

Time to celebrate local business

It's less than a month now until the ANZ Business of the Year Awards gala dinner on 20 February.

Organisers say that ticket sales for the R18, black-tie event are already ahead of previous years, and they are expecting more than 300 guests.

Ashburton District Mayor Liz McMillan says that all business owners are invited to go along, not just finalists.

"It's a great opportunity to celebrate, get inspired and do some networking with fellow business owners.

"Since these awards began in 2021, lots of local organisations have done well out of being recognised, and the contacts they have made.

"We're proud to be backing our local companies, whether they're big or small, new or experienced, and this event recognises the whole range."

The awards gala dinner will be held at the Ashburton Aviation Museum's superhangar beginning at 6pm on 20 February. The aviation museum was a tourism award winner in 2022.

After receiving a glass of bubbles on arrival at the 2026 gala, guests can expect a special three-course dinner prepared by chef Chanaka Jayabahu of ARC Culinary Cruise, entertainment and a cashless bar.



The awards attracted 116 entrants which were shortlisted by judges to 50 finalists across 15 categories.

The judges were former mayor Neil Brown, Jason McCrae from Business Canterbury, Chantelle Quinn of the Braided Rivers Community Trust, and Willie Murney of Murney Trust.

They said there was a consistency across all applications and entrants showed passion for what they do, who they serve, and the wider Mid Canterbury community.

The judges also said the entrants impressed them with in-depth business knowledge and insights.

Category winners are eligible for the supreme business excellence award, which will be decided by Mayor Liz McMillan.

Event partners for 2026 are ANZ, ANZCO Foods, Abbott Insurance Brokers, Canstaff, Catalyst Performance Agronomy, Crest Clean, Croys, Experience Mid Canterbury, Fox Peak Dairy, Mt Hutt, Naylor Love, New Zealand Bed Company, Spark, Talley's, Tavendale + Partners.

Tickets are available from businessoftheyear.nz

Council is partnering with Ri Ra Events to host the awards.

Get ready for the 2026 grant funding round

Are you involved in a group or project that could benefit from a funding boost from Council?

We're gearing up for the annual grants process and will be accepting applications across all categories from 1 March - so start thinking about your application now.

There are nine grant categories, plus funds from Sport New Zealand Travel Fund and the Creative Communities Scheme to

distribute. You can find more information and application forms on our website, ashburtondc.govt.nz/grants.

Categories include:

- Community Project Grant - Funding for projects that maintain or enhance our residents' quality of life.
- Community Agency Grants - Helping with operational costs.
- Community Event Grant
- Community Infrastructure Grant
- School Holiday Programme Grant
- Heritage Grant
- Biodiversity Grant
- Community Library Grant
- Trail Maintenance Fund.

Cr Phill Everest

Challenges of Local Government change

Well, I'm just over two months into my role as your Councillor for the Eastern ward, a position I took on to give something back to our great community.

The job has grown significantly since our election, with changes and proposed changes to local and regional government.

Early this year Council will be working on the 2026/27 budget. The Government has asked Councils to keep to our core business, and from 2029 is considering legislating a maximum rate increase of 2-4%, for specific council expenditure items.

A quick look on Dr Google and I note that our long-term inflation rate averages 5.4% - a high in recent years of 18.9% in 1987 and low of 0.29% in 2015.

This target by the Government will look to place some significant challenges on Council. The easy solution is to stop inflation of all costs, but we don't control that.

Option two is to reduce the level of service provided by Council, which many would be unhappy with.

On a more positive note, the proposed Regional Government (Ecan) reforms and a review of the Resource Management Act could provide an

enabling and sustainable future for our community. The execution of existing policies by Ecan seems to restrict innovation and may frequently impede positive initiatives from being undertaken.

A local Valetta farmer has told me there is a lack of understanding by Ecan about compliance of land use consent, but surely if an A audit on a land use consent doesn't indicate compliance to a farm environment plan, then what does?

