

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Wellbeing Committee, held in the Council Chambers, civic administration building, 29 Bowler Avenue, Gore, on Wednesday 29 November 2023, at 4.03pm.

Present	His Worship the Mayor (Mr B R Bell), Cr Dickson (Chairperson), Crs Fraser, Hovell, McKenzie, Phillips and Reid.
In attendance	Community Strategy Manager (Ms Anne Pullar), Governance Manager (Susan Jones), senior Communications Officer (Ms Bonnie Mager), Guillaume Willemse (Community Development Coordinator) and Employability Coordinator (Ms Joanne Stephens).
Apologies	Crs P McPhail and R McPhail apologised for absence, which were accepted on the motion of Cr Hovell, seconded by Cr Reid.

1. MURIHIKU SOUTHLAND DESTINATION STRATEGY 2023- 2029 (SC3084)

A memo had been received from the Community Strategy Manager advising that the Murihiku Southland Destination Strategy 2023-2029 (MSDS 2023) outlined the pathway forward for Southland's tourism sector and a vision for its future, deeply grounded in the principles of destination management. It signified a crucial step in the re-imagining of tourism, laying the foundations for a more sustainable and regenerative visitor economy. It was a plan for all Southlanders, and one that sought to deliver economic, cultural, social and environmental benefits for Southlanders while protecting and preserving the place.

Southland's tourism sector had experienced robust growth pre-Covid and visitor numbers were predicted to return to those levels within the next two-three years. The communities of Murihiku Southland were supportive of this return but wanted to see growth managed well, particularly in key locations such as Piopiotahi Milford Sound.

The pathway that the document outlined include 63 recommended projects which were spread across the areas of environmental stewardship, leadership and capability development, access and infrastructure, product and experience development and sharing the Southland story. There were 24 priority projects outlined in the document and five key enablers which were of critical importance to the recovery and growth of the tourism sector. These included:

- workforce attraction and development

- advocacy and regulatory planning
- tourism leadership group establishment
- data and insights
- quality accommodation development

A copy of the Murihiku Southland Destination Strategy had been circulated with the agenda.

Ms Nic Wills, Destination Development Advisor, Great South and Ms Amie Young, Destination Development Manager, Great South were in attendance at the meeting and presented the Strategy.

Cr Hovell said in the document, Gore was mentioned 29 times, Te Anau 50, Milford 67, Invercargill 124 and Bluff 68. Where did Gore sit in terms of priority and where was the potential for Gore to develop to become a focal point for tourists. Ms Young said agri-tourism was a key area, events and the Hokonui Moonshine Museum. Development around the food story that, combined with arts, were strong markets. Cycling was another aspect that could be worked on. Cr Hovell said the fashion awards were not mentioned in the document. From an implementation perspective, what could be done to move forward. The document referred to a tourism leadership group. Ms Young said it would be a governance group. It was hoped there would be representation from key stakeholders involved with the plan including the Councils and others such as the Department of Conservation. Cr Hovell said there was a lot of good information in the document and things the Council should be picking up on and working together with Great South. Ms Young said the document was about partnership and working together.

Cr Reid read about the cruise ship visitors who were high value and taking account of where Gore was located, asked what Great South was going to do to encourage those passengers to come to Gore. Ms Young thought there were 19 ships that would be berthing at Bluff during the 2023-24 cruise season. Some were already coming to Gore and it was about building on that market. Cr Reid asked how the passengers would know what there was available to visit in Gore and what was Great South doing to promote Gore to the cruise lines. Ms Young said Great South connected with Cruise New Zealand and liaised with operators who often had a long lead in time. Each cruise line was different but Great South was a connector. Cr Reid said in the past, Google maps had visitors bypassing Gore and self-drive tourists did not always travel through the town. Some assistance from Great South in that area would be very helpful. Ms Young said there was a southern way touring network launched earlier in the year as a partnership between Southland and Otago. Gore featured in the network. There were eight RTOs that promoted the route to encourage people to stay in the region longer and experience what was on offer.

Cr Hovell said Environment Southland (ES) collected about \$1.1 million from levies from the cruise ships that went into Milford Sound. He was unsure how it was spent and whether it was available for any tourism initiatives. Were there any levies that

were collected from the ships that visited Bluff. Ms Young said ES also collected those and understood the levy was applied to environmental issues.

