21.02 KEY INFLUENCES

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Key issues in the future development of the municipality which have been identified are:

Economy and population growth

The shire's economy is based on agricultural production, processing of agricultural product and services to agriculture, a growing tourism and recreation industry and oil and gas resource development. The future development of the shire will depend on building on these assets and ensuring that land use planning decisions do not erode the economic, environmental and infrastructure base upon which they are established.

Over the last census period the shire population continued to decline, however growth has been experienced in many of the towns and the rate of population decline in other towns has reduced. Despite the overall decline in population, demand for new housing is strong in some locations. Ensuring an appropriate supply of land to meet development demand is an important priority for council. The primary objective is to capitalise on potential development where it can provide a positive outcome for the community and meet environmental standards.

Environment

Environmental issues are increasingly playing a role in the management of rural holdings. These issues include the protection of remnant vegetation and fauna habitat, protection of significant landscapes, protection of built and natural heritage sites, pest plant and animal control, management of salinity and soil erosion, and catchment management. Protection and enhancement of the environmental assets that are important features of the shire such as the Great Ocean Road and associated rock formations, volcanic cones, lakes and wetlands and historic buildings and places are also vitally important.

For example Lakes Gnotuk and Bullen Merri are important environments on a number of levels. This includes international scientific and geological importance as well as offering an outstanding and unique scenic landscape.

The municipality also has areas of high conservation value and has made provision for the protection and management of these areas. In identifying these areas, council has worked closely with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Heritage Victoria. The challenge for council is to balance its desire and obligation to protect environmental and cultural values with its desire to encourage growth in the tourism industry and to maintain a profitable agricultural industry.

The issues affecting the environment are:-

- preserving remnant vegetation;
- protecting natural and built heritage assets;
- protecting sensitive coastal and volcanic landscapes;
- integrating catchment management principles into land use planning and management.

Settlement and infrastructure

The shire is home to 11 settlements ranging in size from the town of Camperdown (3,130 pop) to Princetown, which is a town in name only and supports a permanent population of about a dozen people. The unique characteristics of each settlement; its landscape, setting and built environment, influence its form and function. Future urban development within and around the existing settlements will have a key influence on the shire.

Consolidation of the existing townships is seen as important by the council. The structure plans produced for each town define boundaries and identify opportunities and constraints. Infill residential development on vacant land is encouraged within the township boundaries to utilise existing and planned infrastructure, and to prevent any unnecessary encroachment of urban development into agricultural land. Some towns have begun to experience growth and a review of land supply and related infrastructure is warranted.

The main issues affecting settlements and infrastructure are:-

- planning for growth within existing township boundaries as a first priority and into appropriate adjacent lands as efficiently as possible;
- protection and enhancement of the unique characteristics of towns and the smaller settlements:
- augmentation of water, sewerage and drainage infrastructure.

Tourism

The municipality has a range of features that attract tourists with the main one being the Great Ocean Road and its associated features. This area has been recognised in the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014 as one that requires special attention to protect and promote its visual, heritage and environmental values. Tourism along the coast is predicted to grow at 10% per annum for the foreseeable future. Both council and Parks Victoria recognise the need to manage the expected growth to protect the asset. This includes protection of both the natural landscape and the modified rural landscape setting. Of particular concern to council is managing the impact of tourism and its predicted growth on Port Campbell. Some residents see increased development as a threat; others see it as a commercial opportunity.

Apart from the coast many tourism opportunities are gathering strength inland. These relate to the dramatic volcanic landscape with its many lakes, abrupt cones and craters rising from the plains and the many historic built features, both town and rurally based. Protection of these features will ensure some prospect of the development of tourism related commerce broadly across the shire as the combination of built and natural heritage assets give the shire a comprehensive and diverse tourist product.

The main issues affecting tourism are:-

- encouraging the development of tourism and at the same time protecting the resources on which it is based;
- integrating the development of tourism along the coast with the lifestyle and desires of residents who live in the area;
- generally containing tourist related development within the townships not spilling into the rural hinterland.

Agriculture

The Shire of Corangamite relies heavily on its agricultural base. The agricultural land is generally good to high quality, with a rainfall that increases from north to south. The trends in Victoria generally towards larger farm size and higher production per labour unit are applicable to the Corangamite Shire. These trends have resulted in a decrease in the number of people living and working in rural communities and the population of townships in the rural areas has decreased. Despite the fewer people involved in agricultural industries, agriculture will continue to be the main financial base of the shire.

Timber production is a form of land use that is being encouraged at the national and state level which has significant potential within the shire.

The main issues affecting agriculture are:-

CORANGAMITE PLANNING SCHEME

- protecting agricultural land from developments that would reduce the impact agriculture makes to the economy of the shire;
- maintaining the current agricultural base while at the same time creating opportunities to diversify and strengthening the base;
- integrating plantation forestry into the rural environment in a way that creates positive economic and environmental outcomes.
- facilitating the manufacture of agricultural produce from the shire and the surrounding region;
- maintaining viability of townships and rural communities in the face of declining population.