



BUSINESS PAPER

GENERAL MEETING

**Wednesday 13 May 2020
at 6:30PM**



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Statement by the Chairperson:

"We recognise our Shire's rich cultural and religious diversity and we acknowledge and pay respect to the beliefs of all members of our community, regardless of creed or faith."

ABORIGINAL RECOGNITION

Statement by the Chairperson:

"We acknowledge we are on the traditional lands of the Darug and Guringai Peoples. We pay our respects to elders past and present."

VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETING

Statement by the Chairperson:

"I advise all present that tonight's meeting is being video streamed live via Council's website and also audio recorded for the purposes of providing a record of public comment at the meeting, supporting the democratic process, broadening knowledge and participation in community affairs, and demonstrating Council's commitment to openness and accountability. The audio and video recordings of the non-confidential parts of the meeting will be made available on Council's website once the Minutes have been finalised. All speakers are requested to ensure their comments are relevant to the issue at hand and to refrain from making personal comments or criticisms. No other persons are permitted to record the Meeting, unless specifically authorised by Council to do so."

APOLOGIES / LEAVE OF ABSENCE

POLITICAL DONATIONS DISCLOSURE

Statement by the Chairperson:

"In accordance with Section 10.4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, any person or organisation who has made a relevant planning application or a submission in respect of a relevant planning application which is on tonight's agenda, and who has made a reportable political donation or gift to a Councillor or employee of the Council, must make a Political Donations Disclosure Statement."

If a Councillor or employee has received a reportable political donation or gift from a person or organisation who has made a relevant planning application or a submission in respect of a relevant planning application which is on tonight's agenda, they must declare a non-pecuniary conflict of interests to the meeting, disclose the nature of the interest and manage the conflict of interests in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct."

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Clause 4.16 and 4.17 of Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors requires that a councillor or a member of a Council committee who has a pecuniary interest in a matter which is before the Council or committee and who is present at a meeting of the Council or committee at which the matter is being considered must disclose the nature of the interest to the meeting as soon as practicable. The disclosure is also to be submitted in writing (on the form titled "Declaration of Interest").

- 4.16 A councillor who has a pecuniary interest in any matter with which the council is concerned, and who is present at a meeting of the council or committee at which the matter is being considered, must disclose the nature of the interest to the meeting as soon as practicable.*
- 4.17 The councillor must not be present at, or in sight of, the meeting of the council or committee:*
- a) at any time during which the matter is being considered or discussed by the council or committee, or*
 - b) at any time during which the council or committee is voting on any question in relation to the matter.*

Clause 5.10 and 5.11 of Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors requires that a councillor or a member of a Council committee who has a non pecuniary interest in a matter which is before the Council or committee and who is present at a meeting of the Council or committee at which the matter is being considered must disclose the nature of the interest to the meeting as soon as practicable. The disclosure is also to be submitted in writing (on the form titled "Declaration of Interest").

- 5.10 Significant non-pecuniary conflict of interests must be managed in one of two ways:*
- a) by not participating in consideration of, or decision making in relation to, the matter in which you have the significant non-pecuniary conflict of interest and the matter being allocated to another person for consideration or determination, or*
 - b) if the significant non-pecuniary conflict of interest arises in relation to a matter under consideration at a council or committee meeting, by managing the conflict of interest as if you had a pecuniary interest in the matter by complying with clauses 4.16 and 4.17.*
- 5.11 If you determine that you have a non-pecuniary conflict of interest in a matter that is not significant and does not require further action, when disclosing the interest you must also explain in writing why you consider that the non-pecuniary conflict of interest is not significant and does not require further action in the circumstances.*

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

THAT the Minutes of the General Meeting held on 8 April, 2020 be confirmed; a copy having been distributed to all Councillors.

PETITIONS

PRESENTATIONS

RESCISSION MOTIONS

MAYORAL MINUTES

ITEMS PASSED BY EXCEPTION / CALL FOR SPEAKERS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Note:

Persons wishing to address Council on matters which are on the Agenda are permitted to speak, prior to the item being discussed, and their names will be recorded in the Minutes in respect of that particular item.

