

COBDEN TWENTY 20 PLAN REVIEW – 27 March 2018

Summary

This report provides advice to Council on the second review and updating of Cobden's community plan *Cobden Twenty 20 Vision Plan*, which was developed through community forums held in August and November 2010 and received by Council in March 2011. This second review follows on from the initial review conducted in 2014, where existing priorities were confirmed and new directions set. A description of the process and outcomes of the review is provided.

Introduction

Cobden was the first of Corangamite Shire's townships to engage in Council's community planning initiative, engaging in broad community consultation through the period when the *Building Stronger Corangamite Communities* partnership was being negotiated and established with the State Government. Council was able to recognise Cobden's pioneering efforts and reward this community initiative with the announcement of seed-funding (to support project implementation) at the launch of the *Cobden Twenty 20 Vision Plan* on 18 April 2011. Since then, Cobden has provided a model for other Corangamite towns as to the mutual benefits which can be derived from co-operative relationships between place-based communities and their Council.

The original *Cobden Twenty 20 Vision Plan* is a comprehensive and expansive document, describing as it does a broad range of issues of importance to those with an interest in Cobden. In many instances it refers to conditions which people feel need to be addressed, yet it is light on detail as to specific actions to be taken to address an identified problem or in regard to which agencies might be involved in key issues. That is not to be critical, but to say that the plan is 'visionary' and not simply a list of project ideas. Bringing people together to develop a shared understanding of what is important to Cobden, involving a broad range of people in valuing and appreciating the Cobden and district community, and maintaining and building upon the town's acknowledged assets are important elements of the planning process. As has been seen over the past seven years, this work has positioned Cobden to take advantage of changed circumstances and to create opportunities to realise the town's community vision.

The Cobden community has realised many achievements since formulating the 11 key strategies and the 65 actions outlined in the plan. Over the course of implementation the original seven working groups were recast into four, focussing on Organisations and Volunteers; Tourism and Town Appearance; Infrastructure Facilities and Services; and Economic Sustainability, Education and Training. Council has provided more than \$110,000 in direct seed-funding (over seven years) for projects developed by these *Twenty 20* working groups. Cobden has also joined into other programs and tapped other funding streams.

Through the first review of the *Cobden Twenty 20 Vision Plan*, a number of new priorities emerged. These included the installation of a RV/Caravan Dump Point, the development of a new Sporting and Community Precinct, a Community Noticeboard and a new amenities building at the Airstrip (Terminal 1). The 'Cobden Story' project and the Dairy Park/Car Park development were confirmed as continuing projects. These proposals were referred to the four working groups to scope and cost them and advance them as projects. Updates are provided to every second monthly meeting of Progressing Cobden, where the meeting agenda is devoted to advancing township projects.

The initial review of the Plan also provided an opportunity to compile an account of what Cobden people value most about their town. This exercise confirmed that local residents value the friendly, caring community that is Cobden, part of which is characterised by the town's 'can do' attitude towards community projects. The relaxed 'serene' lifestyle available

in Cobden is equally valued, supported as it is by some highly-valued community assets – such as Cobden Lake, the town’s range of sporting facilities and the Old Racecourse Reserve. The strategic importance of the Cobden Airstrip and the Cobden Spring Festival are also acknowledged assets of the town.

Issues

The second review of the *Cobden Twenty 20 Vision Plan* aggregated input from more than 100 people within the framework established in 2010. Through a series of deliberative meetings of Progressing Cobden original priorities were confirmed and a set of projects and ideas were identified to provide a renewed focus for action over the coming three years.

In response to an invitation to put forward community projects for consideration in the development of Council’s 2018-2019 Budget, a list of items was put forward under three headings. These are a subset of the ideas outlined in the *Cobden Twenty 20 Vision Plan*.

Work in train

Community planning funds made available by Corangamite Shire are being applied to the following projects within the current financial year. Some will roll on into 2019 and 2020.

