

Twelve past mayors of Ringwood took part in a forum to review the city's performance, and they were not impressed. JANINE JONES reports.

City under scrutiny

WARRING Ringwood councillors came under attack from a different quarter last week as 12 former mayors gathered to assess the progress of the city.

The mayors, with collective experience of more than a century in local government, condemned the performance and behavior of the current council, claiming that it was ruled by the political agendas of individuals rather than service to the community.

The mayors claimed councillors lacked respect for each other, council officers and ratepayers.

Some were also critical of what they claimed was a lack of progress on certain initiatives planned by previous councils.

Convened by sitting mayor, Cr Greg Adkins, the mayoral forum aimed to assess council's achievements to date and carve a vision for the future of Ringwood.

Former mayors at the forum were Jack McRae, Gerald Smart, Lawrie Lawrenson, Alan Henderson, Neil Hamilton, Pat Gotlib, Frank Corr, Bill Wilkins, John Caffyn, Lillian Rosewarne, Betty Milton and Cr Robin Gardini.

The mayors were asked to respond to a series of points raised by Cr Adkins.

The image of council — the public's view:

John Caffyn, mayor from 1987/88: "Community respect for council is sliding to the point where they are considered rabble."

"I see more points of order in one night of council than there were in 4½ years I was here."

"I wonder if councillors have the ability to recognise there are certain formalities that must be addressed and work towards that."

Cr Robin Gardini, mayor in 1984/85 and 1988/89 and current member of sitting council: "There should be the respect for people to say what they feel about things."

"You are here to vote on your own conscience and there shouldn't be any recriminations on whether you vote one way or another."

Lawrie Lawrenson, mayor in 1977/78: "The attitude of councillors everywhere now seems to be a selfish approach."

"I have lived in two other cities and the attitude has become very, very selfish."

Pat Gotlib, mayor in 1979/80 and 1982/83 and the first woman to be elected mayor twice in Ringwood: "There seems to be too much of a party-hat philosophy instead of everybody working as a team."

"The other spheres of govern-



RINGWOOD mayor Greg Adkins (right) had a lot to learn when confronted by the city's former mayors (clockwise from right) Jack McRae, Lillian Rosewarne, Pat Gotlib, Gerald Smart, Betty Milton, Lawrie Lawrenson, Alan Henderson, Frank Corr, John Caffyn, Bill Wilkins, Neil Hamilton, Robin Gardini and Max Williams. Picture: CHRIS ROSTRON.

ment are split down the middle but local government isn't supposed to be like that."

Jack McRae, mayor in 1970/71: "We never had political biases in council."

"Although we had our own political opinions we didn't bring them in and have little sub-committee meetings."

"It was not one party fighting against another. There was no party politics in council and we didn't think it was required."

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"There is an attitude that once Myers is developed everything else should be small."

"There seems to be a desire in a section of the community to denigrate, disrupt and destroy not only the council but the plans for this district."

Gerald Smart, mayor in 1973/74 and 1976/77: "Plans to make Ringwood a mini central business district have started to stutter."

"... what we seem to be getting is second rate bargain basement places that are terrible. There is an attitude that once Myers is developed everything else should be small."

— Betty Milton

Where is Ringwood heading? What does the future hold?

Betty Milton, mayor in 1990/91: "We seem to be getting diminishing plans. We have lost the office park, we have lost plans for the offices on Patterson Cheney site and Billy Guyatts."

"And what we seem to be getting

"Ringwood needs a reasonable road scheme. It is no longer a rural centre, it is unfortunately part of the creeping monster that is the city of Melbourne and it has come out to engulf it."

"The days of trees and birds, etc. are finished."

Council can be proud of its past achievements. Council's vision for the future.

Bill Wilkins, mayor in 1985/86: "Maybe the concept of a really big business centre is a little bit big for Ringwood in its present size."

"Areas around us have the birds and the bees so maybe we could look at widening our boundaries a little bit."

Cr Lillian Rosewarne, mayor in 1986/87 and 1988/89: "Most of the things in town were all done around 1986/87. Since then we have achieved the few odd sporting facilities but nothing major."

"In the next five years there should be more facilities coming, more important projects finished. I hope the council can pick up where it was and work for the good and the betterment of Ringwood."

Frank Corr, mayor in 1980/81 and 1983/84: "The problems started in 1987/88 with the Garden Street decision when council yielded to pressure from a minority group in the community."

"It's now grown to the point where these groups are represented on council."

"Council is responding too much to pressure groups and it's one problem that's going to take a lot of stopping."