*Persons wishing to address Council on **non agenda matters**, are permitted to speak after all items on the agenda in respect of which there is a speaker from the public have been finalised by Council. Their names will be recorded in the Minutes under the heading "Public Forum for Non Agenda Items".*

GENERAL BUSINESS

- *Items for which there is a Public Forum Speaker*
- *Public Forum for non agenda items*
- *Balance of General Business items*

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

Nil

CORPORATE SUPPORT DIVISION

Page Number 1

Item 1 CS9/20 INVESTMENTS AND BORROWINGS FOR MARCH 2020 - STATUS FOR PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2020

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the contents of Director's Report No. CS9/20 be received and noted.

Page Number 4

Item 2 CS11/20 2019/20 BUDGET - MARCH 2020 QUARTER REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the March 2020 Quarter Review of the Operational Plan (Budget) for 2019/20 be received and noted.

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT DIVISION

Nil

PLANNING AND COMPLIANCE DIVISION**Page Number 12****Item 3 PL9/20 REQUIREMENTS FOR CHERRYBROOK STATION STATE SIGNIFICANT PRECINCT****RECOMMENDATION**

THAT:

1. Council note the State Government's release of the draft study requirements for the Cherrybrook Station State Significant Precinct.
2. A formal submission on the draft study requirements be forwarded to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment outlining the issues raised in Director's Report No. PL9/20.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND MAJOR PROJECTS DIVISION

Nil

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**Item 4 EH5/20 WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES TENDER**

This report should be dealt with in confidential session, under Section 10A (2) (d) of the Local Government Act, 1993. This report contains commercial information of a confidential nature that would, if disclosed (i) prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it; or (ii) confer a commercial advantage on a competitor of the council; or (iii) reveal a trade secret. (This Report is considered confidential under Section 10A(2)(d)(i) of the Local Government Act as it contains information of a confidential nature that would, if disclosed prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it. Discussion of the matter in an open Meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest because the Report contains information provided by tenderers which includes sensitive information about their business operations, methodologies and costs. The publication of such information could result in the withholding of similar information

by potential tenderers in future, therefore limiting Council's ability to make an informed decision about future tenders.)

PUBLIC FORUM – NON AGENDA ITEMS

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

MAYOR'S NOTES

NOTICES OF MOTION

Page Number 21

Item 5 NOM9/20 COUNCIL RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT EXTENDED POWERS OF PLANNING MINISTER

COUNCILLOR HEYDE TO MOVE

That Council write to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces seeking confirmation that:

1. The State Government's actions to adapt the planning system during the State of Emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure continued productivity and investment will not undermine well-established statutory opportunities for community participation in environmental planning and assessment.
2. The Planning System Acceleration Program will make it a priority to balance the imperative of economic stimulus with the other objects of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 including facilitating ecologically sustainable development, promoting the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage, and promoting good design and amenity of the built environment.
3. All Orders made under the terms of COVID-19 Legislative Amendments (Emergency Measures) Act 2020 will cease to have effect following the end of the State of Emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. That any proposal to implement permanent changes to legislation would only be considered after consultation with local government and the community.

Page Number 23

Item 6 NOM10/20 RE-ESTABLISHING THE SHIRE'S TREE CANOPY

COUNCILLOR TILBURY TO MOVE

THAT Council:

1. Note the significant steps taken in improving our tree canopy by planting over 19,000 trees in the past year and a half as part of a comprehensive tree planting program despite challenges such as drought, major storms, community concerns surrounding bushfire risk and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Note that care has been taken by qualified arborists in selecting planting locations and appropriate tree species so that the right tree has been identified for the right location balancing the protection and enhancement of the urban tree canopy and ecology with the protection of human life and property as a key aspect of this program. This has given consideration to bushfire concerns and interaction with utilities such as overhead power lines.
3. Note that the planting program has specifically been designed to be participatory, with residents engaged and provided with the opportunity to have input into the tree species to be planted on their nature strip, or alternatively to decline to participate in the program. Residents have also been provided with free trees to improve their properties.
4. Note that tree planting is an effective stimulus project with long lasting economic, environmental and aesthetic benefits and accordingly actively seek opportunities for stimulus funding to support Council's tree planting program, particularly as it aligns with the Greater Sydney Commission's objective to increase urban tree canopy cover to 40% and the NSW Government's election commitment to plant 5 Million Trees by 2030.
5. Write to Ausgrid and relevant Local Members of Parliament, seeking a commitment to progressively place powerlines underground in high risk areas as part of their network maintenance and renewal strategy, as this would minimise major interruptions to residents and businesses associated with extended blackouts whilst improving the amenity of our streetscapes and allowing for enhanced tree canopy cover.
6. Maintain our commitment to enhancing our tree canopy by continuing our tree planting program into the future.

