

PRESENT

Members:

Councillor Rob Turner (Chair)
Kelly King (Community Representative)
Paul Dawson (Community Representative)
Anthony Thorne (Community Representative)
Kate Wood-Foye (Community Representative)
Stuart Bate (Community Representative)
Hadyn Oriti (Community Representative)
Ross Cargill (Community Representative)
Jane Evans (Community Representative)
Michelle Love (Community Representative)
Kellon Beard (Community Representative)

Other Attendees:

Acting General Manager (Jeffery Sharp)
Acting Director Strategy & Growth (Liesa Davies)
Acting Group Manager Economic & Cultural Development (Amanda Hatton)
Senior Economic Development Officer (David Archer)
Destination & Cultural Development Manager (Jane Ellis)

The meeting opened at 8:31am.

01 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Acknowledgement of Country was delivered.

02 APOLOGIES

CONSENSUS:

That the apologies received from Councillor Geoff Hawkins and Peter Halliwell be accepted.

03 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

CONSENSUS

That the Minutes of the Economic Development Steering Group Meeting held on 9 September 2020 be confirmed.

04 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest presented.

05 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

CONSENSUS:

That the Business Arising Schedule be noted with the following additional information:

- That a proposed pathway for the discussion on red tape will be discussed in Item 06.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

CONSENSUS:

That standing orders be suspended to allow Item 09 to be brought forward and considered next, to allow sufficient time to consider this item.

09 ANNUAL BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEY RESULTS

The results and insights from the 2020 Port Macquarie Hastings Business Confidence Survey were presented to the Group by the Senior Economic Development Officer.

412 businesses were profiled in the survey, with the results showing that local businesses had experienced declining trading conditions as expected, following the 2019-2020 bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interestingly, the results showed that the Port Macquarie-Hastings region has a high rate of business innovation when compared to other regional areas and innovative businesses reported significantly better outcomes across the survey measures in comparison to those businesses who did not innovate.

It was noted that despite the confidence and business performance downturn, businesses remain confident conditions will improve in the next 12 months.

Kellon Beard enquired as to feedback from the real estate industry with the Senior Economic Development Officer noting that whilst commercial real estate feedback has not been obtained at this point in time, feedback suggests that there have been strong residential trading conditions.

The Group also discussed the notion of businesses innovating as opposed to reacting to change, and the positive impact that the 'locals supporting locals' messaging has had for businesses within the community.

CONSENSUS:

That the Group note the overview of the 2020 Port Macquarie-Hastings Business Confidence Survey results.

06 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY RENEWAL

The Acting Director Strategy & Growth led the Group through a discussion on the proposed pathway to develop a new Economic Development Strategy for our region, noting the existing Strategy is due for renewal in 2021.

The approach presented included a plan for preliminary supply chain gap analysis, and consultant-led stakeholder engagement followed by drafting of a new Strategy (which will also incorporate bushfire and COVID recovery priorities). It was noted that the development of a new Strategy would also be an opportune time to further consider feedback around 'red tape' received from the COVID-19 Recovery Working Group. The proposed timeline for development of the new Strategy aims to have it adopted by Council in July 2021.

The Group discussed the project scope and proposed engagement of a consultant to support the Strategy development, with a number of members emphasising the need to ensure the Economic Development Strategy continues to build on the strength of the previous and current strategy, that it maintain its importance in Council's suite of Strategies, and that the business community has ample opportunity to provide input to and continue to feel a sense of ownership of the new Strategy.

CONSENSUS:

That the Group:

1. Note the plan to review the 2017-2021 Economic Development Strategy and develop a new Strategy in 2021.
2. Request staff continue to keep the Group informed of progress with this project.

07 BIENNIAL STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

The Senior Economic Development Officer presented to the Group an overview of the progress in implementing the Economic Development Strategy over the last six months.

It was noted that despite the challenges of bushfires and COVID, many actions under the Strategy have continued over the past six months. This has included development of the Smart Community Roadmap, the \$2.1 million Coastal Walk upgrade, adoption of a new Destination Management Plan, completion of the Cultural Economy Project, finalisation of the Airport Business Park Planning Proposal and a range of business support/recovery initiatives.

In addition to the ongoing delivery of adopted Bushfire and COVID recovery projects, the next six months will continue to focus on achieving identified priority areas under the Strategy, including further work in relation to the Health and Education Precinct, foreshore walks, 'support local' initiatives, promotion of the NBN Business Fibre Zone and a destination brand review.

Jane Evans enquired as to Council's planned communications to stakeholders within the Health and Education Precinct regarding the NBN options to ensure businesses have awareness of and maximise NBN options. The Senior Economic Development Officer confirmed that this would consist of direct communications to identified businesses in conjunction with broader communications via Council's promotional channels.

The biennial strategy implementation will be reported to the 18 November 2020 meeting of Council, with full detail attached.

CONSENSUS:

That the Group note the update on implementation of the 2017-2021 Port Macquarie-Hastings Council Economic Development Strategy.

08 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Destination and Cultural Development Manager presented an update to the Group on destination management activities since October 2019. It was noted that with the 2019-2020 bushfire season followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, destination marketing activities in particular have pivoted with campaign messaging such as 'It's time to play' to 'Paradise will wait'.

Examples of campaign activity were presented to the Group along with campaign results, PR, social media and website activity. Despite the bushfire and COVID-19 challenges, strong results were achieved with an increase in year-on-year data.

Kate Wood-Foye congratulated the team on the results achieved and noted that there has been great anecdotal feedback from operators in relation to visitor activity.

Michelle Love noted the great social media activity occurring and the positive influence being seen in digitising businesses.

CONSENSUS:

That the Group note the update on destination management activities.

Item 09 Annual Business Confidence Survey Results, has been addressed previously within the meeting.

09 GENERAL BUSINESS

Nil.

The meeting closed at 9:58am.