- 1 Implement further stages of the Cobden Story project
- 2 Construct undercover BBQs at Cobden Lake
- 3 Finishing off Public Art installation setting and surrounds
- 4 Maintaining Cobden Lake facilities
- 5 Install community noticeboard
- 6 Free/Low cost camping/ Dump point

Priority actions which could be supported through the 2018-2019 budget

- 1 Streetscape refresh (including a range of pedestrian safety aspects)
- 2 Expanding and reconfiguring Cobden Civic Hall
- 3 Provision of truck and long vehicle parking areas and pedestrian safety measures
- 4 Install lights along walking track (Circuite de Savage)
- 5 Supporting development of Cobden Airstrip terminal
- 6 Develop business case for Dairy Industry interpretation facility/ tourism partnership
- 7 Secure and support dairy-related business development (including industrial estate)

Priority Council advocacy initiatives

- 1 Utility pricing, affordable energy, bioenergy and other initiatives
- 2 Support for the dairy industry and fair milk pricing
- 3 Retain and improve health and emergency services, including attraction of GPs and improved local mental health services
- 4 Provision of quality local NBN services

An essential observation to be made about these lists is the critical importance of local government to local communities in the realisation of their ambitions. Almost all items listed above require substantial involvement of Council in either enabling, financing, executing or permitting progress on these projects. Indeed, in relation to projects executed as part of Council's Community Planning Initiative, policy necessitates the involvement of Council in regard to compliance standards. Without active Council support it hard for communities to make any progress on many their projects.

Over the interval between to first (2014) and second (2017) reviews a number of issues have arisen, some of which have since departed and others continue. These include completion of the feasibility study for the Cobden Sporting and Community Precinct Development project (where this project did not proceed), the Refugee Settlement Proposal (which similarly did not proceed further), the Cobden Airstrip Terminal 1 Funding Application, the Dump Point/ Caravan Park/ Free Camping proposal (which hasn't found a home as yet), and the Dairy Park Development proposals (which are similarly stalled). Over the period Cobden has joined into Council's Public Art program, the Volcanic Lakes and Plains tourism initiative, and most recently, the 'Live Well' project. Cobden has established its own Visitor Centre at the Cobden Roadhouse 'Cobden 3266', and implemented its Street Banners/ Flagpoles project. The Cobden community is in the middle of a public campaign to save its Airstrip from being compromised by the siting of a proposed windfarm development to the north of the runway. The community is grateful for the support of Council in this and other advocacy endeavours.

Policy and Legislative Context

The Council Plan 2017-2021 outlines Corangamite Shire's community planning initiative (Pages 10 and 11) and describes how, over the past six years, it has systematically surveyed local residents and assisted them to develop Community Plans. Recognising the many benefits of community planning and supporting its delivery, the Council Plan includes a 'commitment to support Council's Community Planning Program' under its Theme 4 Objective to 'Engage with and listen to our communities' (Page 23), and under the Theme 1 Objective to 'Advocate strongly in relation to ... community priorities' (Page 13).

Importantly, the Cobden Community Plan review process contributes to Council's Vision: 'We strive for a thriving and connected community' (Page 4) and gives expression to Council's Values of Respect, Innovation and Collaboration (Page 8).

Internal / External Consultation

This second *Cobden Twenty 20 Vision Plan* review process was developed and conducted through the agency of Progressing Cobden, with minimal support from Corangamite Shire. The data collection phase was conducted through a survey and a public noticeboard approach in Curdie Street over several months. Communication was facilitated through the *Cobden Coast Times* and through a range of Cobden community groups, using websites, email, Facebook and face-to-face networks of Progressing Cobden, Cobden Business Network, Cobden Spring Festival, Schools, the Hospital, Racecourse Reserve and other community groups. The deliberative phase was conducted through a series of special meetings of Progressing Cobden in November and December 2017 and March 2018. Progressing Cobden estimates that more the 100 people participated in the review process, across a broad spectrum of the community.

Financial and Resource Implications

This report is for information only and does not entail any recommendations relating to increased or reduced financial and other resources.

Conclusion

The community of Cobden has made steady progress on its community plan priorities outlined in the ten-year *Cobden Twenty 20 Vision Plan* (as amended). These have been reviewed and the community has set some new priorities in its updated Plan. The process of review has highlighted the completion of many projects which have enhanced the community of Cobden and the town's liveability and prosperity, but also the importance of the role of Council in supporting these endeavours. The Cobden community has a clear idea of those aspects of the town which are most valued by local people. Following a period where the tide of support for local communities has ebbed somewhat, (most notably that previously provided by RDV), Cobden looks forward to the opportunities which will come when the tide next turns.

Source: Extract from Ordinary Council Minutes 27 March 2018