

Community Consultative Bodies Executive Meeting

council@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au | shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au    

Shoalhaven City Council – CCB Executive Meeting

Wednesday 27 November 2024 – 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Shoalhaven Indoor Sports Centre, 90 Cambewarra Road, Bomaderry NSW 2541

Meeting Notes

The following meeting notes should be used in conjunction with the CCB Executive Meeting PowerPoint presentations attached.

Please note: these are meeting notes only and not comprehensive minutes.

Mayor and Councillor Attendees: Mayor Patricia White, Cllr Gillian Boyd, Cllr Jason Cox, Cllr Luciano Casmiri, Cllr Selena Clancy, Cllr Ben Krikstolaitis, Cllr Jemma Tribe

Apologies: Cathy Stapleton (Tabourie Lake Ratepayers & Residents Association, Donna Loon (Conjola Community Association), Cllr Natalee Johnston, Eve Bray (Wandandian Progress Association)

CCB Attendees: Anna Evert, Anne Simpson, Bob Pullinger, Brenda Sambrook, Carol Blake, Chris Hayes, Dave Macdonald, Emilio Ferrer, Eve Bray, Gary Chapman, Gary Bickford, Gill Smith, Hugh Sinclair, Ian Carroll, James Morris, Jan Gregory, Jen Barrett, John Wells, Jessica Zealand, John Lang, Karen Weinert, Karyn Knowles, Kerry Barlow, Lynn Cowley, Mary Perkins, Paul Mitchell, Peter Longstaff, Phil Bradshaw, Robyn Flack, Ron Cox, Russell Neeves, Stuart Coughlan, Tim Fletcher

CCB & Community Groups Represented: Basin Villages Forum, Bawley Point, Kioloa & Termeil Community Association, Berry Forum, Budgong Community Group Inc, Burrill Lake Community Association, Callala Bay Community Association, Cambewarra Residents & Ratepayers Association, Culburra Beach & Orient Point Community Forum, Currawong Community Association Inc, Huskisson Woollamia Community Voice, Hyams Beach Villagers Association, Kangaroo Valley Community Consultative Body, Milton 2538, Red Head Villages Association, Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum, Sussex Inlet & Districts Community Forum, Tomerong Community Forum, Ulladulla & Districts Community Forum Inc, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Association

Council Employee Attendees: Beth Britton (Social Planner), Bruce Gibbs (Acting Director – City Development), Carey McIntyre (Director – City Services), Coralie McCarthy (Acting Director – City Futures), Dane Hamilton (Acting Director – City Performance), Denise De Strang (Administration Assistant – Library Services), Erin Olejniczak (Community Connections Officer), Fiona Ellis (Community Engagement Officer), James Ruprai (Acting CEO), Janis Gordon (Recovery Outreach Officer), Michael Paine (Manager – Community Connections), Trish Jeffs (Business Support Administration Officer – Community Connections)

Presenting: Alix Gillett (Co-ordinator – Marketing & Community Engagement), Caitlin Lewis (Manager – Media & Communication), Jim Fraser (Manager – Corporate Reporting & Performance), James Ruprai (Acting Chief Executive Officer), Katie Buckman (Chief Financial Officer), Lauren Buckingham (Manager – Financial Sustainability), Michael Paine (Manager – Community Connections)

ITEM	TIME	TOPIC	PRESENTED BY
1.	10:00 AM – 10:05 AM	Welcome & Housekeeping	Michael Paine – Manager, Community Connections
2.	10:05 AM – 10:10 AM	Acknowledgment of Country	Mayor Patricia White
3.	10:10 AM – 10:35 AM	Introduction of new Council Overview of key organisational priorities	James Ruprai – Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

