | 3 Provide professional leadership and advice to assist Council. |

Council Policy

Nil

Financial Implications

Current Financial Year

The report was produced with budgeted funds in the Business and Economic Development 2023/24 Annual Budget.

Future Financial Year(s)

Nil

Legislative Implications

Nil.

Risk Management

Risk has been assessed against the Shire of Ashburton Risk Management Framework.

| Theme | Risk | Likelihood | Consequence | Inherent Risk Rating | Risk Treatment |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------|-------------|----------------------|---|
| Reputation (social/community) | There is a risk to Council's reputation should it not make informed decisions and advocate for identified regional priorities. | Unlikely (2) | Minor (2) | Low (1-4) | Following the officer's recommendation will ensure Council have a credible information base to inform decision making and advocacy initiatives. |

Based on the inherent risk rating and risk treatments, the residual risk to the Shire is considered to be low.

Voting Requirements

Simple Majority

SP A Smith disclosed a direct financial interest in Item 6.2 (detailed in Item 4.2).

At 9:06 am, SP Audra Smith left the meeting.

6.2 Small Business Friendly Council Initiatives

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| File Reference | ED01 |
| Applicant or Proponent(s) | Not Applicable |
| Author | P Hanlon, Manager Business and Economic Development |
| Authorising Officer | K Donohoe, Chief Executive Officer |
| Previous Meeting Reference | Ordinary Council Meeting 12 December 2023 - Item AD.2 – 218/2023 |
| Disclosure(s) of interest | Author – Nil |
| | Authorising Officer – Nil |
| Attachments | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shop Ashburton Campaign Proposal 2. Whitsunday Small Business Start-Up Program Application Form |

Report Purpose

Council is required to consider the Small Business Friendly Council initiatives for further implementation and further development.

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the engagement to date with the Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and Pilbara Inland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PICCI) on Small Business Friendly Council initiatives for implementation and development.

Council is requested to note the Shire of Ashburton (the Shire) Business Grants Program investigation to date and endorse the recommendation to deliver the Shop Ashburton Campaign Proposal.

Background

The Western Australian Government's Small Business Development Corporation's (SBDC) Small Business Friendly Local Government (SBFLG) initiative fosters better ties between small businesses and local government. This program acknowledges local governments that actively aid their small business communities. [Small Business Friendly Local Governments | Small Business Development Corporation](#)

Council resolved to become a Small Business Friendly Council at its meeting held 12 December 2023 (resolution 218/2023). Council also requested the Chief Executive Officer to investigate a future small business grant program and report to the next meeting of the Economic and Tourism Development Committee.

At the December 2023 Council meeting, Council also resolved to adopt the Economic and Tourism Development Priorities Workshop Outputs report (resolution 217/2023), for an initial SBFLG program to focus on the following programs:

1. Buy Local Scheme with Chambers of Commerce
2. Doing business with Council guide - encouraging and supporting small to medium enterprises to go for tenders and contracts with Council and larger businesses (video/webinar format)
3. Early notification alerts of projects coming up to enable SMEs to get prepared to plan and submit tenders etc.
4. Home based business guide
5. Sponsoring Chamber of Commerce events.

Comments

Council officers have engaged with OCCI and PICCI to develop initial proposals for the following SBFLG initiatives for further development:

1. Shop Ashburton Campaign Proposal (Attachment 1)

The Shop Ashburton Campaign is centred on the rollout and marketing of a gift card program that can only be used at Shire participating businesses. Shire officers conducted initial market research to understand the options currently available which lead to the discovery of the Why Leave Town (WLT) model used by the City of Greater Geraldton [Geraldton | Why Leave Town](#).

OCCI and PICCI have submitted a proposal to the Shire for the delivery of the program (Attachment 1).

OCCI has conducted market research and in conjunction with PICCI recommends the WLT proposal due to its usability for all vendors, administrative support (including remote Point of Sale (POS) terminal lockdown and management) and reporting. The recommendation is to implement Generic Chip Gift Cards and Digital Gift Cards.

The Chambers of Commerce compared other options available including:

- Cards 4 All – due to the type of cards not all businesses would be able to be involved
- Manual Hard Copy Voucher – very labour intensive to administer and lag time for reimbursements to businesses.

The WLT program gift cards are unique to the businesses within the Shire who choose to participate. It is expected that the program will be open to all business located within the Shire to participate.

