

MEETING NOTES

MEETING WITH NORTHERN AREA COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE BODIES

THURSDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 2008

Committee Rooms 1, 2 & 3, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra.

The meeting commenced at 10.05 am.

PRESENT

Russ Pigg – General Manager – Chairperson

Clr Guile – left 11.45am

Clr Ward

Clr Watson – arrived 10.50am

Bill Paterson – Director City Services and Operations – left 12.10pm

Ernie Royston – Director Strategic Planning Group – arrived 10.25am

Lachlan Harris – Media Manager – arrived 10.20am

Tom Phillips – Acting Director Finance and Corporate Services

Robert Russell – Development Manager – arrived 11.40am

Rick Gainford – Berry Alliance

Bill Pigott – Berry Alliance

John Ings – Berry Alliance

Robyn Flack – Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum

Noel Sneider – Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum

Apologies: John Gould, Ernie Dumpleton (Budgong Community Group) & Rae Jameson (Budgong Community Group).

1. Welcome and Introduction

The General Manager welcomed all participants to the meeting. The meeting was advised of John Gould's imminent retirement from Council and the appointment of Bill Paterson replacing John Wells as Director, City Services & Operations and Martin Uptis to the position of Infrastructure and Asset Manager.

2. General Manager

a) One Meeting for all CCB Executives 2009 – Major Policies, Strategies, Management Plans & Budget (*Staff*)

Council Response

Mr Pigg related the advantages of holding one meeting for all CCB Executives, in early March that would allow CCB's to have input into issues such as the Draft Management Plan and Budget at the beginning rather than forwarding submissions once the draft is complete. There was general agreement that this would be advantageous.

A template, due for return in February 2009, has been sent to all CCBs so that CCB ideas and priorities can be recorded and given to the new Councillors. This will give the Councillors an overview of the communities needs and priorities.

It was suggested by the CCBs that the form be sent to them electronically by email in addition to hard copy for their convenience. A suggestion was also raised that Council could consider investigating the option of creating a password operated internet portal in which all CCB related information could be made available.

The Berry Alliance enquired as to why the CCB meetings were separated into four groups as opposed to the three groups decided by Council ward boundaries. The General Manager advised that the current separation of CCB groups was considered to be the most efficient. Ward boundaries tend to envelope diverse areas while the current CCB group is more regional. It was also advised that the Central Area CCB grouping contained the largest number of CCBs and was therefore separated due to the length of the meetings and in order to deal with issues most specific to their region.

ACTION: GM – to send the template for CCB ideas and input electronically to all CCBs.

ACTION: IT Manager – investigate the option of setting up a password operated CCB internet portal.

b) How is Council placed if State Government is abolished (Staff)

Community Representatives

The Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum enquired as to how Council would be positioned if the State Government is abolished and whether the issue had been considered.

Council Response

Council is of the view resources would be most efficiently allocated if this matter is considered when or if it becomes a certainty. For such a proposal it is considered there would be a lengthy consultation period.

c) Meeting with Telstra on Internet Connectivity (Staff)

The General Manager advised he has met with Nick Hampson and Pat Nolan from Telstra (based in Ulladulla) in regard to Council internet connectivity and broadband matters. Mr Hampson has expressed that he is willing to meet with CCBs if they wish to discuss any particular matters regarding internet connectivity. The contact number for Nick Hampson at Telstra is 0419 296 465.

3. FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES GROUP

a) Council Investments and their Performance (Berry Alliance)

Community Representatives

The Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum enquired as to how Council was currently placed with respect to its investment portfolio and how the Leeman Brothers investment had affected Council. It was expressed that more constant investment performance updates would be appreciated.

Council Response

Mr Phillips advised the meeting that Council currently has approximately \$82-\$83 millions dollars in investments and \$29 million dollars in management funds. These funds are not threatened by

exposure other than the fluctuation of the stock market. Council has a large amount of investments in Australian Banking Institutions which are now protected by the Australian Federal Government.

With respect to Grange Securities (later taken over by Leeman Brothers), Council had \$16 million managed by Leeman Brothers which was invested into a variety of institutions including cash and international corporate organisations. The \$500,000 that was previously tied by Leeman Brothers has been paid back to Council in full with interest.

However, it is important to note that while Council's investment money is secure, it is still subject to falling interest rates which will result in less return on investments.

Regarding the request for more regular updates on the current value of Council's investments, it is advised that it will be reported more regularly to Council meetings and Committee meetings which will allow for public access to the information.

b) Increased Ranger and Police Patrols (*Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum*)

Community Response

The Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum expressed concern in relation to anti-social behaviour being experienced within the Shoalhaven Heads area, particularly around the New Year period.

A CCB also revealed the success they have received in relation to the reduction of anti-social behaviour experienced at the skate-ramp. It was discovered that by putting a sense of ownership back onto the local youth residents, incidents of graffiti and litter were reduced.