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

MATTERS OF URGENCY

1 INVESTMENTS AND BORROWINGS FOR MARCH 2020 - STATUS FOR PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This Report provides details of Council's investment performance for the period ending 31 March 2020 as well as the extent of its borrowings at the end of the same period.
- Council invests funds that are not, for the time being, required for any other purpose. The investments must be in accordance with relevant legislative requirements and Council's policies and the Chief Financial Officer must report monthly to Council on the details of funds invested.
- All of Council's investments have been made in accordance with the Local Government Act, the Local Government (General) Regulation and Council's Investment of Surplus Funds Policy and Investment Strategy.
- In respect of Council's cash and term deposit investments, the portfolio achieved an annualised return for March 2020 of -4.61% and year to date 1.57%.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the contents of Director's Report No. CS9/20 be received and noted.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Report is to advise Council of funds invested in accordance with Section 625 of the Local Government Act; to provide details as required by Clause 212(1) of the Local Government (General) Regulation and Council's Investment of Surplus Funds Policy; and to advise on the extent of Council's current borrowings.

BACKGROUND

Legislation requires that a report be submitted for Council's consideration each month detailing Council's investments and borrowings and highlighting the monthly and year to date performance of the investments. Initial investments and reallocation of funds are made, where appropriate, after consultation with Council's financial investment adviser and fund managers.

DISCUSSION

Council invests funds which are not, for the time being, required for any other purpose. Such investment must be in accordance with relevant legislative requirements and Council Policies, and the Chief Financial Officer must report monthly to Council on the details of the funds invested.

Council's investment performance for the month ending 31 March 2020 is detailed in the attached document. In summary, the portfolio achieved an annualised return for March 2020 of -4.611% and year to date 1.57%.

In respect of Council borrowings, the weighted average interest rate payable on outstanding loans taken out from June 2010 to date, based on the principal balances outstanding is 6.32%. The Borrowings Schedule as at 31 March 2020 is also attached for Council's information.

BUDGET

Revised budgeted income for 2019/20 is \$6,397,008 with an average budgeted monthly income of \$553,084. Net investment income for the month ended 31 March 2020 was negative \$834,041 which includes interest income of \$401,771 and a loss of \$1,235,812 from TCorp Managed Funds.

Budgeted investment income year to date at March 2020 is \$4,797,755. Total investment income year to date at 31 March 2020 is \$3,927,209 which includes a year to date net loss of \$811,609 from TCorp Managed Funds and a one-off receipt of \$319,902 in relation to a class action against Standard and Poor's for compensation of losses incurred on structured investment products during the global financial crisis.

Approximately 29% of the investment income received by Council relates to externally restricted funds (e.g. Section 7.11 and Section 7.12 development contribution funds) and is required to be allocated to those funds. All investments have been made in accordance with the Local Government Act, the Local Government (General) Regulation and Council's Investment of Surplus Funds Policy and Investment Strategy.

Current market instability caused by uncertainty over current external factors have led to a cut in the cash rate in March 2020. The consequence of this rate cut will have an impact on the reinvestment of term deposit rates. While the returns from TCorp Managed Funds are presently experiencing significant market volatility due to Covid-19 Pandemic, this product has a 7-year investment horizon and will therefore reflect marked to market valuations on a monthly basis. Advice from Council's Independent Investment Advisor, Prudential Investment Services is to hold this investment for the 7-year timeframe originally planned. This is due to the anticipated net positive performance returns that will be gained over the long term for this investment.

CONCLUSION

The investment of Council funds and the extent of its borrowings as at 31 March 2020 are detailed in the documents attached to this Report. Council's consideration of the Report and its attachments ensures that the relevant legislative requirements and Council protocols have been met in respect of those investments and borrowings.



RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

The officer responsible for the preparation of this Report is the Chief Financial Officer – Duncan Chell - who can be contacted on 9847 6822.

