

Helping Dublin to grow and prosper

Bec O'Brien reports:

WORKING with the local community was the focus of an "Our Town" workshop held recently at Dublin, where identifying areas for development and providing support for local groups to plan and implement strategic goals was key.

Held at Dublin Cricket Club's new clubrooms on Wednesday March 24, the event was facilitated by Regional Development Australia (RDA) Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains with support from the Adelaide Plains Council and the Adelaide Plains Business Advisory Group (APBAG).

Around 25 people attended the workshop, which was led by RDA facilitator, Maz McGann, who spoke about similar workshops being held in communities across the country.

Social, economic, cultural and/or environmental pathways were identified during the workshop, with a range of information regarding a number of projects and resources presented to those in attendance.

Breaking into small groups, participants discussed the strengths, challenges and opportunities the area provided, with seafood, fishing and crabbing as well as boating activities and the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary (AIBS) high on the list of strengths.

The construction of a caravan park for the township was a hot topic, with discussion also centering around the history of the Jinkers at Parham and capitalising on Dublin's position



APC mayor Mark Wasley, RDA facilitator Maz McGann, RDC Barossa CEO, RDA Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains CEO, Anne Moroney, and APBAG chairperson Ian O'Loan.

on a major transport corridor and its close proximity to Adelaide and the Barossa region.

Living in a supportive and connected community that offered essential shopping and meals, as well as a unique coastline and beaches was also stressed.

Some of the challenges brought up through the workshop included a lack of accommodation in the area, no swimming pool, unsealed

roads and maintaining environmental sustainability through thoughtful development.

A lack of clarity around a brand for the area and a need for clear directional signage and entry signage for the towns along Port Wakefield Road was also brought up.

Participants looked at what kinds of things could be done "now" to attract visitors to the area and promote the region as a whole.

They included refreshing the Samphire Coast brand and promoting the region as a destination, developing a relationship with the South Australian Tourism Commission, staging family-friendly outdoor events, conducting fishing and crabbing workshops and tours; and holding guided walking tours that focus on plant-life and shore birds.

Adelaide Plains Business Advisory Group (APBAG) chairperson, Ian O'Loan, said he was pleased at the input given by the participants, saying the vibe was a positive one.

"The input really reaffirmed the knowledge that some people have had for some time about the area," Mr O'Loan said.

"There were interesting comments about how Dublin can be used as a stepping stone to the Samphire Coast and the potential for a real caravan parking facility at Dublin on the national highway."

Mr O'Loan said talks also centered around local businesses working to improve their shopfronts to encourage people to stop in the town.

"It was good to see how the locals interacted with the facilitators, they really opened up about their comments and opportunities, and the shortfalls of the area," he said.

"It's the next step to moving forward to implementing some of these suggestions and the business advisory group in conjunction with RDA will be doing that in the next few months."

Mr O'Loan said the workshop also highlighted a need for affordable housing options for potential workers that may be induced to come and work in the area in the future.

APC seeking feedback on draft business plan

ADELAIDE Plains Council has endorsed its draft 2020/2021 Annual Business Plan and Budget and will ask the public for feedback on the extensive documents, which suggests there is "never a better time to borrow money".

The draft plan outlines an average rate increase of 2.25 percent for all properties in the next financial year and prioritises the renewal of community infrastructure and the sealing of unsealed roads for vital freight and tourism networks.

The proposed capital expenditure program presented in the draft budget is estimated to cost \$6.251 million in the next financial year, double that of last year's expenditure, with new loan borrowings of \$2.741 million.

Almost 50 percent of these new borrowings are proposed to cover APC's mandated co-contribution to a number of recently received government grants.

The waste levy is expected to again rise, this time by 4.3 percent to \$167.

This follows a rise in this levy last financial year by 12.68 percent.

Charges for both the Malla-la and Middle Beach CWMS schemes will also increase by three percent to \$659 and \$443 respectively.

Excluding CWMS, APC's estimated employee costs is \$5.506 million and is calculated based on estimated full-time equivalent staff numbers of 57.

In his report to council,

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which was deliberated on at its general meeting on Tuesday April 27, APC's finance and business general manager Rajith Udugampola outlined a budget that he believed contributes to its strategic objectives.

"But is also financially sound and allows the council to meet its financing commitments from cash derived from operating activities without placing a burden on ratepayers through excessive and/or ad-hoc rate revenue increases or borrowing money to deliver current council services that will create intergenerational inequality," the report stated.

"The focus in developing the Draft 2021/2022 Budget has been on ensuring that the council can maintain the service standards for its existing services and that those services receive appropriate funding, balanced with ensuring that the community does not face significant/adhoc increases in their annual rates contribution in next year or future years.

"To achieve above objectives, council's management has applied "zero based budgeting" by reviewing its current actual level of income and expenditures and comparing it with proposed activities for the next financial year to estimate the appropriate level of income and expenditures for 2021/2022 Financial Year."

In his forward in the budget

report, APC mayor Mark Wasley said the region had come through the COVID-19 pandemic relatively well, given the circumstances.

"What this has meant to us as individuals is that we have been able to go about our daily business, keep jobs as much as possible and weather this situation," Mayor Wasley stated.

"Your council has made some tough but necessary decisions along the way resulting in as little disruption to services as possible.

"Local government has not shut down, in fact, adapting to changes put upon us and implementing different ways of continuing our service has been at the forefront."

Mayor Wasley outlined the pressures a relatively low income council, for its size, has, saying pressure to maintain existing infrastructure and at the same time also provide new facilities for the growing population was a "balancing act".

"The draft budget has been worked through by elected members and staff at many workshops, informal gatherings and sub committees to reach this point," he said.

"You will have noticed significant improvements and changes around the district made possible through stimulus funding and grants received from the two higher levels of government - not at ratepayer cost.

"This is flowing on into the 2021/2022 financial year and with unprecedented external funding available, your

elected members have seen the value in taking up the "50/50" contribution schemes.

"What this means is projects such as road sealing for example can be achieved at effectively half price to the ratepayers.

"Combined with extremely low interest rates, now is an opportune time to achieve these goals which have been out of reach for some time.

"A staged approach is needed which the elected members have worked through to ensure realistic goals are achieved.

"There will never be a better time to borrow money to partner with the governments "50/50" stimulus and grant funding, rather than fully paid for by ratepayers."

APC CEO James Miller

outlined council's plans for the year ahead, stating in the report the draft budget highlights a concerted freight and tourism road network sealing program to be staged over two years.

This program would include the sealing of unsealed roads in Cheek Road, Aerodrome Road, Middle Beach Road and Aerodrome Road.

Other projects APC hope to deliver in the coming year include a community survey; recreation precinct master plans for Two Wells and Malla-la; a tourism/recreational trail strategy; a review of the Gawler River Floodplain Management Authority Charter; and advancement of the Light & Adelaide Plains Region Economic Development

Authority.

"I encourage our community to review this year's draft budget and provide comment as a means of arriving at a sound and responsible program for 2021/2022," Mr Miller stated.

"It is against this backdrop that I commend the draft 2021/2022 Annual Business Plan and Budget to you, the ratepayers and residents of the Adelaide Plains."

The chamber voted to endorse the draft 2020/2021 budget and ABP and go to public consultation from Wednesday May 5 until Tuesday May 25 at 5.00pm.

Public notices will appear on council's website www.apc.sa.gov.au, where the draft budget can also be viewed.

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