Cr Fraser said there must be figures about how many people visited Milford via a tour company as opposed to self-drive. Ms Young said there was data available but it was high level. Great South was working on encouraging tourists to extend their visits and spend more time in the region. In response to Cr Hovell, Ms Young said there was a national programme that collected data about accommodation usage in the commercial sector but it was voluntary. It was available on the MBIE website. He said if the Council was encouraging more accommodation to be provided there was a threshold above which it was economic to build more. He wondered if that information could be made available to encourage investors. He understood accommodation in Gore had been well used in recent weeks.

Cr Dickson noted a key action of Great South was to work with businesses that required workers to provide accommodation for them.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Cr Phillips, seconded by Cr Fraser, THAT the report be received.

The Great South representatives departed the meeting at 4.34pm

2. NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT (SC3086)

A memo had been received from the Community Strategy Manager advising that Neighbourhood Support had been operating for approximately a year within the Gore District. Neighbourhood Support's primary vision was about creating a safe, resilient and connected community. The initiative connected neighbours with each other so that neighbourhoods were safer and more caring places to live. This could also assist in reducing crime, increase community connectedness and enhance well-being.

Ms Sharlene Taylor-Giles and Ms Kelly Young were in attendance at the meeting and provided a presentation on Neighbourhood Support and its operation.

Cr Hovell asked if there were many neighbourhood support groups in rural areas. Ms Taylor-Giles advised not yet. It was much needed and something that would be worked on. Cr Reid was a member of neighbourhood support and appreciated the information received when there were local incidents. As far as youth involvement went, she suggested approaching the local secondary schools for assistance when they had community days.

Cr Fraser suggested approaching Federated Farmers for support with establishing rural neighbourhoods groups. He said getting youth involved could be a challenge.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Cr Reid, seconded by Cr Hovell, THAT the report be received.

Ms Young departed the meeting at 4.58pm

3. GORE DISTRICT WORKFORCE SURVEY ANALYSIS 2023 (SC3343)

A memo had been received from the Community Strategy Manager outlining the workforce survey analysis that provided insights into the current market situation within the Gore District in regard to workforce. The information would assist with the implementation of the Work Force Plan and delivery of the Mayoral Task Force for Jobs Programme. A total of 80 businesses had been surveyed, independently of the Council.

The survey results provided valuable insights into the business landscape of the Gore District. When it came to labour shortages, 41% of businesses indicated they were currently grappling with that challenge. Finding qualified and suitable staff for vacant positions was cited as the primary obstacle. Labour shortages seem to be affecting most business types. For businesses planning to hire, they emphasised the need for senior or experienced professionals in roles such as senior accountants, real estate agents, hair stylists and personal trainers. There was a diverse range of roles businesses intended to hire for, spanning industries from healthcare to hospitality.

The "Closing the Gaps" programme was known to 66% of businesses. Most businesses (81%) reported no issues with staff retention, while 9% acknowledged facing challenges, pointing to a competitive labour market and the need to retain highly skilled or specialised staff.

While over half (56%) of businesses believed that no changes were needed to strengthen the business community in the future, 44% suggest various opportunities. These include collaboration between businesses and community initiatives like providing food for children or partnering with local Runanga to support troubled youths. There was also a recurring theme of the need for improved access to compliance and regulatory information and a more supportive role from the Council to meet local business needs. Altering the perception of Gore and its industries to enhance the district's attractiveness to potential residents was another key aspect, involving promoting Gore as an appealing place to live and refreshing promotional material.

In summary, the survey revealed a diverse set of challenges and opportunities within the Gore District's business community, with labour issues and economic conditions being key areas of focus. Businesses showed a willingness to support youth and individuals with health and disability challenges, while also seeking to strengthen their local business network through collaboration and improved access to support services.

Cr Fraser asked how the businesses who were interviewed were selected. The Manager said there was a large database of businesses available. Some had declined to be involved and others had chosen not to participate again.

Cr Hovell said the report was an amazing piece of work with a lot of data. He asked what would be done with it. The Manager said with the Mayoral Taskforce for Jobs programme some questions were around employers participating in Gateway etc and for those businesses who indicated they would, they would be followed up. Others who specified certain needs had been referred to Great South to assist. Cr Hovell said there appeared to still be a shortage of skilled labour. What could the Council do to help that. The Manager said a project about attraction and retention would be launched in the new year by Great South and there would be a Gore specific tranche to that. A list of local businesses that employed a certain number of staff had been created and would meet to discuss attraction and retention.