4.	10:35 AM – 10:45 AM	Q&A	James Ruprai – Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Q: Affordable housing was listed in the presentation; however, this was not talked about.			
A: James apologised for this and advised that we are one of the few councils that has adopted an Affordable Housing Strategy. Council collaborates with the Homes NSW and community housing providers to address social housing issues in the LGA.			
Q: <i>Mary Perkins, Curarong Community Association Inc.</i>			
A: <i>James Ruprai</i>			
Q: Who is the ultimate owner of stormwater? This is one of the major pieces of infrastructure which previously has had many owners.			
A: Following the restructure, this will be managed by a single directorate, City Services. This is a very big asset that is not visible, but large.			
A: City Services will have a dedicated project team along with an operations team, with one Manager. This will provide a clearer structure, and clearer line of sight to better manage services.			
Q: <i>Bob Pullinger, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Assoc.</i>			
A: <i>James Ruprai</i>			
A: <i>Carey McIntyre</i>			
Q: The presentation mentioned next generations. Have considerations been made for the aged generation? Considering the large population of those living with illnesses and those living at home?			
A: Demographics show this is a real issue for us. The Local Environment Plan (LEP) needs to address this in some form. We currently have a structure that looks at the types of residential housing, however, previously we haven't looked at the framework for building. We need to create a structure to determine the types of housing required over a 20–30-year building period.			
Q: <i>Bob, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Assoc.</i>			
A: <i>James Ruprai</i>			
Q: You mentioned trust, the old saying “trust everyone until you have reason not to”. It's a real challenge to restore trust.			
A: Agreed – we will be working towards this, trust is hard won and easily lost.			
Q: <i>Bob Pullinger, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Assoc.</i>			
A: <i>James Ruprai</i>			
Q: The internal operational review is reviewing full time positions and staffing arrangements and programs. Could you advise what is happening in the planning, where we are at? There are matters in the Land and Environment office being managed by external solicitors, are these being reviewed? We are concerned as we have heard nothing from the incoming council.			
A: Organisational rationalisation will have an impact on programs and services if resources are reduced. Priorities need to be determined, and decisions made on our guiding vision / direction if we don't have the money required to fulfill all of our current commitments.			
Q: <i>Chris Hayes, Red Head Villages Assoc.</i>			
A: <i>James Ruprai</i>			
Q: How can the FTE (full time equivalent staffing) and budget tracking changes be regularly communicated to advise the community of Council's progress?			
A: Public reporting on financial sustainability and the method of delivery is something we will be looking at.			

Information needs to be presented in a simple and easy to digest manner. This is a priority. It would be ideal to have an online report, either monthly or quarterly on our website. We have 150 services, so identifying the metrics that matter to the community will be worked through internally. I have not had a chance to discuss this with Council as yet, and will be working towards a meaningful response on this. Proposals are currently being investigated to address this and will be presented to the Councillors shortly.

Q: Peter Longstaff, Bawley Point, Kioloa & Termeil Community Association
A: James Ruprai

Q: Currently we have two large development proposals for unit developments. Both applications are at escarpment level. Applications may end up with the regional Land and Environment Court. This is a costly process. The current process cuts out local communities. Is there a way Council can work with local residents to enable them to have a say in these matters?

A: These are state driven policies which Council has advocated against. We believe local decisions should be kept local and handled in a more streamlined manner, with a long-term vision for the local area. The community can participate by getting involved in the LEP process. Decisions made now set a definite vision for the future. Our Community Engagement Strategy encourages the community to participate in these decisions and processes.

Q: Paul Mitchell, Ulladulla & Districts Community Forum Inc
A: James Ruprai

Q: The Shoalhaven is a large area. I'm interested in the comment regarding the centralisation of functions in the restructure. Given our area, how can we ensure that decisions are not always referred back to the main office rather than being handled more efficiently at a local level?

A: Council decisions shouldn't differ regardless of where they are made geographically. We will continue to make geographically aware business decisions. There is no proposal to remove the geographical focus and locations of operational teams, we intend to maintain northern and southern operational areas.

A: Local operational staff will maintain their levels of autonomy. It's more about ensuring that enquiries are directed to a central point and handled uniformly.

Q: Tim Fletcher, Budgong Community Group Inc.
A: James Ruprai
A: Carey McIntyre

ACTION: Follow up required – confidential matter with Land and Environment Court.

L	10:40 AM – 11:00 AM	Strategies on Exhibition	Michael Paine- Manager Community Connections
6.	11:00 AM – 11:10 AM	Q&A	Caitlin Lewis- Manager Media & Communications

Q: As we can't get all the community together, how do we break it down?

A: The Community Engagement Strategy framework identifies Council's key stakeholders and consultation stages and is currently on public exhibition. The document does have a lot of information and is written and designed in a way – through the use of tables and imagery - to make it more accessible and easy to understand. If you have any questions about the document, contact us in the Communications team and we will do what we can to help.

Q: Bob Pullinger, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Assoc.
A: Caitlin Lewis

Q: Can we request that Council consults with a particular stakeholder group?

A: We welcome suggestions on particular groups and their interest levels in Council projects. However, during the planning phase, Council will decide what stakeholders need to be consulted depending on their level of influence in the project.