DUNCAN CHELL
Chief Financial Officer
Corporate Support Division

GLEN MAGUS
Director - Corporate Support
Corporate Support Division

Attachments:

1.  HSC Investment Summary Report March 2020
2.  HSC Borrowings Schedule 31 March 2020

File Reference: F2004/06987-02
Document Number: D07894004

2 2019/20 BUDGET - MARCH 2020 QUARTER REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Accountable organisations like Council review their budget and operational performance at least each quarter. In this regard, the March 2020 Quarter Review of the 2019/20 Operational Plan and Budget is attached.
- The 2019/20 Original Budget forecast a surplus at 30 June 2020 of \$4.322 million. The September 2019 Review reduced the surplus by \$341K to \$3.981 million whilst the December 2019 Review included no net budget changes. This March 2020 Review recommends net budget changes of \$2.474 million due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which reduces the forecast 30 June 2020 Budget surplus to \$1.507 million.
- This March 2020 Review incorporates Council's initial estimate of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic including forgoing up to \$9.375 million in revenue to the end of the 2019/20 financial year based on the best data available at that time. An amount of \$6.901 million in cost saving initiatives are recommended to offset the expected foregone revenue as well as reducing \$2.474 million from the forecasted budget surplus at 30 June 2020.
- Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the forecasted budget surplus for the 2019/20 financial year it is expected that this will still be satisfactory in meeting Local Government liquidity-based performance measures.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the March 2020 Quarter Review of the Operational Plan (Budget) for 2019/20 be received and noted.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Report is to present for Council's consideration the March 2020 Quarter Review of the 2019/20 Operational Plan.

BACKGROUND

On 12 June 2019, Council adopted its two-year Delivery Program 2019-21 including the one-year Operational Plan for 2019/20. The Fees and Charges for 2019/20 were also adopted by Council on 12 June 2019. The Delivery Program and Operational Plan set out the manner in which Council intends to deliver services and measure performance.

In line with Office of Local Government requirements, a Quarterly Budget Review Statement (QBRs) must be submitted for Council's consideration at the end of each quarter. The Statement must be based on key financial indicators and the estimate of income and expenditure set out in Council's Operational Plan for the relevant year.

DISCUSSION

This Review includes the third quarter results for 2019/20, comparing actual expenditure, income and funding sources against the budget. The Net Operating and Capital Result after internal funding movements showed a positive variance of \$1.972 million or approximately 1.1% of the consolidated year to date expenditure budget. This positive variance is largely the result of timing differences associated with project related works that are expected to be expended by 30 June 2020.

The 2019/20 Original Budget forecast a surplus at 30 June 2020 of \$4.322 million. This surplus was intended to be set aside in a restricted asset account to enable the implementation of initiatives identified in future years of Council's Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP), notably addressing a significant funding requirement of \$20 million in 2023/24.

The September Review adopted net budget changes of \$341K, which reduced the forecast 30 June 2020 Budget surplus to \$3.981 million whilst the December 2019 Review had no net budget changes. This March 2020 Review recommends net budget changes of \$2.474 million due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The forecast 30 June 2020 Budget surplus has been amended to \$1.507 million.

A revision to Council's LTFP is now required because of declining revenue from COVID-19 and the impact on current year and forecasted future budget surpluses. Reduced liquidity may necessitate a review of identified projects in this Plan which will be undertaken during the 2020/21 financial year.

COVID-19 Pandemic

It was noted in General Managers report GM9/20 at the 8 April 2020 General Meeting, *"initial estimates on the impact of the pandemic indicate that Council may forego up to \$9.375 million in lost income from facility closures and reduced services, and from offering relief to the community as provided within the Hornsby Helps Support Package. Additionally, the number of hardship applications for relief from rate payments is expected to increase in line with the unemployment rate."*

It should be noted that the financial impact estimates were calculated based on the best data available at the start of the pandemic. The March to June months of this year will enable an improved level of financial analysis based on actual revenue receipts and the likely financial consequence on the 2020/21 Budget.

This review recommends revenue is reduced to reflect the initial estimates and required action to maintain tight budgetary control over this year's budget has required a range expenditure reductions. The table below details foregone income and expenditure reductions.

