



Submission



Central Otago District Council
2021-31 Long Term Plan

Connecting People & Advancing Business

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Otago Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the proposed Central Otago District Council's 2021-31 Long Term Plan. The Chamber has consistently worked hard to ensure the district's business community has a voice in council matters, and long term plans are an essential part of this.
2. We provide constructive comments on the positive initiatives and what changes we would like to see in the final Long Term Plan document. These are based on a range of research, member surveys, and our observations and expectations from our member base. We also provide some recommendations to the Council for amendments to this draft LTP to meet the Council's vision.
3. The Chamber would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission with the Council.

ABOUT THE CHAMBER

4. The Chamber is a membership based service organisation that has been the home and voice of business in the Otago region¹ since 1861. It offers business and business people a range of services and advocacy. We are dedicated to promoting and actively encouraging business growth and opportunity throughout the Otago region.
5. Comprised of over 950 members, the Chamber actively provides information, advocacy and support for business, connecting members through networking events and functions, and developing capability and skills through our training workshops and programmes, including the not-for-profit sector.
6. We also advocate and offer a voice for business concerns and submit on behalf of members on local and national government policy. Representation occurs on behalf of a broad cross-section of business demographics including size, location and industry type, with the full range from small businesses through to large employers and stakeholders in the region.

FEEDBACK

7. We are pleased to make a submission on behalf of our members based in the Central Otago District. Overall, the Chamber supports the Council's purpose to "enhance well-being in communities" by supporting economic development and promoting opportunities for growth over the next 10 years.
8. The goal of a "Thriving Economy" fits well with the mission of the Otago Chamber of Commerce to have a "Thriving Otago Community", if the economy is doing well the whole community benefits. Also the Chamber is all about connections and having a connected community is vital on so many levels. Last but not least, growth needs to be sustainable both in the environmental and in the economic sense.

¹ There are two chambers operating within the Queenstown Lakes District Council area ie. Queenstown Chamber of Commerce and Ignite Wanaka.

9. The Chamber welcomes:

- a. The focus on investing in the district and keeping services running.
- b. Support for businesses in the region promoting growth and attracting employees to live and work in the area. Proposed initiatives spread across the district, including Omakau, Roxburgh, Cromwell and Alexandra recognise the importance of nurturing and sustaining local communities.
- c. Priority being given to asset and infrastructure maintenance and development to ensure investment for the long-term future.
- d. The revitalised Cromwell Town Centre plan which is positive in the longer-term for the wider businesses in the district. It is exciting and presents future potential for individual businesses. Chamber members are supportive of the investment in Cromwell and want projects to commence with a degree of urgency.

10. We would like to see the following reflected in the final LTP document:

- a. A commitment to managing efficiencies in current spending to facilitate growth in new areas.
- b. Ongoing collaboration, innovation and partnerships with the business community.
- c. An intention to facilitate growth by minimising “red tape” and keeping development costs down, particularly in light of those impacted due to COVID-19.
- d. More detail around growing the workforce, including facilitating housing development and affordable housing/accommodation. This may be covered in the Economic Development plan but is also an important consideration for the long term plan.

11. The Chamber would also like to see:

- a. How the Council plans to do things differently to minimise the cost of delivery against this plan. The Chamber is concerned the current draft plan does not describe how this will happen. Are there any projects / services is the Council going to stop, merge or redesign in the process of planning for the future?
- b. Businesses within the district being given the opportunity to have a role in providing the labour, skills and expertise to undertake work in council priority work and other projects, whether that be in a one-off or ongoing regular basis.
- c. An opportunity for the business community to fully understand the implications of the financial strategy and rating system.
- d. Brave decisions to ensure value and sustainability for ratepayers, both commercial and residential. Do it once and do it right is a common theme for Chamber members.

FEEDBACK ON PROPOSALS

The Chamber has the following feedback on the proposed projects and options as detailed in the *Framing Our Future* consultation document. Members were surveyed to get their feedback on the range of options.

Note: comments below from members are noted in italics.

