

ITEM NO: 18

SUBJECT: PROPOSED BLUE MOUNTAINS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUM

FILE NO: F01791

Recommendations:

1. *That the Council notes the proposed Blue Mountains Economic Development Forum.*
 2. *That the Council appoints a Councillor as a representative on the Blue Mountains Economic Development Forum Working Group.*
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Report by Acting Group Manager, Community and Corporate:

Introduction

It is proposed that a Blue Mountains Economic Development Forum be held by the Council in May 2008. This forum will enable relevant stakeholders to have input into the Economic Development Strategy for the City of the Blue Mountains, currently being developed. The purpose of this report is to inform the Council of the proposed forum and to seek a Councillor Representative on a working group to be established to organise the forum.

Background

The need to “*complete an Economic Development Strategy in line with the City Strategy direction and outcomes*” was first outlined in Council’s 2004-2005 Management Plans (for completion within the 2004-2008 Management Plan period). Council’s current 2007-2008 Management Plan states that Council’s core objective for the Principal Activity of Working and Learning is to increase local employment and support sustainable economic development within the City, appropriate to our World Heritage environment. The proposed forum will support development of a comprehensive Blue Mountains Economic Development Strategy with clear actions and targets for achieving this core objective.

Proposed Economic Development Forum

It is important that relevant stakeholders from business, community, government and non-government sectors, have an opportunity to have input into the Economic Development Strategy being prepared for the City of Blue Mountains. To achieve this it is proposed that a Blue Mountains Economic Development Forum be held in May 2008. This forum amongst other things would focus on the key economic development challenges and opportunities facing the Blue Mountains and identify strategic actions to address them.

The Blue Mountains faces significant economic development challenges. Creating a strong local economy without impacting detrimentally on our World Heritage environment requires particular attention to the types of industry and employment to be encouraged in the City. The location of the City within a World Heritage National Park environment itself represents a significant economic development opportunity. Tourism is a major industry and a priority action area of our City Strategy is for the Blue Mountains to become a leader in sustainable business practices. The need to diversify and strengthen the local economy beyond tourism is

also a key challenge to be proactively addressed. Another challenge is creating increased local employment opportunities. Many Blue Mountains residents work outside the local area. In the 2007 Community Survey, the need to increase local employment opportunities has been raised as one of the top three priority areas for improvement in the City.

Forum Working Group

It is proposed that a working group be formed with the task of organising and steering the focus of the proposed Blue Mountains Economic Development Forum. This working group could consist of 5 representatives including: a nominated BMCC Councillor, the BMCC Economic Development Program Leader, the Chair of BMTL, the President of Biznet and an appointed Forum Facilitator. Meeting times of the working group would be established at its first meeting.

Sustainability Assessment (Triple Bottom Line Reporting):

In moving towards a more sustainable City, it is important that we address economic as well as social and environmental outcomes for the City as presented in the 25 Year Map for Action. The Economic Development Strategy will be a key component of achieving a more sustainable City.

Financial implications for the Council

Costs of the proposed Forum are provided for within existing budget. It is estimated that the Forum will cost approximately \$3,000.

Legal and risk management issues for the Council

There are no anticipated legal or risk management issues for the Council

External consultation

BMTL and Biznet were consulted through their last Board meetings to seek approval for the head of the Boards to participate in the Forum working group.

Conclusion

It is recommended that the Council notes the proposed Blue Mountains Economic Development Forum and endorses the nomination of a Councillor to participate on the Blue Mountains Economic Development Forum Working Group.

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