Whilst there are costs to participating in the program including a subscription fee and per card fee, the benefit of the program comes from an increased awareness of spending money locally (marketing) with the call to action leading to the purchase of unique Ashburton gift cards. This ensures that money stays within our community and supports local businesses in alignment with the Shire's Tourism and Economic Development Strategy.

There will be a requirement to engage with local businesses to sign them up to the program and OCCI and PICCI have stated that they are committed to promoting the program with member businesses and providing support in addition to WLT to assist member sign-up as well as being a local load-up point for the gift cards.

Funding support requested from the Shire:

- In-kind support from the Shire for all associated graphic design work, including for cards and promotional materials (a draft design has been included with Attachment 1).
- Initial seed funding to purchase program subscription that covers five years \$13,596 (incl. GST). Initial subscription includes marketing for 30 member businesses (shop-front stickers and posters), additional quantity can be purchased as needed.
- Sponsorship of initial 500 generic cards to reduce barriers to purchase, \$2,600 (incl. GST).

Total contribution from the Shire: \$16,196.00 (incl. GST).

2. Shire Business Grants Program Investigation

Council officers have held an initial engagement with OCCI and PICCI to investigate a Business Grants Program for the Shire.

During this engagement it was discussed that whilst there are business grants available through avenues such as State and Federal government departments, small businesses, and in particular start-up businesses, don't usually meet the necessary eligibility criteria. An overview of these grants can be found here: [Grants Assistance and Programs Register for WA industry \(www.wa.gov.au\)](http://www.wa.gov.au). The Shire currently operates the following grant programs, however they are not targeted at the business community:

- Community Support Grants
- Signature Events and Activities Grants
- Small Assistance Donations.

OCCI and PICCI see an opportunity to partner with the Shire to continue investigating our own small business grants, focusing on topics such as:

- Purchasing of new equipment
- Enhancing digital capacity
- Upgrade of facilities.

Shire officers also see the following possible grant funded initiatives as needing further investigation:

- Marketing support of tourism related businesses
- Initial seed capital for start-up businesses.

The Chambers of Commerce would like to work with the Shire to determine the best way to utilise the funds considering:

- Co-contribution from businesses
- Spread across each town in the Shire
- Eligibility criteria
- Individual grant amounts.

Shire officers have conducted an initial review of business grants operated by other local governments in Australia including Queensland's Whitsunday Regional Council Small Business Start-up Grants Program [Small Business Start-up Grants - Apply Now | Your Say Whitsunday \(whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au\)](http://www.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au).

The Whitsunday Regional Council states:

The Whitsunday Small Business Start-Up Program is a Council-administered business grant fund targeting start-up business opportunities in the Whitsunday region.

It is a competitive and merit-based grant program that aims to attract entrepreneurs to undertake start-up business activities in the Whitsundays.

Successful applicants have the opportunity to receive monetary funding of up to \$10,000 (matched 50:50 by the applicant) for business-related activities in a start-up new business.

Council will ensure the successful applicants will align with our identified regional economic opportunities and will not compete with existing business.

The program aims to benefit the Whitsunday region by:

- Increasing employment
- Attracting new investment
- Increasing local supply and/or manufacturing supply chains (i.e. local import replacement, local procurement)
- Establishing new trade opportunities (local, inter-regional and/or overseas)
- Value adding to the existing Whitsunday region
- Providing circular economy benefits.

A detailed application form can be found at Attachment 3.

Given that the Shire is investigating a program that provides ratepayer funds to private enterprise, a well-developed grant guideline and application process must be developed to ensure a high level of governance is maintained. With the development of the Shire's Economic Development Strategy 2024-2028 nearing completion, it is recommended that any proposed business grants program is aligned to this strategy to ensure that the Shire achieves strategic outcomes endorsed by Council. It is recommended that further investigation on a business grants program is conducted by Council officers following the endorsement of the Shire's Economic Development Strategy 2024-2028.

Consultation

Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Pilbara Inland Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Marketing and Communications Officer

Strategic Community Plan

Shire of Ashburton Strategic Community Plan 2022-2032

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Strategic Objective | 3. Prosperity - We will advocate and drive opportunities for the community to be economically desirable, resilient, and prosperous. |
| Strategic Outcome | 3.4 Sustainable commerce and tourism opportunities |
| Strategy | 2 Ensure Shire processes support the development of strong and sustainable local business opportunities. |

Council Policy

Nil

Financial ImplicationsCurrent Financial Year

1. Shop Ashburton Campaign Proposal

\$14,724 plus GST covers the five year cost of the program and initial sponsorship of 500 gift cards and will be outlaid in the current financial year under budget J3101 Business Development.

