

RETIRING COUNCILLOR, NIGEL WAISTELL, PROVIDES ADVICE TO CANDIDATES

This time 4 years ago, I was approached by electors and asked for advice on how to vote.

I believed that change was required in the Scenic Rim Council's leadership team, along with an accompanying change to the culture of the Council.

Subsequently, a change in the leadership team did occur. However, since the election I have been particularly in the area of transparency, did not occur. In fact, in some areas it became worse and this resulted in me being reported to the Department of Local Government on many issues about how I was going about my job of representing Division One. The end result of these complaints was that the majority were dismissed for lacking in substance.

In my view, this is not the type of culture our elected representatives should work under.

So where to from here? I believe that we need a leadership team which recognises and acknowledges that changes to the Council's culture are essential. Some of the changes I am proposing are:

- Council requires a communication protocol so that residents receive timely and meaningful communication which is continued until an answer is provided. The answer may not satisfy the resident but so long as reasons are provided to support that decision then that is fair.
- There needs to be greater transparency in how our rates are spent. Rates are high and Council needs to justify why it needs to raise so much and how it is being expended. One way to achieve this is to publish the final budget papers.
- The rules pertaining to Councillors' method of operation need to be reviewed. For example, Councillors cannot talk directly to officers as residents can. They have to use the chain of command. Councillors cannot copy residents into an email when submitting their request into Council. They have to send a separate email. Officers, when responding to a query, cannot directly email Councillors. They have to use the chain of command which slows up the response.

Candidates need to recognise that Council has a duty to:

- Promote the area to attract businesses and create local jobs
- Promote tourism and agriculture
- Promote events which bring a benefit to the area
- Maintain Council's infrastructure
- Advocate to State and Federal Governments for support be it via direct funding or their spending.

Candidates should explain their position on rates. In this term of Council, it was decided to amend how rates were levied in order that rural and commercial properties paid their fair share so that residential properties did not have to bear so much of the burden.

The employment of consultants should be addressed by candidates. Consultants should only be employed when the skills set of Council employees restricts their ability to do the work. If Council has to employ a large number of consultants, then the question has to be asked: Is Council employing people with the right skills set?

Going forward, we need to consider who is most appropriate to make up the future leadership team. We need to ask the questions and then make up our own mind.

Nigel Waistell

Retiring Councillor for Division One.