

**HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL
CATCHMENTS REMEDIATION RATE
EXPENDITURE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
10th November 2020**

Attendees:

Members - Rod McInnes, David Wilkins, Brian Pearson, Chris Taylor (CT), Warren Birkinshaw (new member), Nilmini De Silva (new member), James Hazelton (new member) & Dilini Kumarasinghe (new member). *Councillors*: Joseph Nicita (Chair), Councillor Robert Browne. *Staff*: David Beharrell.

1. Apologies:

Members - John Croker. *Councillors*: Councillor Robert Browne for leaving early circa 8pm due to a clash of Council committee meetings.

Summary:

The November 2020 CRR committee meeting was an online meeting in line with Council Covid procedures.

The main business of the meeting was to introduce the newly appointed members, to induct the newly appointed members with a training presentation on an overview of the committee's objectives and business and to conduct the biannual review of the CRR financial reports.

Meeting Opened:

6:00pm Most attendees online, but Councillor Nicita formally opened the meeting about 6:05pm. Councillor Browne apologised for (slight) lateness.

2. Declarations of Interest:

No interests were declared.

Action: DB to forward through the Code of Conduct so all members can familiarise themselves with CRR panel membership responsibilities.

3. Introduction of New Members:

New members were introduced, and incumbent members introduced themselves to the new members.

4. Redundant:

An item on the agenda but not applying to this meeting as the Panel Report (Minutes) is attached to Council Business Papers prior to subsequent panel meetings.

5. CRR Panel Charter Review:

In response to the Review of Committees letter from the General Manager that was provided to committee members after the previous meeting in October, the committee had provided out of session feedback to the Executive Officer on the existing Charter during December. The committee had requested that this meeting would be where the engagement mooted with the committee would occur. However, the Council did not have any specific issues to raise at this meeting, but rather the Executive Officer promised to keep the committee updated as soon as the review progressed. The Committee noted that the Catchment Review Rate Committee had been set up through a commitment at a public meeting to provide oversight of spending when the Rate was increased.

6. CRR Presentation

DB gave a presentation on the CRR Program including the types of works undertaken.

DW raised a discussion point about whether the CRR was getting value for money in small catchments, where a given project capital cost might represent a high cost per area of catchment treated, as seen in a recent project. DB responded that many projects are undersized to catchment due to a shortage of available land, and RM/CT noted that this was to be expected with a backlog program like CRR, where assets have to be squeezed into spaces that under older planning rules were never expected to have stormwater treatment assets. This led to a more general point, as to whether CRR could contribute by looking at value for money prior to construction. A further consideration would be value, such as the protection of sensitive ecosystems or valuable habitat.

Action: DB to review cost against catchment size and against surface area of device to determine whether there is a value for money correlation and/or to identify outliers.

NS queried how site and devices prioritisation occurred. DW mentioned possibly metrics such as cost per unit of nutrient removed.

DB stated that a 10 year capital works program existed which incorporated prioritised project types and locations. Also, in creating this plan numerous criteria, eg. spatial, target pollutants (eg. plastics), and effectiveness of particular device types were considered.

Other strategies and tools were also employed, eg. a stormwater harvesting feasibility study, and a Gross Pollution Trap (GPT) selector.

Action: NS to forward to DB the benefit criteria matrix used at Fairfield City Council to prioritise works.

The committee asked that they get access to the presentation.

Action: DB to fwd through presentation slides and associated links/information for new members to familiarise themselves with the CRR program

7. Financial Reports

Abridged financial reports (edited for space) were shown on screen and discussed. Members also had access to full electronic (or paper copies, if printed) of the reports which had been sent out electronically earlier.

Balance of CRR Funds:

The Balance of Fund report shows a sizable balance of \$0.504M at end-of-year (30th June). This is the largest end-of-year balance for five years. Discussion ensued on whether this relatively high balance could have been avoided, particularly given the exceptional circumstances of 2019/20 with drought, bushfire and Covid-19 impacting the Council as a whole. DB argued that despite the obvious difficulties of the year, the underspend was more due to project specific factors, which are considered below. Unspent project budget at completion is in excess of \$215,000, indicating that significant underspends did occur in multiple projects this year, explaining over 40% of the balance of CRR funds. The remainder of the underspend could be explained by a conservative approach to scheduling whereby two capital projects begun in 2018/19 were not programmed to progress in 2019/20.

Project Review:

Ten current capital projects were on the program during the financial year. One was for minor works to complete a previous year project, four were projects planned and begun in the previous financial year and substantially or fully completed during the year, two were the planned projects that started in the previous year but which were not scheduled for the year and three were projects where planning was commenced for next financial year works.

The following projects attracted comment in the project review:

101154 Thomas Wilkinson Ave, Dural - GPT & Biofiltration Basin

This project was budgeted at \$200,000, later revised upwards twice to \$300,000 and was fully completed by June and had \$145,000 remaining budget. DB explained that the site had been assessed as requiring significant hard rock work based on the local geology, but that digging revealed that there was much less hard rock in reality. This resulted in a significant underspend, even against the original scoping budget.

101054 CRR - Lessing Park, Asquith - GPT & Biofiltration Basin

This similar project was 70% complete at June, with \$97,000 balance remaining.

Proportionally, if the project completes next year as estimated there would be over \$40,000 budget unspent. Again, DB indicated that the amount of hard rock work required was much less than budgeted for.

Discussion on the two projects revolved around whether, given the problems in these projects, that the expense of investigation of hard rock conditions would be worthwhile to enable more timely use of the CRR budget. If the overbudgeting could have been identified earlier in the year, there was theoretically scope to progress at least one project of the two on hold to use the money made available. The conclusion was that investigations could be considered, but given the long term nature of the program there is probably no huge advantage to spending much on investigation, but rather rolling the program up or down as funds are carried over from such occurrences.

6520 Kangaroo Pt Pump Out Facilities

The lack of any spending against budget for this item was a result of this facility no longer being funded by CRR and it would no longer be budgeted.

6521 Water Quality Data:

A significant underspend of \$72,000 or over one third of the revised budget was noted. DB explained that a rejigging of the Water Quality program and Covid restrictions has meant that some data collection, either could not or did not occur due to setup of new systems and programs.

5932 Street Sweeping - contribution by CRR

The Street Sweeping program was mentioned (DW) as something that the Committee should look at in more detail in a forthcoming meeting, particularly for the understanding for the new members of how this contributes to the overall CRR objectives. Further information could be circulated via e-mail.

8. Other Business

CT raised the work of the Lower Hawkesbury Estuary Management Committee, which has been overseeing the implementation of the Lower Hawkesbury Estuary Management Plan between 2008-2019. He sat on the committee and noted its relation to the outputs of the CRR program in terms of pollution reduction. Six council areas from the region provide members to that committee.

Action: DB to consider future invitations, from and to, other relevant Committees, e. g. the Lower Hawkesbury Estuary Management Committee

9. Next Meeting

The catchment tour was scheduled for late February/early March 2021 and there will be a separate second quarter Panel meeting.

The meeting closed at 8:30pm