2. Shire Business Grants Program

No financial contribution has currently been considered until the program has been further developed for implementation. It is anticipated that officer time and consultancy funds may be required this financial year to develop the concept further.

Future Financial Year(s)

1. Shop Ashburton Campaign Proposal

As the funding is being committed for five years upfront, future financial year spending is not currently considered. It is anticipated that officer time will be the main contribution in the future with further funding contributions, if required, to be considered at a future point in time.

2. Shire Business Grants Program

Future contributions will be considered once the program has been developed for implementation.

Legislative Implications

Nil.

Risk Management

Risk has been assessed against the Shire of Ashburton Risk Management Framework.

| Theme | Risk | Likelihood | Consequence | Inherent Risk Rating | Risk Treatment |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------|-------------|----------------------|---|
| Reputation (social/community) | There is a risk to the Shire's reputation should it not be seen to support business friendly local government initiatives adopted as a priority action. | Possible (3) | Minor (2) | Moderate (5-9) | Following the officer's recommendation will ensure the Council is supporting adopted small business friendly local government programs. |

Based on the inherent risk rating and risk treatments, the residual risk to the Shire is considered to be low.

Voting Requirements

Simple Majority

Officer Recommendation

That with respect to Small Business Friendly Council Initiatives, the Economic and Tourism Development Committee recommends that Council,

1. Notes the Business Grants Program investigation to date;
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to continue investigating a business grants program with the Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Pilbara Inland Chamber of Commerce and Industry following the adoption of the Shire's renewed Economic Development Strategy for future consideration;
3. Endorses the following contributions to the Shop Ashburton Campaign Proposal for delivery in partnership with the Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Pilbara Inland Chamber of Commerce and Industry:
 - (a) In-kind support from the Shire of Ashburton for all associated graphic design work including for cards and promotional materials;
 - (b) Initial seed funding to purchase program subscription that covers five years \$13,596 (incl. GST); and
 - (c) Sponsorship of initial 500 generic cards to reduce barriers to purchase, \$2,600 (incl. GST).

Amended Recommendation

That with respect to Small Business Friendly Council Initiatives, the Economic and Tourism Development Committee recommends that Council,

1. Notes the Business Grants Program investigation to date;
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to continue investigating a business grants program with the Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Pilbara Inland Chamber of Commerce and Industry following the adoption of the Shire's renewed Economic Development Strategy for future consideration;
3. Endorses the following contributions to the Shop Ashburton Campaign Proposal for delivery in partnership with the Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Pilbara Inland Chamber of Commerce and Industry:
 - (a) In-kind support from the Shire of Ashburton for all associated graphic design work including for cards and promotional materials;
 - (b) Initial seed funding to purchase program subscription that covers five years \$13,596 (incl. GST); and
 - (c) Sponsorship of initial 500 generic cards to reduce barriers to purchase, \$2,600 (incl. GST).
4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to investigate the possibility of external Sponsorship, to increase seed and/or generic card purchase funding.

Committee Decision**Moved** Cr M Lynch**Seconded** Cr B Healy

That with respect to Small Business Friendly Council Initiatives, the Economic and Tourism Development Committee recommends that Council,

- 1. Notes the Business Grants Program investigation to date;**
- 2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to continue investigating a business grants program with the Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Pilbara Inland Chamber of Commerce and Industry following the adoption of the Shire's renewed Economic Development Strategy for future consideration;**
- 3. Endorses the following contributions to the Shop Ashburton Campaign Proposal for delivery in partnership with the Onslow Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Pilbara Inland Chamber of Commerce and Industry:**
 - (a) In-kind support from the Shire of Ashburton for all associated graphic design work including for cards and promotional materials;**
 - (b) Initial seed funding to purchase program subscription that covers five years \$13,596 (incl. GST); and**
 - (c) Sponsorship of initial 500 generic cards to reduce barriers to purchase, \$2,600 (incl. GST).**
- 4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to investigate the possibility of external Sponsorship, to increase seed and/or generic card purchase funding.**

For: M Lynch, A Sullivan and B Healy**Against:** Nil**Carried 3/0****Reason for change:**

Chief Executive Officer to investigate whether external parties would invest in the program to create a larger initial project.