Council Response

Mr Phillips advised that Rangers Services could be requested to patrol the Shoalhaven Heads area more frequently but because of a lack of resources, Rangers priorities are focused on health and safety issues first. However, it was noted that residents should be encouraged to report crimes to the Police so that it can be duly recorded for the purpose of police resource allocation.

ACTION: F&CS – Rangers be requested to do extra patrols in the vicinity of Shoalhaven Heads.

4. CITY SERVICES & OPERATIONS GROUP

a) Recycling Bins (*Berry Alliance*)

Community Representatives

The Berry Alliance suggested that Council should consider the placement of more recycling bins in public areas to encourage residents to recycle. It was suggested that Council collect and analyse recycling statistics to pinpoint areas where public recycling bins would be viable options. The Berry Alliance offered to trial public recycling bins in Berry.

The Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum enquired as to the entry cost of delivering waste to the Council Waste Depots. As the cost of living rises, dumping on the roadside is becoming more common. It was suggested that Council consider lowering costs or making entry a free service as an investment to lower dumping compliance costs.

Council Response

Mr Paterson advised that Council has previously trialled making Council recycling bins available in public areas. During the trial it was discovered that unless the public recycling bins were continuously supervised, waste was placed in the bins and often made recycling the contents difficult.

It was suggested that Council could consider community involvement in configuring a strategy to encourage recycling.

In relation to the entry charge for Council Waste Depots, Mr Pigg advised that Council is legally required by the Local Government Act 1993 to have a contained and self-sufficient budget for waste management. If Council were to lower costs in one area of waste management, costs would have to rise in another area, such as bin service costs on Rates Notices. It was also advised that the State Waste Levy is rising and Council will have to pay higher costs.

Mr Pigg also suggested that the Shoalhaven Heads Mens Shed might like to consider investing in a community chipper to assist in green waste disposal.

b) Village Swimming Pool Operations (*Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum*)

Community Representatives

The Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum enquired as to the opening hours of Shoalhaven pools and the differences between pools at Council caravan parks. It was pointed out to the meeting that other Council's are willing to have pools unsupervised. It was also suggested that Council could consider the use of solar heating panels to aid in the reduction of heating costs.

Council Response

Mr Paterson informed the meeting that pool opening hours was dictated by operating costs and resources. However, if community groups are willing to supply trained people to supervise and run the pools, the extending of pool opening hours would be considered.

The Best Practice Guidelines for public outdoor pools provide that there should be fences surrounding the pool and lifeguard supervision at all times. Staff will never suggest that Council lower its risk profile. Council's risk management advisors and consultants have also advised that we should not lower our safety standards or Council could be at risk from litigation.

With unsupervised outdoor pools, there is also a risk of contamination from hazardous materials such as needles and broken glass.

Mr Paterson also advised that Council will consider working with the community to consider what we can put into place to assist Council in extending pool opening hours. It was suggested that if community groups were prepared to provide adequately trained community members to supervise and assist in operating the pools, the hours could possibly be extended accordingly.

It was also advised that Council will research why other Council's open their pools and leave themselves open to more risk.

With respect to the differences between Council public pools and caravan park pools, it comes down to being prepared to take the risk.

c) Staff Reporting of Maintenance Issues (*Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum*)

Community Representatives

The Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum enquired as to whether Council encouraged all staff members to actively report any maintenance issues as they are noticed. It was recommended that Council promote this idea in the next staff newsletter.

Council Response

Mr Paterson advised that Council has both formal and informal approaches to detecting maintenance issues. The formal means is carried out by routine maintenance investigations by staff members. The informal approach entails staff reporting problems as they are noticed. When a maintenance issue is detected by either formal or informal means, the defect is placed in a program which is prioritised by risk.

The General Manager informed the CCBs that Council would encourage all staff to report any maintenance issues that are noticed, within the next staff newsletter.

The meeting was advised that Council's internet site currently facilitates the reporting of maintenance items through its 'Complaints, Compliments and Comments' section. Within this section is a link to a maintenance request form which can be submitted electronically.

ACTION: GM – Encourage staff to report any maintenance issues if they are noticed, within a staff newsletter.

5. STRATEGIC PLANNING GROUP

a) Bicycle Lanes/Paths/Tracks and PAMP Program (*Berry Alliance*)

Community Representation

The CCBs enquired as to Council's over-all Policy for footpaths, bicycle lanes and tracks. It was suggested that Council's Pedestrian and Mobility Plan (PAMP) should be allocated with more funding and given a higher priority and enquired as to why Council funded brick footpaths which need to be constantly upgraded.

A question was raised in regard to the local gaol inmates and whether they would be involved in programs that assisted the community.

Council Response

Mr Royston informed the meeting that PAMP is a rolling three year program which is reviewed annually. Council is currently working towards the 2008/09 PAMP.

Mr Pigg advised that in order for Council to allocate more money to the PAMP budget, the funds would need to be reduced elsewhere.

Clr Watson added that when Council prepares a budget, priorities can come up unexpectedly and there is a trade-off between funding what Council wants against what Council needs.