For two years, the Ashburton Lakes Catchment Group has been wanting to develop a small, constructed wetland (less than 2300 m² - about the size of

three sections in town) to see how much they can improve water quality in the catchment.

Ecan want five or six consents to allow the wetland construction, with an estimated cost of \$50,000-\$80,000. The total construction, planting and monitoring cost has been budgeted at \$25,000-\$30,000 (depending on consenting requirements).

Where is the sense in requiring expensive consents for an activity that will enhance environmental and biodiversity outcomes?



SHORT AND SWEET

RESTRICTIONS OFF

Council has lifted water restrictions for households and businesses connected to its community supplies. Group Manager of Infrastructure Neil McCann said drinking water consumption had declined over the past few weeks because of cooler temperatures and more rain was in the forecast. Council will be keeping a close eye on water use at all plants and will review the situation if conditions change significantly.

DOGGIE SPEAK

Speak up now if you want to help us review our dog control policy and bylaw. We're running an online survey until 1 February and feedback will help inform potential changes to our dog rules - so far 300 people have taken the survey, and they're all in with a chance to win a \$100 Prezzy voucher. There'll be a chance for formal consultation later in the year, but right now we're checking in so see if our dog rules are working and that we're providing the right facilities.

STAY IN THE KNOW WITH TXT ALERTS

Are you subscribed to the Council's 4196 text system? It's the easiest way to receive important alerts for your area and it's free. Text your postcode to 4196 to subscribe.

Extra funds for roads

Council will rehabilitate another section of Fairfield Road and upgrade the Oak Grove roundabout after receiving additional funding from NZ Transport Agency.

Infrastructure Group Manager Neil McCann said the national transport agency had increased the budget for its subsidised work programme in the Ashburton District by \$2.5 million this financial year.

This will mean that Council can claim a subsidy for the \$1m of reseals and \$0.5m of unsealed maintenance metalling budgeted as unsubsidised. It also allows the proposed additional sealed road rehabilitation to be completed.

"Council's share of that extra work is \$1.225m, and we can meet that from our



existing unsubsidised roading budget. We learned of the extra funding just before Christmas, so now we're able to make more improvements."

Mr McCann said Council was pleased that NZTA recognised the need for work on the network and had the resources to get the work done within the next few months.

Want to start your own business?

Council is hosting a free two-day workshop next month, aimed at helping people aged 18-30 learn more about how to start and run a business.

The King's Trust Enterprise Workshop is being supported by the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs, which is all about helping young people into jobs. Ashburton Mayor Liz McMillan is one of 17 mayors supporting the national taskforce and she will open the workshop on Wednesday 4 February.

So, if you've got an idea for an app or a new service, but don't know how to take the next step, then register and come along to the Ashburton Library on 4 and 5 February - you'll gain practical business skills, explore enterprise fundamentals and connect with like-minded people.

After completing the workshop, you'll have access to a 10-week accelerator course, mentoring and networking opportunities, and potential to access funding for your business.

The workshop is one of a series being run by the King's Trust, and the Ashburton event will include presentations by local entrepreneurs like Harriet Hill, of Hemprino. Harriet is the sales and marketing director and merino wool grown on her family farm in the Rakaia Gorge is blended with hemp to make clothing that is natural, beautiful and sustainable.

There'll be a chance to ask questions about Hemprino's journey from concept to production.

Organisers say the enterprise workshop is geared to those aged 18-30, and is one of two being run in the South Island. People can register via, kingstrust.org.nz

The workshop is also supported by the Minister of Youth James Meager.