Q: *Bob Pullinger, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Assoc.*

A: *Alix Gillett*

Q: This issue has come up again regarding general maintenance. We have gone back to using Snap Send Solve as the Council system is too complicated. There's a huge information gap between questions we have submitted and Council's response – no ongoing information beyond the initial response; when we try to upload a photo it's difficult, whereas Snap Send Solve makes this easy. We would like to know from Council what maintenance issues are fixed or are on hold. How do we find out where things are up to?

A: This is very good feedback that you are providing. OneCouncil was implemented by Council to streamline processes and resolve previous issues. We're interested to talk with you about these issues and look for solutions.

Q: *Robyn Flack, Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum*

A: *Dane Hamilton*

Statement: I agree, the interface for Council's online issues reporting is awful, it looks like it was designed for someone on the backend. The front-end uses unhelpful jargon and is difficult to use.

Q: Regarding distribution of information from Council: we would like to be an intermediary and help get messages out into community, but we are finding it's too complicated. We're provided PDF copies which are difficult to extract information to share, or links eg. to a DA which takes you to a generic development page rather than a specific page. We need information to be provided in format that can be shared in social media – the current information processes make it difficult to circulate information. I am proficient in IT, it must be more difficult for less-skilled people.

We'd like something that accurately summarises the information to enable us to communicate and disperse information within the community.

A: We received this feedback during the consultation period for our community engagement framework and now are working on solutions, e.g. Providing infographics in shareable format, video content etc.

A: This is great feedback. This is an issue as information is being received from multiple people. We are in the process of trying to centralise all our engagement activities rather than Council teams sending information/materials directly. This will enable us to ensure useable formats for CCB's and is a work in progress. We would like to speak to you more on these matters to understand the needs of the CCB groups to disseminate information more readily.

Q: *Paul Mitchell, Ulladulla & Districts Community Forum Inc*

A: *Alix Gillett*

A: *Caitlin Lewis*

ACTION: Dane Hamilton to follow up with Robyn Flack regarding OneCouncil maintenance requests.

**Morning Tea & Networking
11:05 AM – 11:25 AM**

7.	11:25 AM – 12:25 PM	Financial Sustainability Special Rate Variation End of year financial update	Katie Buckman - Chief Financial Officer Lauren Buckingham - Project Manager Financial Sustainability
8.	12:25 PM – 12:40 PM	Q&A	

Q: How much does Council actually owe?

A: \$190M, split between General Fund (\$125m) and Shoalhaven Water (\$70m). This is disclosed in Council's audited annual financial statements which are available on Council's website.

Q: *Jan Gregory, Ulladulla & Districts Community Forum Inc*

A: *Katie Buckman*

Q: What is the impact to service levels? Are the changes to service levels being communicated to the

community? What will be the ongoing maintenance levels on Budgong Road?

A: Council is on the journey to review and identify service levels, and this will involve community consultation in line with the Service planning framework.

A: Gaps between revenue and services will go straight into the asset maintenance backlog and operating deficit. This is a decades-old problem that requires a structured approach, it will not be solved in a matter of weeks. We are working with a 10-year projection to maintain reasonable levels of service and take a reasonable, considered approach to how the organisation is operating. Trying to compact that to a three-year limit would result in drastic cuts to services.

Q: Tim Fletcher, Budgong Community Group Inc

A: Lauren Buckingham

A: James Ruprai

Q: Paid Parking at Hyams Beach was investigated by the Council in 2019 in close collaboration with the HBVA and a solution was developed that presented a preferred technology option, with costs and a supporting business case. I raised the topic of Paid Parking at the CCB Executive meeting held at Sussex Inlet in 2023, as a cost recovery option that would address traffic management issues and generate revenue for SCC. Amanda Findlay responded to my suggestion and said it would be an option that Council had to look at.

Most of the summer tourists who visit Hyams Beach are day trippers who bring their own food and drinks and contribute very little to the local economy (one cafe in Hyams). This may not be the case in other CCBs, but this is what we see at Hyams Beach. The old summer peak that lasted the duration of school holidays is now experienced across the summer months over weekends. The costs to manage tourists through traffic management, Rangers, cleaning of amenities, rubbish disposal and the increasing pressure on infrastructure is resulting in more demand and increasing costs. Given the significant gap between Council's revenue and costs one would think that paid parking has to be seriously considered?