Cr Reid said one of the challenges for employers employing migrant workers was the hours banks were available to the community. The Manager said another challenge was not having a permanent street address as a bank account could not be opened without one. There were a number of issues that made it difficult for newcomers.

Cr Reid asked when speaking with retailers were they more or less optimistic than from previous surveys. The Manager said less optimistic. Cr Reid said online trading was a significant issue for small retailers. Was there any intention to promote the town by a retail group. The Manager said there was a group who were working together.

Cr McKenzie concurred with Cr Reid's comments about opening hours of banks. Accommodation and housing was also a big problem. His Worship said Great South were involved with the regional housing project. He would circulate an email he had received to elected members.

Cr Reid said the citizenship ceremonies were very well done and it was important for those people to have some fuss made of them. Attaining citizenship was a long and expensive process for candidates. It was good to have it acknowledged appropriately.

Cr Dickson asked if the 90 day trial period could assist employers. The Manager said businesses indicated they were happy with it. Cr Dickson noted there was a high percentage of businesses who were unaware of the Gore Business Support Network. The Manager said the group was being proactive and looking to increase its membership. Cr Dickson wondered if the Council could do anything about buy local. The Manager said the Go Retail group was managing that as the Council was no longer involved with it.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Cr Fraser, seconded by Cr Reid, THAT the report be received.

4. COMMUNITY STRATEGY REPORT

A report had been received from the Community Strategy Manager that covered a number of topics that she had been involved with over the past 12 months. These included Mayoral Task Force for Jobs (MTFJ), Hokonui Health Locality, PH Vickery

Trust, Ready for Living Strategy, Workforce Plan, Business Scoping Report, Closing the Gaps, Sister City, Great South, Just Transitions, Beyond 2025, Kainga Ora, Youth Council, Caring Communities, Welcoming Communities, citizenship ceremonies, Welcome Packs, regular liaison with community groups, citizenship ceremonies and Southland funders meeting.

The Manager introduced Guillaeme Willemse as the Community Development Coordinator and Joanne Stephens as Employability Coordinator. His Worship advised he was a member of the core group for Mayors' Taskforce for Jobs. The project had been funded again for the current year at \$12 million and \$10 million the following year. The group was looking for additional funders to bridge the \$2 million shortfall across the country. That was why there was 25 outcomes to meet as opposed to the previous 50. Unfortunately, it impacted on smaller Councils such as Gore. He congratulated the Manager for securing the two new staff members who had joined the Council.

His Worship asked if there had been any indication of the boundary for the Hokonui Locality. The Manager advised she would raise it at the next meeting and report back to the Council.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of His Worship, seconded by Cr Phillips, THAT the report be received.

5. MINUTES OF GRANTS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS (SC3649)

A memo had been received from the interim Chief Executive advising that the Council re-established the Grants Sub-Committee at its 21 March 2023 meeting. In preparation for the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan and consideration of grants made by the Council, the Sub-Committee had met on two occasions on 25 October and 8 November and heard from several organisations on the grants they had received. A copy of the minutes from both meetings had been circulated with the agenda.

His Worship said one set of minutes included recommendations but the other did not. Following a conversation with the Chair of the Grants Sub-Committee, the suggestion had been made for the Sub-Committee to consider all of the grants in totality before referring them through the Long Term Plan process.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Cr Phillips, seconded by Cr Hovell, THAT the minutes of the Grants Sub-Committee meetings held on 25 October and 8 November 2023 be received.

Cr Hovell noted the Southland funders had regular meetings and that could be useful for the Grants Sub-Committee to be aware of other funding that may be available to community groups, particularly when it came to looking at a budget. Cr Phillips said the key groupings of grants funding had not been discussed as yet as part of the LTP. He thought there needed to be consideration given to those groups that held MoUs,

contracts for service and had received sponsorship prior to formally confirming any grants.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of His Worship, seconded by Cr McKenzie, THAT the Committee request the Grants Sub-Committee to reflect on the presentations received at its meetings held on 25 October and 8 November and make appropriate recommendations for consideration by the Council as part of the Long Term Plan process.

Cr Phillips said recommendations about the grants would be considered as quickly as possible and the Council was aware of the possible financial implications.

Cr Dickson extended a safe, relaxed and happy Christmas break to those in attendance.

The meeting concluded at 5.24pm