COUNCIL OFFICE

2 Baring Square East
Mon, Tue, Wed & Fri 8.30am-5pm
Thursday 9am-5pm

ASHBURTON LIBRARY

2 Baring Square East, Ashburton 7700
Mon & Fri 8.30am-6pm, Tue-Thu 8.30am-8pm
Sat & Sun 10am-4pm

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council meetings are held in Hine Paaka, the Council Chamber, unless otherwise stated; agendas are online at ashburtondc.govt.nz

Friday 23 January, **Council workshop on Local Government Reforms**, 10.45am

Monday 26 January, **Methven Community Board**, 9am at Mt Hutt Memorial Hall

Wednesday 28 January, **Activity Briefings**, 9am (livestreamed)

Wednesday 28 January, **Bylaws workshop**, 1.30pm

Tuesday 3 February, **Council workshop on Draft Annual Plan**, 10.45am

Wednesday 4 February, **Council Agencies six-month reports**, 9.30am (livestreamed)

Wednesday 4 February, **Council meeting**, 1pm (livestreamed)

Tuesday 10 February, **Council workshop on Draft Annual Plan**, 9.30am

Wednesday 11 February, **Three Waters Committee**, 10am (livestreamed)

Wednesday 11 February, **Audit, Risk, & Finance Committee**, 1pm (livestreamed)

Tuesday 17 February, **Road Safety Co-ordinating Committee**, 9.30am, Wakanui Room

Tuesday 17 February, **Biodiversity Advisory Group**, 1pm, Wakanui Room

Wednesday 18 February, **Council workshop on Revenue & Finance Policy**, 9.30am

Tuesday 24 February, **Council workshop on Development Contributions**, 1.30pm

ROADING NOTICES

Chalmers Avenue - Closed at the Ashburton River end until 30 January while water mains are installed.

Thompsons Track - Closed between Winchmore Lauriston Road and Pole Road, and Braemar Lauriston Road at Thompsons Track intersection until 31 March, so Fulton Hogan can do heavy road maintenance on behalf of Council. Detours in place. Resident access remains.

Thompsons Track - Closed between Blands Road and Dip Road until 27 January while ACL carries out road maintenance for Council. Detours in place. Resident access remains.

Mayfield Valetta Road - Closed between Anama Valetta Road and Tinwald Westerfield Mayfield Road until 28 February, so Fulton Hogan can do heavy road maintenance on behalf of Council. Detours in place. Resident access remains.

Winters Road - Closed between Hamptons Road and Buckleys Road from until 3 February while Tarbotton Land & Civil install a stock underpass under Winters Road.

Ealing Montalto Road - Closed between Shepherds Bush Road and Ruapuna School Road until 27 February while Grant Hood Contracting carries out road maintenance for Council. Detours in place.

Fairfield Road - Closed between Company Road and Singletree Road from 19 January to 31 March, while Fulton Hogan carries out heavy road maintenance for Council.

Elizabeth Avenue (Rakaia) - Closed from Burrowes Road to Tancred Street from 19 January to 27 February, while Rooney Earthmoving installs water pipes for Council. Access for residents remains.

Spaxton Street - Closed in parts (including Lilley Place and Macphail Place) until 27 February while Rooney Earthmoving installs water mains for Council.

Tancred Street - Closed in places between Cass Street and Chalmers Avenue until 5 February while Tru-Line Civil installs new wastewater pipes.

Albert Street - One-way closures are in place on Albert Street until 16 February, while ACL installs services for a private development. No entry from Albert Street to Trevors Road, no entry from Trevors Road to Albert Street.

SH1 at Longbeach Road intersection (NZTA): Road reconstruction from 26 January to 18 March. Expect speed restrictions and delays of up to 10 minutes. This reconstruction work is weather dependent and may be rescheduled at short notice.

Full details of local road closures are on our website, ashburtondc.govt.nz

TRIENNIAL MEETINGS FOR RESERVE & HALL BOARDS

Our hall boards, reserve boards and domain boards are holding their triennial meetings and looking for new members.

- 27 January - **Highbank Reserve Board** - 7.30pm, Highbank hall
- 24 February - **Ealing Reserve Board** - 7pm, Ealing hall.