



MINUTES
of the
SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL
held on
WEDNESDAY 9 JULY 2014
in the
ALEXANDRA COUNCIL CHAMBERS
commencing at
6.00 pm

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1. PRAYER, RECONCILIATION STATEMENT & OATH

The meeting was opened with Prayer, reading of the Reconciliation Statement and Oath.

2. APOLOGIES AND REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

TRIM: SF/306

No apologies or requests for leave of absence.

Present:

Crs M Rae (Chair), A Derwent, C Challen, J Kennedy, B Magner, C Ruhr, J Walsh

In attendance:

Chief Executive Officer: Margaret Abbey

General Manager Corporate and Community Services: Michael Chesworth

General Manager Infrastructure and Development Services: Tamara Johnson

Manager Business Services: Andrew Bond

Manager Communications Library & Customer Service: Jacqui Rabel

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST OR CONFLICT OF INTEREST

TRIM: SF/783

The following Councillors declared a conflict of interest:

Cr C Challen an interest in Item 5

Cr J Kennedy an interest in Item 5

Cr J Walsh an indirect interest in Item 5

4. OPEN FORUM

TRIM: SF/130

There were no attendees at the Open Forum session.

Cr J Walsh, Cr C Challen and Cr J Kennedy, having disclosed a conflict of interest in Item 5, left the meeting before consideration of Item 5 at 6.02 pm.

5. ADOPTION OF THE 2014-2015 BUDGET

TRIM: 15/15350

(Refer Encl 5 – Draft 2014-2015 Budget)

Purpose:

This report provides an opportunity for Council to adopt the 2014-2015 Budget.

Recommendation:

That having given notice under Section 129 of the *Local Government Act 1989* and invited and considered submissions under Section 223 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the Council hereby resolves:

1. That the 2014-2015 Budget be adopted under Section 130 as generally exhibited and as attached at *Enclosure 5*.
2. That responses to issues contained within the two (2) submissions received, in respect of the draft 2014-2015 Budget, be issued by the Manager Business Services.
3. That the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to give public notice of this decision to adopt the 2014-2015 Budget, in accordance with Section 130(2) of the *Local Government Act 1989*.
4. To confirm the differential rates as detailed in the Budget document per *Enclosure 5*.
5. That the rates officers of Council be authorised to levy and recover the differential rates so declared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989*.
6. That Council note the due dates for instalments will be as follows:
 - 30 September 2014
 - 30 November 2014
 - 28 February 2015
 - 31 May 2015

Background:

Council endorsed the Draft 2014-2015 Budget for public consultation at a Special Meeting on 30 April 2014. Consultation in accordance with Section 127 of the *Local Government Act 1989* has taken place. The Budget document was placed on public exhibition at all Council offices, on Council's website and was advertised in the local newspapers in accordance with the Council resolution.

Council Plan/Strategies:

The Budget is part of the Council Plan, budget and annual report process.

Legal/Policy Issues:

The adoption of the Budget is a statutory requirement of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

Financial/Resources/Risk

Adoption of the 2014-2015 Budget is an essential part of strong corporate governance.

Discussion:

A total of two (2) submissions were received in relation to the Draft 2014-2015 Budget.

The general tenor of the budget submissions received can be summarised as follows and comments are provided to inform Council's consideration of the budget's content:

Summary of Submissions:**Submitter 1**

- To assist in promoting employment options and local economic development, has Council given any thought to approaching the RMIT Infrastructure department, to seek their ideas regarding local industry strategies? Some students may have ideas regarding future options that are different to more established ideas by people “entrenched in their profession”.
- Has Council given any thought to develop a town solar plant in Yea that would both support the local community and potentially generate a profit by selling energy back into the grid?
- Council’s plans to upgrade the swimming pool facilities at Yea are noted and well received. Is a kiosk included in the upgrade plans as this could provide a surplus of funds to Council if it can generate a profit?

Comment – Council has an existing relationship with RMIT to explore economic development initiatives with both local and international students and government organisations. Further opportunities will continue to be explored in 2014-15.

A town solar plant in Yea is not presently on the agenda for Council’s infrastructure planning. Council is committed to focusing its expenditure on the renewal and maintenance of the large infrastructure network under its control, with less of a focus on new asset construction. Council is currently undertaking works to reduce its own energy consumption, including involvement in a project to retrofit streetlights to more energy efficient alternatives.

