WCC candidate Matthew Walsh chats with The Terrier

Description

CANDIDATE MATTHEW WALSH:

10 QUESTIONS FROM THE TERRIER:

What three main skills could you bring to the Warrnambool City Council as a councillor?

Experience working within a Federal Government environment where good governance (Transparency, Accountability, Equitable and inclusion) is a must.

Policy development/review experience

Experience with administering public funds under strict controls.

Do you see any particular issues, projects or problems in Warrnambool that you would like to work on as a councillor?

Community is the heart of Warrnambool, but tourism is the lifeblood, for example, Flagstaff Hill has been a significant loss generator for several years. There needs to be a considerable focus placed on ways to improve its performance. (I have noted some detail at Q8)

The harbour redevelopment is essential to capture more of the recreational fishing market if we want to be considered as the end of the Great Ocean Road and not have people continued further on we need to offer top-class facilities.

Introducing sustainable long-term solutions for the erosion and seaweed issues around the main beach area in particular; it is the showpiece of the town. Part of this could be looking at commercial options for the disposal and possible use of seaweed.

Do you think the council could be more “open” with residents and if so, how?

Councils are elected to represent the community; this community should know and understand

everything that is happening within the council to deliver on their needs.

Council meetings run from a more prominent space such as the Lighthouse Theatre so that more of the community can attend. Meetings live-streamed but perhaps also visualised on the Civic Green? We could also use the electric signage of The Lighthouse Theatre to remind residents of the upcoming Council meeting dates.

Regular updates to be delivered with rates notices talking about projects, expenditure and future planning etc.

Re-introduce the coffee with a councillor initiative/speed dating with the Councillors style event, provide a direct entry point into council without any red tape. Thus ensuring Councillors stay in touch with the heart of the community and also make sure Councillors are approachable for all.

The next 12 months is going to be challenging due to the impact of Covid-19 – do you have one or two key idea/s for how WCC could support residents and/or businesses?

Attracting people to the area will be crucial, given the opening up of regional areas, Warrnambool must be promoted as the destination of choice.

Hospitality and the Arts are significant areas where the council could focus its energy, providing reduced/free access to outdoor dining opportunities in line with the ever-changing restrictions. The Arts, we have so much local talent, in particular, musicians have had a real tough time given crowd restrictions across a range of events. WCC should look at scheduling events to support local musicians, be that Lake Pertobe, Civic Green or Flagstaff Hill for a summer twilight series.

Local food and alcohol events – again, we have great local boutique food and alcohol businesses, let us use it as a tourist card and show off what Warrnambool has to offer.

Do you have any ideas on where the council could cut costs, if necessary, to keep rates at the state cap?

I won’t make any bold claims around this one until I better understand the financials. However, I do think there will be multiple areas for efficiencies to be realised; one area is within the Executive group. Given the number of currently un-filled roles, it is highly likely that these duties could be re-distributed, and some delegation levels changed.

The main thing is that a reduction in services offered should not be considered.

Preferences will decide who is elected to the council. Are you planning to preference most highly new candidates, exisiting candidates or you won’t be putting forward preferences:

I will be looking to preference new candidates; I think it is critical that there is a changing of the guard. New faces, and new blood, is what is needed.

There is significant disdain within the community on what has been happening, and this reputation needs to be repaired.

If you were elected, what ways – if any – would you keep residents and ratepayers informed as an individual councillor?

Maintain a social media presence to help people understand the inner workings of the council.

Make myself available for community events if/when needed.

Be a visible and active member of the community.

If you were elected, what would you have liked to have achieved at the end of your four-year term?

Improved the reputation of the council amongst the community.

Increase both the transparency and governance around decision making within the council, measurable by a genuine change in culture in particular within the executive group, who can then drive it through the organisation.

Achieved internal efficiencies that improve the operation of the organisation, better use of funds that ensure that increases above the rate are never required again.

Revamp of Flagstaff Hill, increase patronage of tourists and locals by looking at better ways to use the grounds for markets/food events/live music. Attract school-groups/camps to the area by linking with Tower Hill, The Maremma project etc. to create an immersive experience.

Creating Warrnambool's first-ever All Abilities Music Festival. I'd love to work with someone like Dylan Alcott (a leader and change champion for disability rights and inclusion) and local advocates such as The Gillin Boys Foundation, Tom Richardson and Kylie Thulborn. They continue to create a more inclusive Warrnambool. The All Abilities Choir shows the need for more to be done in this area.

Are you a member of any political party? If so, which one?

I have no alignments to any political movement or party.

In the past two years, have you been a member of any local club, organisation or association?

Nestles Cricket Club

Closing thoughts or ask and answer your own question here:

When voting, I would like people to consider me as a fresh face, not only for my vision and ideas but because I am invested in Warrnambool. Not as a business owner, but as a father of two little girls who wants Warrnambool to be the best it can be. Economically and sustainably, because the decisions this council make now and, the way it is governed does have a flow-on effect.

The right mix of people is needed to guide us now and into the future. That mix of people does not belong to just one organisation or club or faction of the community. It needs to be a diverse representation of the people they stand for.

You can find Matt's candidate Facebook page here.

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