	Total (\$)	Comment
Estimated Revenue Decrease		
Admission Fees, Sales & Hire	2,898,000	Significant drop in revenue due to closure of Aquatic and Community Centres.
Planning Regulatory Fees	1,067,000	This includes Planning fees and certificates, development applications and other income.
Rent Relief	584,000	Rent and lease relief provided to sporting clubs, outdoor dining, residential and commercial tenants.
Commercial Garbage Suspension	562,000	
Increase in Bad Debt Provision	166,000	Potential rise in bad debt write-offs due to reduced capacity to pay debts.
Rates Hardship Relief	4,098,000	This is based on potential unemployment levels and reduced capacity pay. While rates are secured against a property this would have a negative cashflow impact.
	9,375,000	
Expenditure Reductions		
Facility Closure Recurrent Costs	1,384,000	Direct cost savings from facility closures including casual labour, utilities, cleaning etc
Capital Project Deferrals	1,975,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicle & plant purchases \$645K, SRV Bushland (Calicoma and Waitara Creek) \$195K, SRV Mt Colah-Kooyong Ave to Myall Road Drainage \$660K Greenway Park toilet block renewal \$125K

ITEM 2

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glenorie Bus Stop Improvements \$200K Community Stage Purchase \$150K
Asset Management Reduction	1,500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buildings move to reactive maintenance only. No scheduled maintenance. \$900K Reduced road pavement rehabilitation \$300K Reduced scheduled drainage maintenance. \$300K
Reduced Development Application Legal Expenditure.	250,000	
Freeze on recruitment and vacant positions	1,134,000	
Reduced advertising, printing, training and other expenses	540,000	
Reduced Employee Leave Entitlements	118,000	
	6,901,000	
Net Cost Shortfall	2,474,000	

The recommended cost savings listed above amount to \$6.901 million, which offset all but \$2.474 million of estimated reduced revenue of \$9.375 million. As a result, Council's forecast 30 June 2020 surplus of \$3.981 million will be reduced by the net cost shortfall of \$2.474 million to \$1.507 million.

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has materially reduced the 2019/20 operating performance it is anticipated that Local Government liquidity-based performance measures including the unrestricted current ratio and cash expense cover ratio will be met at 30 June 2020.

In addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic there are several other matters that could impact the budget at 30 June 2020 that were reported to Council as part of the December 2019 Review. An update in respect of each of these is provided below.

Reimbursement for Storm Expenditure

Severe storms during 2018 in the Hornsby Shire resulted in extensive clean-up costs being incurred by Council. The storms were declared a natural disaster by the NSW Government with Council receiving formal confirmation for reimbursement of \$460K from the Office of Emergency Management. At this stage the amount of \$460K has not been received from the Office of Emergency Management along with no formal advice for a further claim of \$400K that was Council was seeking associated with

this storm. Advice provided from the Infrastructure and Major projects Division is that this matter should be resolved in May 2020.

Additionally, Council incurred further costs during severe storms in February 2020, which were also declared a natural disaster by the NSW Government. A claim for \$700K to recoup costs incurred during the clean-up of this storm is being compiled by the Infrastructure and Major Projects Division for submission to the Office of Emergency Management.

Emergency Services Levy

The 2019/20 Annual Budget also includes a recoupment of costs of \$300K to fund the first-year increase of the Emergency Services Levy from the NSW State Government that was outstanding at the December 2019 Review. These funds have now been received.

Delivery Program 2019-21 including the Operational Plan 2019/20

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting social distancing and mass gathering requirements, has meant that Hornsby Council is experiencing ongoing business disruptions impacting on its ability to carry out services as normal. The ongoing consequences of COVID-19 have significantly impacted on the ability of staff to progress some of the Key Initiatives and Capital Projects in the Delivery Program 2019-21 including the Operational Plan 2019/20 and some projects may need to be progressed in 2020/21 when the situation resolves or may be removed from the Program entirely due to financial and staffing constraints.

Staff are currently in the process of reviewing milestones for major projects and timeframes for other projects. Updated information will be put before Councillors at an informal workshop for discussion prior to the adoption of the draft 2020-2022 Delivery Program including the Operational Plan 2020/21.