Issue	Feedback
Financial strategy	<p>67% support the Council's financial strategy for the move into debt to meet the need for infrastructure and accommodate growth. This enables the council to keep rates affordable and for future rate payers to contribute. We agree that affordability and sustainability are important guiding principles.</p> <p>However, there are members who are unsure of the strategy, which means that further discussions could happen in the business community to fully understand the implications.</p> <p><i>Comment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Absolutely critical to spend on infrastructure. It is an investment for the future and debt funding is appropriate.</i>
Rates	<p>67% support the council to maintaining a limit or 'cap' on rates increases of 5% per annum for existing ratepayers.</p> <p>The remainder are unsure which means that further discussions could happen in the business community to fully understand the implications.</p>
Cromwell masterplan timing options	<p>There is strong support for funding the masterplan projects and improvements. It is evenly split between the Hybrid option and Town Centre first options.</p> <p><i>Comment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Arts and Culture Precinct should feature in conjunction with Old Cromwell.</i>
Cromwell – 3-4 storey development	<p>There is a slight majority in support of a three to four-storey development and accommodation for residents, seasonal workers and visitors within areas close to The Mall.</p>
Cromwell – new civic building	<p>The majority support the construction of a new Civic building that includes a new integrated library, resource centre and expanded administration spaces as well as commercial tenancies (café, retail).</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Yes, this would add so much value to our town. A new purpose built facility would be just amazing.</i> - <i>No, I think a new facility should be incorporated with the new sports complex at Anderson Park.</i>
Cromwell – civic square	<p>60% are in favour of a new central Civic Square with public realm upgrades to internal parts of The Mall. Although not all respondents saw the merit in this option.</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>No, please just get rid of those ugly old buildings in the mall.</i> - <i>No, the Mall should be turned into accommodation and a new retail centre built.</i>

Size of hall/events centre	<p>The proposal for a hall/events centre based on the estimates of the capital costs and square metre rates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 57% preferred option A \$16m/2000m2 building providing for community activities currently provided for, plus events and medium scale conferences. <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Option A – do it once and do it right.</i> - <i>Option A – aligned with the sports pavilion.</i>
Alexandra riverside development	<p>The majority supported the funding of Stage 1 of the riverside development. Within those that did support, it is evenly split on the two funding options.</p>
District museum function	<p>The majority (86%) supported the expanded heritage/museum role - extend the role in option 1 to incorporate heritage in addition to the museum focus. An increase of \$2.40 per ratepayer.</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>There should be a centrally located Central Otago museum rather than one in each town. If towns want their own, then they should fund themselves.</i> - <i>Agree with a museum coordinator, but not in-house at Council or at ADMI. The funding of \$50,000 should be an annual grant to a region-wide Museum Trust, which would have council involvement and full representation from all museums. They would set the agenda and objectives for the coordinator and then under an annual review, they would justify the expenditure and outcomes back to council. Therefore council have control but the museum focused people drive to maximise the museum outcomes.</i> - <i>Support the increased funding to provide a heritage role, which would be additional to the museum role. For this to be effective it should be a part-time role within the planning department of council.</i>
Omakau Community Hub	<p>The majority of respondents supported splitting the funding of a new community centre 1/3 each way (Council's preferred option).</p>
Roxburgh pool upgrade	<p>There is strong support to fund the upgrade, with the majority in agreement with the 50/50 loan/reserve fund split.</p>
Comments on other issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Traffic lights at Clyde Bridge - we should never have traffic lights in Central.</i> - <i>Where is the Clyde Heritage Precinct upgrade? 3 years on with zero progress and minimal consultation/communication with the locals.</i>

12. We would like to highlight the comment about the Clyde Heritage Precinct upgrade. No mention of this has been made in the plan. There was strong support for this upgrade from our members in 2018. Is it still under consideration, if yes where does it fit in to the plan?

13. In regards to infrastructure, the Chamber recognises the importance of maintaining a strong infrastructure whilst planning for future growth. We are aware that investment in infrastructure is key to the ongoing development of the region. One thing we have noted missing from the plan is any mention of public transport, whilst we understand this is a regional council responsibility, we do believe that plans for accessibility should include capacity for the provision of public transport in the future. With an aging population, alongside environmental considerations, this is going to be an issue in the future and should be considered when redesigning town centres.

CONCLUSION

14. The Chamber supports the region's commitment to a thriving economy, sustainable environment and connected community. We recognise that a strong infrastructure is important to support sustainable growth and that well considered new initiatives can bring multiple benefits to the region long term.

15. This submission is submitted on the basis that it provides feedback and the opportunity to further engage with the council on a number of issues. We are committed to joining and working with the Council to achieve our shared objective of attracting and encouraging the development of business opportunities in the Central Otago District.

16. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit. The Chamber would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission with the Council.

Yours sincerely,

Nicky Aldridge

Acting Chief Executive Officer

Otago Chamber of Commerce