

Council Policy

Policy Title:	Business Friendly Policy
Responsibility:	Chief Executive
First Adopted:	26 April 2017
Review Frequency:	Three yearly, or as otherwise required
Last Reviewed:	26 April 2017
Next Review Due:	26 April 2020
Doc No	700198

File No P50-0047



1 Policy Objectives

- 1.1 This policy sets out Ruapehu District Council's (Council's) commitment to supporting new and existing local businesses. It is one of the actions that will contribute to the *Business Development Support* outcome of Council's "Growing Ruapehu: Economic Development Strategy 2015-25.
- 1.2 Other Council documents that inform this policy are:
 - (a) Growing Ruapehu: Economic Development Strategy
 - (b) Ruapehu District Council's Long Term Plan

2 Definitions

- 2.1 Business – all forms of commercial activity.
- 2.2 Business Friendly – "Explicit attempts by local government and their partners (including central government) to reduce the regulatory and non-regulatory barriers, costs, risks, uncertainties in all forms of commercial activity to stimulate and support local business growth, local business retention and the attraction of new business to the local area."¹
- 2.3 Council Officer – Any employee, elected member or other person acting as a representative of Ruapehu District Council. This includes contractors.

3 Principles

- 3.1 "Business friendliness" is not a "value added" or an "optional extra" provided for customers when dealing with Council. It must be an integral aspect of the daily mindset and activity for all Council officers.
- 3.2 The following principles for being business friendly are set out in Local Government New Zealand's *Business Friendly Councils* guidance document² and have been incorporated into *Growing Ruapehu 2015-25*, Council's economic development strategy:
 - (a) Build excellent relationships and partnerships
 - (b) Identify local challenges and local business needs - context matters
 - (c) Provide certainty and clarity for business decision-making
 - (d) Make every interaction count

¹ *Business Friendly Councils, Guidelines and Case Studies from New Zealand's Core Cities*, LGNZ, 2014.

² *Ibid.*

- (e) Be proactive and look for opportunities to support businesses
- (f) Respond rapidly and flexibly to business after major emergencies

3.3 Keeping in mind that authentic economic development seeks to improve the quality of life for the whole community, a business friendly approach must be implemented in such a way as to allow consistency with social wellbeing. That is to say that Council's support of business development must not disadvantage vulnerable members of the community.

4 Background

- 4.1 *Growing Ruapehu 2015-2025* identified that “the need for Council to become more ‘business friendly’ was one of the common recurring themes” of the submissions to the Long Term Plan 2015-25 (page 32). This indicates a strongly felt need within the existing local business community to be more supported and empowered by their Council to innovate and flourish as businesses.
- 4.2 *Growing Ruapehu 2015-2025* also states that “the [economic development] goal is to generate economic activity by attracting businesses to locate and to operate in our communities...The businesses sought are the ones that will create the most economic benefits for Ruapehu and be sustainable” (page 19).
- 4.3 During October 2015 public meetings were held with local business owners in Taumarunui, National Park and Ohakune in order to hear from them how they felt Council could support them better. Three main concerns emerged from those meetings:
- (a) The desire for better communication to businesses from Council
 - (b) The desire for Council to “cut the red tape”
 - (c) The desire for Council to advocate to Central Government for local businesses

Policy Statement

5.1 For a coherent business friendly approach, Council must have an intentional, multi-faceted approach with both an internal focus and an external focus. The internal focus is about fostering a business friendly Council culture, supported by policies and processes. The external focus is about how Council relates to the business community.

5.2 INTERNAL FOCUS

5.2.1 **Culture** [*Principles 3.2(a)(c)(d)(e)*]

A business friendly approach “requires a ‘whole of organisation culture’ for business friendly behaviours to become established, understood and part of daily practice”. This “Business Culture” will be established in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Business Friendly Councils, Guidelines and Case Studies from New Zealand’s Core Cities*, LGNZ, 2014, pg. 13.

5.2.2 Examples of business friendly culture within Council may include (but are not limited to):

- (a) Debriefs on vertical processes to discover lessons learnt with all staff involved
- (b) Formally seeking feedback from customers who have had prolonged or complicated business with council
- (c) Investing time and resources in training

- (d) Focus groups including business representatives
- (e) Initiating contact time between staff and business customers on rule changes and Council's approach. This may be on an individual or group basis
- (f) Acknowledge individual staff members who demonstrate an excellent business friendly manner
- (g) Celebrate business friendly successes

5.2.3 Reducing the "red tape" [Principles 3.2(b)(c)(e)]

Council is bound by statutory obligations, the effect of which is passed on to the local community. This involves processes, deadlines, costs and sometimes penalties. While compliance with these statutory obligations must be maintained, Council will also actively pursue the reduction of regulatory and non-regulatory barriers, costs, risks, uncertainties in all forms of commercial activity to stimulate and support;

- (a) New local businesses
- (b) Local business growth
- (b) Local business retention
- (c) The attraction of new business

5.2.4 While Council encourages staff to strive for project cohesion and continuity with business customers, this policy does not condone Council or its officers exempting any business customer from complying with all legislative requirements.

5.2.5 Policies and processes [Principles 3.2(c)]

Council will ensure its policies and procedures are consistent and supportive of the business friendly principles outlined in 3.2.

5.2.6 Council will ensure Council's Procurement Strategy and processes adopt a positive weighting for local suppliers/businesses who have invested in the Ruapehu community that is balanced with the need to reduce expenditure and the rates burden.

5.3 EXTERNAL FOCUS

5.3.1 Relationship [Principles 3.2(a)(d)(e)(f)]

Council has a case management approach to facilitate new investment in business.

5.3.2 Council will be proactive and positive in its support and facilitation of business development, both of existing businesses and start-ups.

5.3.3 Communication [Principles 3.2(c)(e)(f)]

Council communicates with established and prospective business owners in order to increase a sense of partnership between Council and the business community. This may be done through;

- (a) The provision of local economic information on the Council website
- (b) A targeted business communication database
- (c) Intentionally including the Ruapehu business community in public consultation and communication processes
- (d) Digital interface mechanisms such as the Council website, targeted webpages and social media, which facilitate two way communication and ease processes for the customer, eg. forms, facts, functions and boundaries
- (e) Providing clear guidance and an understanding of the true cost for all phases of the process

- (f) A commitment to “closing the communication loop” with the customer for every phase of the process

5.3.4 Advocacy and Support [*Principles 3.2(b)(e)*]

Council will support small-medium enterprises through advocacy to Central Government.
Council will promote the NZ Business Mentoring programme.
Resources for start-up and existing businesses wanting to develop their web presence

5.3.5 Incentives [*Principle 3.2(e)*]

Council may provide appropriate incentives for existing and start-up businesses on a case- by-case basis.

Annotations

Date	Description
26 April 2017	Policy adopted by Council (adoption report doc 653016).
September 2018	Customer Services Strategy removed from 1.2.