At 9:09 am, SP Audra Smith returned to the meeting.

6.3 Airlie Island Preliminary Conservation and Eco-Tourism Concept

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| File Reference | ED01 |
| Applicant or Proponent(s) | Not Applicable |
| Author | P Hanlon, Manager Business and Economic Development |
| Authorising Officer | K Donohoe, Chief Executive Officer |
| Previous Meeting Reference | Ordinary Council Meeting 11 December 2020 - Item 16.1 – 227/2020 |
| Disclosure(s) of interest | Author – Nil |
| | Authorising Officer – Nil |
| Attachments | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Airlie Island Preliminary Conservation and Eco-Tourism Concept 2. Letter - Marine Tourism Business - Confidential |

Report Purpose

Council is required to consider the Airlie Island Preliminary Conservation and Eco-Tourism Concept (Attachment 1) as a key tourism project proposal in accordance with Council's resolved position on the Pilbara Inshore Islands Draft Management Plan 2020.

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with greater detail on the Pilbara Inshore Island Conservation and Eco-Tourism Project.

Council is requested to endorse the Airlie Island Preliminary Conservation and Eco-Tourism Concept as a key tourism project for the Shire of Ashburton (the Shire) for further development and authorise the Chief Executive Officer to engage with the Western Australian Government.

Background

In December 2020, Council resolved to authorise the Chief Executive Office and the Shire President to continue to investigate tourism and development opportunities for the Pilbara Inshore Island Group.

Prosperity is one of the four pillars included in the Shire's Strategic Community Plan 2022-2032, which states that we will advocate and drive opportunities for the community to be economically desirable, resilient, and prosperous. Onslow currently has a strong industrial economy with Chevron's Wheatstone and Woodside's Macedon LNG projects and Onslow Salt's operations providing employment opportunities.

The Shire is committed to securing the long-term future of Onslow by ensuring the community has the amenity, vibrancy and lifestyle in place to underpin future industry expansion.

The visitor economy is seen as a sustainable opportunity to deliver these long-term benefits to the community and to sustain a strong industry workforce.

To support this vision, the Shire adopted the positioning paper 'Onslow Towards a Visitor Economy' which highlights the visitor economy vision of the community, the actions that we have taken to date and those we plan to undertake.

Principle 2 of this document states that we will enhance the Gateway to the Mackerel Islands experience.

The Shire has received communication from a private entity who was looking to establish a marine charter business in Onslow (Attachment 2). Unfortunately, the underlying infrastructure (availability of safe commercial anchorage in Beadon Creek) is not currently in place in Onslow to make this commercially achievable.

Comments

One of the priority projects of Council to be considered in the draft 2024 Priority Projects Council report is to 'Develop the Pilbara Inshore Island Conservation and Eco-Tourism Project'.

The Pilbara Inshore Islands Nature Reserve comprises over 170 islands, islets and rocks, and spans the area between Exmouth Gulf and Cape Preston. Many of the islands are protected as nature reserves, home to migratory shorebirds, marine turtles and seabirds. The islands also offer incredible tourism value.

Tourism is a key economic driver for the Shire. There were approximately 365,000 visitors to the Shire in 2019 (Tourism Research Australia, 2020), which provided an economic benefit of over \$150 million – almost 30% of the total output of the Pilbara region. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) released the Pilbara Inshore Islands Nature Reserves and Proposed Additions Draft Management Plan in September 2020 (Draft Management Plan). This has created a potential change of status for the islands, with the potential to inhibit tourism numbers by up to 36,000, at a loss of \$15 million to the local economy.

The Draft Management Plan identified that Airlie Island is one of three islands that have the most challenges for long-term management of conservation values.

The Shire is seeking to develop designated camping and day use areas on select islands such as Airlie Island to minimise camping and use outside of designated areas of higher natural values and significance, thereby reducing disturbance, abandonment of shore bird chicks and risk of introducing pests.

Airlie Island is classified as a contaminated site with an updated investigation required to understand the current levels of contamination. Recent site visits revealed that the island has introduced weed species and infrastructure not removed during oil and gas decommissioning including concrete pads, pylons and considerable portions of the bund wall.