At the last HBVA general meeting and AGM this topic was raised again and coincided with the Council's SRV proposal. The meeting voted to establish a sub-committee to revisit Paid Parking and for this topic to be raised at the CCB Executive meeting. The HBVA are willing to work with Council. We are concerned that without measures such as Paid Parking rate payers are going to be hit with higher rates. Hyams Beach are among the highest rate payers in the Shoalhaven and increasing rates is a major concern.

A: There is no bigger issue than Paid Parking at many councils. I am well aware of the parking issues in Hyams. While I am open to any additional revenue streams, including user-pays schemes, more consideration and consultation would need to go to this issue. There needs to be a better mechanism to capture tourism revenue, being one of our biggest industries, and we do need to recover costs.

Q: Dave MacDonald, Hyams Beach Villagers Association

A: James Ruprai

Q: Regarding asset renewal and disaster recovery: I have heard that so far Council has handed back \$60M which would have been paid in bushfire grants. Handing back funds received from recovery grants would be a wrong thing.

A: We have not handed back \$60M in disaster projects. There is a distinction between some projects related to bushfire recovery and some more community focussed infrastructure projects. The wharf facility at Ulladulla, for example, was a co-funded initiative and as Council could not access funds for its contribution, the grant funds were required to be returned. We will only return funds that require co-contribution. Most of the floods and storms funds over the last few years will be retained, including \$80M for road assets, drains and rock walls.

A: The challenge is that while we don't have Council money to contribute, we won't be able to apply for grants.

Q: Chris Hayes, Red Head Villages Association

A: Katie Buckman

A: Carey McIntyre

Q: We would like to see the schedule for work done by Shoalhaven Council. Some other councils make this publicly available, e.g. at Muswellbrook where I can see what mowing and maintenance work

is being done. We have poor and patchy maintenance at Shoalhaven Heads. Please review the trojan horse of the Coastal Management Plan.

A: We will take this matter on notice regarding the visibility of maintenance costs. \$45M notional grant funding required for Jervis Bay Coastal Management Plan (CMP) requires a \$15M contribution from Council over 10 years, which is currently unfunded. It's very important, strategic work, however the money is not there or allocated for the required \$15M co-contribution.

A: The long-term financial plan (included within Council's Resourcing Strategy) identifies the planned capital spend by asset class, under each of the 3 scenarios, for the 10 year period. It does not provide a details capital works program at this stage. The current year adopted budget does include a list of capital projects that have been funded to be delivered in FY2025.

Q: Robyn Flack, Shoalhaven Heads Community Forum

A: James Ruprai

A: Katie Buckman

Q: I am concerned by the glossing over of Hyams Beach parking issues. As a residential rate payer, I am always amazed at the Northern Beaches where it costs \$4-\$8 per hour to park. They have no problem with this impacting on residents or tourism. Rate payers are funding tourists to use our services, what is the reluctance of Councillors to recover revenue from tourists – beyond the desire to protect the Tourism industry?

Technology can exempt residents so that they are not be impacted by paid parking. As rate payers we pay for cleaning, maintenance, etc. Tourists who come here should not be allowed to free-load in our areas. There appears to be a reluctance to properly raise revenue in our 'tourism industry'. We need income and this can be easily achieved.

One more question regarding rate variations, I think that 12% is grossly inadequate and we should be seeking a 20% increase asap. There seems to be disparity between residential and commercial rates. I am disturbed by the organisation advising that they are experiencing increasing costs but reducing services. Maybe get cafes to pay for tables on footpaths so that the additional funding requirements are not all borne by residential ratepayers.

A: The rating structure is different between residential and business. This has been identified as an issue and will require significant consultation. It is on our agenda to review the mix. The business paper from Council meeting 5/11/2024 is very clear that 12% is not enough for an SRV and that 29% is more in line with what is required.

Q: We do not see why residents are being asked to fund rates that should be paid by commercial businesses. It's not acceptable for this service organisation to tell us 'we're going to increase our fees and charges and reduce our services'. Our community requests we ensure that the load not be borne by residential ratepayers.

A: The proportion of business ratepayers is very low when compared to residential ratepayers. This means that if the business rates are increased, and the residential rates decreased by the same amount, the saving on residential rates will be minimal due to the total reduction being spread over such a large population.