Major Projects Update

Updates in respect to the progress of projects of significant dollar value or of community interest are noted below:

- Hornsby Park – From Quarry to Park – this project involves the redevelopment of the abandoned Hornsby Quarry and adjacent Old Mans Valley on the western side of Hornsby into open space for recreation purposes. A Development Application (DA) for bulk earthworks and site rehabilitation was prepared in early 2019. Based on submissions received on the DA, a Response to Submissions (RTS) package was prepared and lodged in late 2019. Exhibition of the RTS concluded in January 2020. Assessment and determination of the DA will be made by the Sydney North Planning Panel at its May meeting. Subject to approval of the DA, bulk earthworks and site rehabilitation will commence in late 2020. Master planning for the final park embellishments is underway and due for completion in 2020, with a community engagement process to follow.

The total expenditure on the next stage of the project to 31 March 2020 is \$2.611 million. Currently \$50 million of funding is available, provided in June 2018 from the NSW Government's Stronger Communities Fund. It is anticipated that additional funds will be required to complete the project.

- Westleigh Park Development – A conceptual master plan for the Westleigh Park site has been completed based on the site having an active sport focus. A draft Plan of Management (POM) for the site is nearing completion. Negotiations with Sydney Water has secured "in principle" support for an extension of Sefton Road through their Thornleigh Reservoir site. Community engagement will be undertaken on the conceptual master plan, likely in late 2020.

The total project expenditure to 31 March 2020 (excluding the acquisition costs of \$21 million funded by development contributions) on this project is \$0.573 million. Currently \$40 million of funding is available, provided in June 2018 from the NSW Government's Stronger Communities Fund. It is anticipated that additional funds will be required to complete the project.

- Storey Park – a new facility has been constructed on the former Asquith Community Centre site. The facility includes multi-purpose rooms that will be ideal for a wide range of events and activities and park facilities. The total expenditure to 31 March 2020 on this project is \$6.209 million out of a budget of \$6.308 million, funded by development contributions and proceeds from the sale of assets rationalised in previous years. Council held Australia Day 2020 celebrations at the newly constructed facility on 26 January 2020.
- 25,000 Trees by 2020 – Council is committed to planting 25,000 new trees by December 2020 to invest in the environment for future generations. The expenditure incurred to 31 March 2020 is \$1.201 million. During the month of March, the total number of trees planted reached 19,204. 31,076 other plants have also been planted during community planting days in support of the program. This project is largely funded by development contributions.
- Public Domain - Concept design options for Peats Ferry Road and Galston Road main street projects were prepared and presented to Council with preferred concept options adopted. The aim of the projects is to improve streetscape amenity through the planting of advanced trees, landscaped garden beds, footpaths, shared paths, seating and signage. The cost estimate for the Peats Ferry Road project from Hookhams Corner to Wattle Street is approximately \$9 million with funding being sourced from developer contributions. Detailed design for the Peats Ferry Road project from Hookhams Corner to Wattle Street is currently underway with sign-off of an alternative concept for the section between Lodge and Hyacinth Streets required prior to completion of design and subsequent engagement. Construction for this project is anticipated to commence later in 2020.

The total expenditure to 31 March 2020 on this project is \$0.550 million out of an initial budget of \$0.617 million for concept design, funded from general funds.

- Galston Aquatic Centre – A development application has been lodged for the replacement of the roof structure over the Galston Aquatic Centre.

The development application contains two parts – essential works for the replacement of the existing roof over the indoor 24 metre pool facility and a design for a new roof structure over the Learn-to-Swim facility, which could be undertaken at a later stage.

To date Council has approved a budget of \$3 million for the replacement roof over the 24-metre pool. However, the cost is now estimated at \$4.5 million due to fire and vegetation restrictions. Determination of the DA is expected by April 2020. Further details and options to fund the additional cost are to be provided to Councillors at a briefing following a determination of the development application.

- Hornsby Library - The 2019/20 Annual Budget includes a capital expenditure budget of \$2.7 million for the refurbishment of Hornsby Library funded from development contributions. Detailed plans have been developed for the refurbishment and a DA lodged for the work. Costs to bring the building up to current standards have resulted in an increase in likely cost to over \$5 million for the project, and a briefing has been provided to Councillors in this respect. Given the increase in projected project cost, further information is being finalised

regarding options to manage costs and funding opportunities that will be presented to Councillors for further consideration.

