

**Agenda Briefing Forum 7 April 2020**  
**Questions from Elected Members**

**Item C20/6175 Motions from the Annual General Meeting of Electors 3 February 2020**

Questions from Cr Pazoli

Response Director Corporate Services

Question 1: Does the LGIS Insurance cover the loss of revenue or additional costs resulting from dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic?

Response: No. The Scheme and the wider insurance market do not cover losses arising from large-scale pandemics.

The outbreak of the SARS in 2003, prompted insurers to model just how large claims could amount to in the event of a major pandemic. Similar to the likes of war and nuclear events, pandemics are not contemplated under a Property/Bi policy as it is a single event that closes operations around the world.

The insurance market would not have the capacity to fund all the losses.

Question 2: Does Part 3. of the Officer recommendation mean that the CEO will test the commercial insurance market for competitive insurance products before preparing the report to FMARCC?

Response: Yes

## **Item C20/6176 Melville Community Stimulus Package**

### Questions from Cr Robins

#### Response Director Corporate Services, Manager Neighbourhood Amenity

Question 1: Can I please have an explanation as to how the decision to reduce rates by \$200 for improved properties was made? I'd also like to know whether consideration was given to applying the same % discount to all properties and why this was decided against.

Response: Originally a % across the Board was discussed at anywhere between a rate freeze i.e. zero % and a reduction of 10%. The \$ value per improved property was considered as an option which provided greater relief to those on lower incomes.

Question 2 Would I be correct in assuming that the rates concession, the reduced private swimming pool inspection fees, the reduced Property Surveillance and Security Service Charge etc would only be reduced in the 2020/2021 budget and next year we will be considering the usual increases on 2019/2020 figures?

Response: In regard to rates, 2020-2021 is currently a revaluation year which LG's and WALGA are seeking approval from the Minister to move to 2021-2022.

The base for next year will be the same as 2019/2020 except there will be differences in the rate in the dollar depending on the impact of the revaluation.

For the two service related charges the reduction is a one off and I would expect we would start with the 2019/20 figure as the base .

Question 3 WALGA asked local governments to consider whether Fees and Charges could be waived, deferred or reduced. We are looking at not increasing any of our fees and charges. Why was it considered appropriate not to take on WALGA's advice in this instance?

Response: The officers are recommending the waiver of some fees and charges.

We are also deferring rentals for community groups in the first instance which will then be followed up by the waiver recommended in the Council item. The treatment of Commercial tenancies occupying City owned land and building will be considered in terms of the financial impact the pandemic is having on their business on a case by case basis. We have notified most tenants of a six month deferral at this stage

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Question 4: With regards to the intention of amending parking fees to first hour free all areas, is the reason this is recommended to be for a year because we only set fees and charges every year? My concern is that it will be hard to change things back to how they are now if it's in a year we're trying to make such a change. Could we do first two or three hours free until the end of the year perhaps? Then at the end of the year council could adopt new fees for the first half of 2021?

Response: The recommendation was made for 12 months (effectively 15 months) was not so it aligned to the annual setting of fees and charges. Fees and Charges can be amended at any time throughout the year by Council. It was more of a recognition that once you do make this change it will be very hard to change things back.

The idea of first hour free is something that can be for a year (or ongoing) and we can see the usage data and then make recommendations to Council for the 2021/22 FY.

All areas where there is paid parking (other than Fiona Stanley Hospital) the City doesn't have a time limit in which you can park.

If we needed to get turnover of vehicles you can increase the fee on the second hour and so on.

All of the Riseley Precinct has first three hours free.

In the Applecross precinct there are six streets where there is paid parking with first hour free, to make the other four street first hour free would have some consistency and again will look at the data and make adjustments to the second hour etc.

*Item C20/6176 Melville Community Stimulus Package continued*

Questions from Cr Pazoli:

Responses Director Corporate Services

Question 1: Do the waiving of loan repayments, lease payments & interest charges on outstanding payments to the City represent the City paying the loan repayments to WA Treasury, forgiving the entire amount of lease payments (ie tenants don't have to make up the lease payments after the temporary deferment)? Or does the waived payments merely represent capitalising the payments to add to the debt of the tenant/sports associations?