Q: Phil Bradshaw, Milton 2538

A: Katie Buckman

Statement: Vincentia Golf Club was closed three months ago by the St George's Club. We require the club for functions and its restaurant. It's the only club in Vincentia and residents and tourists now have to go to Huskisson, which is already overloaded. Council has been asked to intervene. This is a major tourism issue and we are requesting accountability and collaboration from Council to help us resolve the problem.

S: Anna Everts, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Association

Statement: Having been involved in different Councils that use Paid Parking, I can advise that the idea of Paid Parking is not as simple as some think it is. Northern Beaches and Wollongong Councils have implemented this, more for providing reasonable access to a large population. 2-4 hours of Paid Parking allows better accessibility for all. Financially, however, these Councils are striving to break even. The technology is available, such as numberplate scanning, however these companies make a good income ... the costs of fee recovery are high, and this may not be the way to go. I am not confident

about timed parking.

Q: I note with reference to FTE's, that local Government should be a good place to work. Having a lower number of staff is not necessarily a good thing, and may result in a lower number of services for higher cost, due to services being contracted out?

Q: Assets coming to end of life that won't be renewed, what is an example of that?

A: Regarding FTE's, they give us a measure by which to track our planning, ... the link to services is unrelated. Gaining anything above a 3% efficiency by FTE's is unlikely. The reality is that we are 'running a business' and there will be ongoing accountability and transparency about decisions made over the coming months and years.

A: Where one park is coming to end of life and there is a smaller park close by, Council would review utilisation and may not replace the aged infrastructure.

Q: Gary Chapman, Callala Bay Community Association

A: James Ruprai

A: Katie Buckman

Q: How can we get the message over to the community thanking Council for doing a great job. This information is hard to absorb. How can CCB's assist?

A: We are making a video about financial sustainability. We are trying to communicate a lot about this with snippet animations, fliers, understanding this is a lot of information for anyone to take in so we are aiming to provide bite-sized pieces of information.

Q: Bob Pullinger, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Assoc.

A: Caitlin Lewis

Q: The messaging from members of the State Government with disaster funding is 'the worse the situation gets, the less money you get'. How can State Government be made accountable regarding rates and disaster funding?

A: Please raise these funding issues directly with the State Government

Q: Bob Pullinger, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Assoc.

A: James Ruprai

Q: How do we update the DPOP list?

A: The Delivery Program, Operations Plan (DPOP) is a tool for Council to set its delivery program and operational plan with costings over a 4-year period. Councillors will review the current DPOP and adopt a new DPOP for the 2025/26FY in line with the review of Council's Community Strategic Plan, by 30 June next year. During this process there will be opportunity for community input. All items will be required to be linked to financial and resourcing plans, and we invite communities to get involved in the consultation process, to influence the delivery plan.

Q: Bob Pullinger, Vincentia Residents & Ratepayers Assoc.

A: Caitlin Lewis

A: James Ruprai

Q: Even with 12% variation, we will not dig ourselves out of the hole until 2032. We do not know the full costs of Asset Management planning and this will take some time to determine. Does that mean we will be here again next year?

A: Assessment of road asset management plans will give us a better understanding of what is required to achieve sustainability. Yes, the SRV Business Paper endorsed by Council on 5 November 2024 does indicate we will be here again next year.

A: Community feedback last year was very clear that a higher rate increase is not an option. An FTE reduction of \$25M achieved from internal efficiencies alone would reduce the general fund staff base by 1/3. The

organisation would not be able to deliver basic services with that reduction. We have committed to looking at internal efficiencies as part of a planned, multi-year approach, to deliver services as required by the community.

A: Every 1% equates to an additional \$950K, therefore 12% will provide an additional \$8M above the rate peg. To put this in context, a recent grant allocation Council has received, of \$40M, will fix only *part* of five roads. From this you can see that an SRV of 12% will not go very far.

Q: Ron Cox, Burrill Lake Community Association

A: Katie Buckman

A: James Ruprai

A: Katie Buckman

Lunch
12:40 PM – 1:10 PM

11.	1:10 PM – 1:55 PM	Community Strategic Plan Engagement	Jim Fraser - Manager Corporate Performance & Reporting
13.	2:00 PM – 2:05 PM	Thank You & Close	Michael Paine – Manager, Community Connections
Summary of Actions	Action		Responsible Officer
	Follow up with Robyn Flack regarding OneCouncil maintenance requests.		Dane Hamilton Acting Director – City Performance
	Follow up required – confidential matter with Land and Environment Court.		Bruce Gibbs – Acting Director, City Development.