Community groups are encouraged to participate in programs funded by Council to carry out works for footpaths in their vicinity, such as the recent footpath at Kangaroo Valley. In these situations, the community group can often achieve more for the same cost and elevate the priority level.

With respect to the matter of brick footpaths, it was advised that Council is phasing out brick footpaths, other than when final infill is still appropriate.

Clr Watson suggested that it would be prudent to set aside some money which could be doubled with employment grants.

b) Parking vs People and Parks (*Berry Alliance*)

Community Representation

A CCB expressed concern that Council car parks are taking over green space, in particular, the Princess Street, Berry car park where concerns were raised about mixing toddlers and vehicles.

It was requested that the Traffic Section to inspect Berry on the day of the markets to investigate car parking.

It was also suggested that Council could consider placing parking map signage to direct visitors to the parking areas.

Council Response

Council will investigate.

ACTION: SPG – Traffic Section to investigate the possibility of inspection of car parking in Berry on the day of the markets.

c) Increased Road Funding (*Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum*)

Community Representation

A CCB enquired as to the extent of road sealing that has occurred on Main Road 92.

Council Response

Mr Paterson advised the meeting that Main Road 92 is currently sealed up to Tianjara. The project is going well and expected to be finished early next calendar year however, will have a shortfall of \$15 million leaving approximately 12km unsealed. Council has made an application to the Federal Government to fund the shortfall.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

a) DA Approval Numbers (*Berry Alliance*)

Community Representatives

The Berry Alliance expressed concern over the number of roadside advertisements in the Berry vicinity. Often these signs, particularly Real Estate signage, were creating safety hazards by blocking

the sight distance at intersections. It was requested that Council review its Policy and ensure that the matter of illegal signage is policed.

Mr Gainford read from a letter as follows:

“Suggest that Council introduce a policy of providing a DA approval number on a sticker or a small plaque and require it to be attached to all signs in the Shoalhaven that require a DA.

Secondly, we know that the current policy allows a number of signs (real estate signs in particular) that do not require a DA and we ask that the policy of policing these and when they should be removed, be reviewed with a view to reducing the number of advertising signs and how long they are left up. This would reduce the visual pollution created. For example, to allow real estate signs to be left up until settlement or longer is too long. We believe that they should be removed 7 or 14 days after contract exchange. The result as the policy currently stands is that the signs are simply used as advertising for the real estate agency from exchange of contracts until final settlement with no other obvious purpose. Finally, the question of directional signs for real estate for sale that appear on the Highway and other major roads should be reviewed and policed. The size and content on these signs is getting bigger and does not comply with the current policy at all. We give as a good example the proliferation of large billboard signs that contain full marketing details of the properties for sale or auction on the corner of Strongs Road and the Princes Highway.”

It was also suggested that Council consider placing Development Application (DA) approval numbers on approved signage to make distinguishing between approved and illegal signage easier.

Council Response

Mr Russell advised that section 4.2, page 31 of the Signage Strategy provides that DA numbers and approval dates should be placed on approved signage located on public footpaths. However, the matter will be reinforced to staff and applicants.

Development Services staff inspect Berry at least once a year to ensure signage compliance.

Unauthorised signage within road reserves is a Ranger Services issue and the letter in question will be referred to Ranger Services however, will be subject to available resources. Development Services will assist by sending letters to Real Estate agents and other groups reminding them of their obligations in relation to signage. The timing of the enforcement measures by Ranger Services and the sending of letters to Real Estate agencies needs to be coordinated in order to achieve maximum benefit.

Mr Pigg asked for input from the CCBs as to what position Council should take in regard to signage compliance – a soft or a tough approach. This issue requires engagement with the Community and feedback as to how important it is so it can be considered before the next financial year’s budget. It was suggested that this information be entered into the templates recently sent to all CCBs.

Mr Pigg advised that Council does not have the resources to handle all problems and thus allocates its resources by prioritising in terms of risk to public health, safety and environmental damage.

ACTION: F&CS – Information on intersections with bad signage problems mentioned in the meetings, be referred to Ranger Services for action.

7. GENERAL BUSINESS

The draft LEP

The draft LEP is currently with the Department of Planning (DoP) for review. The document has been with the DoP for approximately two months and Council is enquiring on a regular basis in regards to when we will receive the document back.

Once the LEP is approved for exhibition and Council has met with the DoP if necessary, the document will be placed on exhibition for public consultation. This is not expected to occur before Christmas. A comprehensive exhibition process is proposed.

Signage at Grand Pacific Drive

A CCB enquired as to the disappearance of a sign on Grand Pacific Drive advising travellers of how many kilometres there are until the next town.

It was advised that the Roads & Traffic Authority (RTA) had removed the sign against the advice of Council. Council has since been in contact with the RTA and were advised that Council could replace it at its own cost.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded, the time being 12.12 pm.

Russ Pigg
CHAIRPERSON