Response: The intent of the waiving is that the City would forgive these payments. The City would continue to meet all repayments as guarantor of the loan but not seek reimbursement from the clubs.

Question 2: Regarding the proposed rates reduction, has the State or Federal Governments made any offer of funding/grants increases to assist the Council in funding the costs of the package?

Response: There has been no discussion with the State or Federal Governments or offers to increase funding/grants.

There may be the possibility of joint funding with the State and Federal Governments for projects as part of the recovery phase.

Question 3: As a result of the financial impact of this pandemic, has the City terminated the employment of any permanent employees, contract employees or casuals (or failed to renew employment or contractor contracts)? How many and in what areas of the organisation?

Response: The State Government's directive to temporarily close community facilities has certainly impacted some of our staff employed in face to face based services. We have commenced deploying individuals to other areas of the organisation and reviewing opportunities internally or with external agencies to deliver essential services that are needed more than ever by our community through these challenging circumstances.

At the time of the temporary closures there were 52 full and part time staff and 183 casual staff in LeisureFit, and for our Libraries and Museums there were 47 full and part time staff and 11 casual staff. For our LeisureFit, Library and Museum facilities the temporary cessation of some services has impacted the work many casual staff were employed to support. Casual staff are engaged on an ad hoc as required basis, with each occasion that they work being a contract of employment in its own right.

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For those non casual staff within LeisureFit they are still working within the facilities or being redeployed within the organisation, however we recognise that some have had their hours impacted. The City will be advocating for extension of the Jobkeeper payment scheme, as the leisure facilities will be able to demonstrate a significant impact in revenue and a need to have trained and inducted staff to re-open to the public as soon as directed.

Non-casual staff within Libraries and Museums have continued to work within the facilities to deliver services, albeit the doors are closed to the public. There have been no changes to non casual staffing, though some people have had their hours impacted. The focus is on developing innovative approaches to provide community value and service delivery, such as the new videos for baby rhyme time that are going online this week and a range of other projects such as further development of the digital/ e-resources collection.

As the City continues to respond to COVID-19 and what may foreseeably be a long term phased recovery, it is likely staff will continue to be redeployed across various services and areas, depending on the community's needs at the time.

Questions from Cr Mair

Responses Director Corporate Services

Question 1 Once we have emptied out our Rates Equalisation Reserve, Risk Management Reserve, Private Swimming Pool Inspection Fee Reserve and Community Surveillance and Security Reserve this year, how are we going to support the community for the next several years with dispensations? How will it affect our budgeted programs?

Response: The two main reserves are temporary reserves that should not carry significant balances. The community surveillance and security reserve will still have a balance of \$240,000 and the Swimming Pool reserve a balance of \$126,000 after their contributions to the package.

The City has a number of cash reserves which relate to its asset management program and these will still be available to support the economic recovery through the City's capital works and maintenance program.

The budgeted programs also would not be affected.

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Question 2: What consideration was there given to residents asking for a 4 year rate freeze?

Response: A 4 year rate freeze was not suggested as an option for consideration.

Question 3 How would the finances look after a 4 year rate freeze compared to the current proposed plan?

Response: A 4 year rate freeze would have to be modelled;

You would need to make assumptions on the CPI rate over the next four years, expected wage increases and increases/decreases in other local government costs. It would be difficult to model the impacts of demand and supply on the local government basket of goods over the four years given the uncertainty.

For information a 1% rate increase accounts for about \$900,000 in revenue. The Perth CPI was running at about 1.6% prior to Covid-19 which equates to about \$1,440,000 in rates revenue for the City.

Question 4: Would the reduction in the property surveillance and security service charge mean a scaling back of the service

Response: There would be no scaling back of either of these services. There is sufficient funding from the current charge and also funds remaining in the reserve to ensure the current level of service is maintained.

## **P20/3848 Progress on Local Planning Policy – Canning Bridge Activity Centre**

Question from Cr Robins

Response Director Urban Planning

Question: I note that Financial Implications are stated as "NA". Surely there is a consultant fee? Is this paid for out of budgeted funds?