With the level of contamination, remaining industry infrastructure and likely prevalence of invasive weeds, Airlie Island presents as a logical candidate for a locally driven and managed case study into how Eco-Tourism can assist in conservation.

Alternatively, the Shire will work with the Western Australian Government to determine the most feasible islands for greater tourism utilisation.

The Airlie Island Preliminary Conservation and Eco-Tourism Concept provides context and further information on the concept. This will be used in conjunction with the 2024 Priority Projects document to seek support of the Western Australian Government through the New Tourism Investment Committee of Cabinet to develop Airlie Island or other suitable islands accessible off the coast of Onslow as a first stage tourism project.

The Shire will develop the management plans and business cases required for investment. This will be performed in collaboration with the community and Western Australian Government.

Consultation

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Manager Land, Property and Regulatory Services

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) – Shire officers have held positive early engagement with DBCA on the concept. Further work needs to be undertaken to understand land tenure and the level of contamination on the island to inform a detailed concept design. DBCA have also indicated that the project would require liaison with a number of State government departments including:

- Department of Transport and Pilbara Ports Authority – to investigate the requirements to install marine moorings.
- Department of Water and Environmental Regulation – to confirm levels of contamination.
- Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety – to confirm the current land tenure details of past resource industry activities.

Further consultation should also be undertaken with the Australian Marine Safety Authority as the island has an operational lighthouse for marine navigation.

Strategic Community Plan

Shire of Ashburton Strategic Community Plan 2022-2032

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Strategic Objective | 3. Prosperity - We will advocate and drive opportunities for the community to be economically desirable, resilient, and prosperous. |
| Strategic Outcome | 3.4 Sustainable commerce and tourism opportunities |
| Strategy | 3 Work collaboratively with tourism sector providers, Australia's North-West Tourism and Tourism WA to increase visitor spend, and length of stay, in the Shire. |

Council Policy

Council Policy – Tourism Support and Promotion

The Shire recognises that tourism will continue to be a major employer and contributor to the economy within the Shire of Ashburton, and that it needs to play an active role to facilitate the growth and development of tourism in Ashburton.

Financial Implications

Current Financial Year

The concept plan has been produced by officers internally so there is no financial impact on Council further than the budgeted staff time.

Future Financial Year(s)

Future actions and initiatives will be considered at the time of procurement.

Legislative Implications

Nil

Risk Management

Risk has been assessed against the Shire of Ashburton Risk Management Framework.

| Theme | Risk | Likelihood | Consequence | Inherent Risk Rating | Risk Treatment |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------|--------------|----------------------|--|
| Reputation (social/community) | There is a risk to Council's reputation should an endorsed Priority Project not be developed further. | Possible (3) | Moderate (3) | Moderate (5-9) | Following the officer's recommendation will provide Council with a concept and pathway forward to continue developing the project. |

Based on the inherent risk rating and risk treatments, the residual risk to the Shire is considered to be low.

Voting Requirements

Simple Majority

Officer Recommendation

That with respect to the Airlie Island Preliminary Tourism Concept, the Economic and Tourism Development Committee recommends that Council:

1. Endorses the Concept as a key tourism project for the Shire.
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to engage with the Western Australian Government through the New Tourism Investment Committee of Cabinet to develop Airlie Island or other suitable islands accessible off the coast of Onslow, as a first stage project utilising the Concept as provided at Attachment 1.
3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to commence detailed project planning and development.

Committee Decision**Moved** Cr A Sullivan**Seconded** Cr B Healy

That with respect to the Airlie Island Preliminary Tourism Concept, the Economic and Tourism Development Committee recommends that Council:

- 1. Endorses the Concept as a key tourism project for the Shire.**
- 2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to engage with the Western Australian Government through the New Tourism Investment Committee of Cabinet to develop Airlie Island or other suitable islands accessible off the coast of Onslow, as a first stage project utilising the Concept as provided at Attachment 1.**
- 3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to commence detailed project planning and development.**

For: M Lynch, A Sullivan, A Smith and B Healy**Against:** Nil**Carried 4/0**

7 New Business Of An Urgent Nature Introduced By Council Decision

Nil

8 Next Meeting

The next Economic And Tourism Development Committee Meeting will be held at 9:00am on Tuesday 21 May 2024 at Council Chambers, Onslow Shire Complex, Second Avenue, Onslow.

9 Closure Of Meeting

There being no further business, the Presiding Member closed the meeting at 9:19am.