The Council’s plans to upgrade the swimming pool facilities at Yea do include an upgrade of the kiosk. These works are to be undertaken after the 2014-15 pool season.

Submitter 2

- Proposal for increased financial assistance from Council to help support the Visitor Information Centre in Alexandra (“Alexandra VIC”) – Council’s current contribution of \$3,500 is acknowledged.
- It is estimated that the Alexandra VIC requires approximately \$15,000 in additional revenue to continue to provide a “reasonable level of services” to the residents of and visitors to Alexandra.
- The Alexandra VIC is presently running at a loss. Alexandra VIC is proposing a range of measures to assist in minimising costs, such as increasing their volunteer pool, reducing opening hours in non-peak times and increasing fund raising activities.
- A proposed shared funding model to assist in meeting the costs of the Alexandra VIC is proposed by the Alexandra Tourism & Trading Association (“ATTA”) to cover the costs of the Alexandra VIC, by way of a \$7,500 contribution each from both Council and the ATTA.
- The ATTA are presently meeting the full shortfall in operational costs of the Alexandra VIC, and as a result has limited funds left to support growth, economic development and tourism initiatives.
- If the proposed shared funding model is agreed to by Council, the ATTA would utilise the \$7,500 available to them to fund the following initiatives:
 - Increased advertising in metropolitan and regional media to promote Alexandra and the district as a tourism destination (\$3,500);

- Production of an ATTA brochure to promote ATTA members to visitors (\$1,200). This will also help ATTA increase membership;
- Increased profile of the www.alexandratourism.com through Google-advertisement paid searches (\$300);
- Street entertainment at selected times during the year to assist tourism development (\$1,000); and
- Entertainment and activities for the Great Victorian Bike Ride in December 2014 to assist tourism development and promotion of the Rail Trail (\$1,500).

Comment – Whilst recognising the financial challenges facing the operation of the Alexandra VIC, Council is not prepared to increase its funding under the proposed shared funding model at this point in time.

Council officers will continue to work with members of the ATTA and the Alexandra VIC to explore options that may be available, inclusive of any grant funding opportunities that may exist in the future.

Council would also encourage the VIC to look at opportunities to reduce its ongoing expenditure.

Cr Walsh alerted Councillors to the minutes of the Yea Saleyards Committee of Management held on 8 April 2014 where the Committee has adopted a proposal for a reduction in scanning fees at Yea Saleyards from \$2.50 to \$2.20 per head.

Comment – Council recognises the request from the Yea Saleyards Committee of Management but will keep fees at the \$2.50 per head level for the 2014/15 financial year in order to ensure the funding of future infrastructure projects related to the saleyards, and to ensure that the saleyards remains a fully self-funded facility. It is also noted that costs are likely to increase during the year and that Council wishes to avoid changing fees mid year.

Consultation:

The Draft 2014-2015 Budget was advertised for public consultation and submissions in the following publications.

Newspaper / Other	Publishing Date (s)
Alexandra Standard	07-May-14
Yea Chronicle	07-May-14
Marysville Triangle	08-May-14
North Central Review	06-May-14
Website	05-May-14
Copies at Council offices: Alexandra, Kinglake, Yea and also Eildon Resource Centre & Marysville Visitor Information Centre	05-May-14

Conclusion:

Having considered submissions from ratepayers it is appropriate that Council adopt the 2014-2015 Budget.

RESOLUTION:

Cr B Magner / Cr A Derwent

That having given notice under Section 129 of the *Local Government Act 1989* and invited and considered submissions under Section 223 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the Council hereby resolves:

1. That the 2014-2015 Budget be adopted under Section 130 as generally exhibited and as attached at *Enclosure 5*.
2. That responses to issues contained within the two (2) submissions received, in respect of the draft 2014-2015 Budget, be issued by the Manager Business Services.
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CARRIED

Cr C Ruhr congratulated the Chief Executive Officer and officers for the preparation of the Budget.

Cr J Walsh, Cr C Challen and Cr J Kennedy returned to the meeting at 6.04pm.

There being no further items of Business, the Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 6.05 pm.

CONFIRMED THIS

CHAIRPERSON