Response: A consultant's fee is applicable to the preparation of the Local Planning Policy. Expenditure is budgeted for under the accounts associated with the review of the Canning Bridge Activity Centre Plan. Any delay in progress of preparation of the LPP has no additional financial implications.

Question from Cr Pazolli

Response Director Urban Planning

Question 1: Who is the external consultant & when did they actually start the work after the contract appointment of mid-February?

Response: The external consultant appointed to prepare the draft Local Planning Policy is Taylor Burrell Barnett (TBB). Work commenced on the project on 26 February 2020. The appointment of TBB was advised to Elected Members in the EMB dated 28 February 2020.

Question 2: Which stakeholders has the consultant interviewed since the commencement of the contract and which are left to be interviewed?

Response: The consultants have been provided with a list of stakeholders under the groupings of local residents, local landowners, business owners and development industry. The list has been sourced from submissions on the previous draft bonus height policy. Initially it had been intended that these groups be engaged in a workshop setting. To meet social distancing requirements this has now changed to an approach involving individual interviews. These interviews are scheduled to commence in the week beginning 6 April 2020. The next key stakeholder group to be engaged is the Elected Members. An online workshop is being arranged involving Elected Members and TBB on Tuesday 14 April 2020 at 6:30pm and is to be confirmed.

## **ITEM T20/3844 Long Term Cycling Network**

### Questions from Cr Pazolli

### Responses Director Technical Services

Question 1: How realistic is the expectation to spend \$80K on a Melville Bike Plan in 19/20 given that it is already April 2020?

Response: A brief for the project to perform a major review on the bike plan was being put together but was delayed due to the review of the LTCN. The project will also incorporate a major stakeholder engagement component. The bike plan review is being worked on but the \$80,000 will need to be carried forward to complete the review in 2020/2021

Question 2: What is involved in preparing the Bike Plan that it should cost \$80K?

Response: The City of Melville Bike Plan was developed in 2012 and is overdue for a review. Since the adoption of the plan many of the recommended projects have been completed, new cycling treatments such as bike boulevards/Safe Active Streets have been developed, structure plans have been adopted, and the Corporate and Community plans have been updated. As part of the review, the Bike Plan is being expanded to become a bike and pedestrian plan. The major review includes the following:

- i. Incorporation of the LTCN
- ii. Review of current cycling and walking network
- iii. Inclusion of Safe Active Streets where appropriate
- iv. Consult with stakeholders through Melville Talks, Community workshops including a community reference group.
- v. Complete an updated Bike Plan in line with the new tactical plan format where possible. Bike Plan must meet the criteria set out by DoT to ensure eligibility for funding.
- vi. Update the Bike Plan with respect to new road modifications, shared path additions and public transport routes.
- vii. Review scoring and prioritisation matrix of new footpath projects
- viii. Develop a prioritised schedule of works

Question 3: Isn't there already a Melville Bike Plan that can just be updated to incorporate the LTCN and convert the savings to funding the Melville Stimulus Package?

Response: The estimate of \$80,000 was developed from a review of consultant costs for the development of the City's previous Bike Plan and the costs for other Local governments who have recently reviewed their plans. City officers will undertake some of the work themselves, but will need consultant assistance along the way to assist with specialised

tasks and to meet other associated costs involved with stakeholder engagement. As noted above, the review is more than a simple update to align with the new LTCN and therefore the funding is still needed for the project. The City has received over \$1,000,000 in Bike network funding from the State Government linked to the City's 2012 Bike Plan and the Bike Plan needs to be updated to identify a suite of new priority projects and ensure the City is still eligible for future funding.

**Item M20/5744 Review of Council Policy CP-096 Naming of Road, Parks, Buildings and Infrastructure**

Questions from Cr Mair

Response Exec Manager Governance and Legal Services

Question I want to know what the following item means under the Policy Statement

(i) all names are to consider gender equality

Can you clarify this for me please?

Response: This was added to the Policy review to try and encourage the addition of more women's names on the City's Schedule of Names. An administrative correction will be made to the policy to read *"The list of names are to consider gender equality."* And not *"All names are to consider gender equality."*