- Local Strategic Planning Statement - Council has prepared a draft Hornsby Local Strategic Planning Statement (draft LSPS) that sets out a 20-year vision for land use; the special character and values that are to be preserved; shared community values; and how Hornsby Shire Council will manage growth and change. The draft LSPS provides an understanding of the current planning context for Hornsby Shire under the themes of Liveable, Sustainable, Productive and Collaborative. It examines how expected changes in our population over the next 20 years will influence how we provide for our community. The planning priorities identified within the draft LSPS will help guide land use decisions and earmark changes to our local land use plans, strategies and policies over the next 20 years. The draft LSPS has been the subject of extensive community consultation and has been reviewed in response to public feedback and comments from the Greater Sydney Commission and key government agencies.

BUDGET

This Report provides the March 2020 Quarter Review of the 2019/20 Operational Plan (Budget), which, if adopted, will achieve a forecast surplus at 30 June 2020 of \$1.507 million. The predicted Budget result at 30 June 2020 is satisfactory in maintaining financial benchmark indicators in respect to liquidity.

POLICY

There are no policy implications associated with this Report.

CONCLUSION

Council's consideration of this Report ensures that relevant statutory requirements have been met. The March 2020 Quarter Review demonstrates that Council remains in a strong position to deliver local services and facilities in a financially responsible manner.



RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

The officer responsible for the preparation of this Report is the Chief Financial Officer – Duncan Chell – who can be contacted on 9847 6822.

DUNCAN CHELL
Chief Financial Officer
Corporate Support Division

GLEN MAGUS
Director - Corporate Support
Corporate Support Division

Attachments:

1.  31 March Quarterly Budget Review Statement
2.  31 March Consolidated Results

File Reference: F2019/00075

Document Number: D07906105

ITEM 2

3 REQUIREMENTS FOR CHERRYBROOK STATION STATE SIGNIFICANT PRECINCT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has nominated the State-owned land at Cherrybrook Metro Station as a State Significant Precinct (SSP).
- Under the State led, State Significant Precincts approach to the rezoning of the Government land at Cherrybrook Station, a set of study requirements has been drafted for Council and other relevant agencies to provide comment. The study requirements set out the scope of the technical studies required to support the investigations for the proposed rezoning.
- Although the study requirements are comprehensive, several amendments are recommended as outlined in this report.
- The amendments would improve the robustness of the investigations and ensure that the technical studies for the SSP will have a broader scope. The studies should include more detail than that of a site-specific rezoning application, given the history of planning for the area and the need to plan for a precinct wide approach.
- Council's submission on the draft study requirements should also include a request for an update on the status of the draft Terms of Reference. The submission should confirm that Council welcomes the opportunity to engage with the DPIE throughout the process and should nominate the Director, Planning and Compliance and the Manager, Strategic Land Use Planning to be part of the collaborative working group.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT:

1. Council note the State Government's release of the draft study requirements for the Cherrybrook Station State Significant Precinct.
2. A formal submission on the draft study requirements be forwarded to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment outlining the issues raised in Director's Report No. PL9/20.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Report is to discuss the State Government's draft study requirements for the Cherrybrook Station State Significant Precinct.

BACKGROUND

Planning for the area around Cherrybrook Station commenced in 2013 when the (then) Department of Planning and Environment (DP&E) released the North West Rail Link Corridor Strategy.

In early 2014, Urban Growth NSW (now Landcom) requested Council's participation on a Precinct Working Group under the North West Urban Transformation Program for land surrounding Cherrybrook Station. The request was accepted by Council at its meeting on 12 March 2014 and formalised under a Memorandum of Understanding on 15 June 2015.

There has been protracted dialogue and negotiation with the State Government in the years since.

In May 2017, Landcom representatives outlined plans to submit a Planning Proposal for the Developable Government Lands (DGLs) prior to the completion of a masterplan for the entire study area. Council wrote to Landcom expressing concerns that the Planning Proposal for DGLs was inconsistent with the endorsed MOU and Project Plan which provide for a 'whole of Precinct' approach in relation to technical studies, master plan and infrastructure requirements.

In June 2017, Cherrybrook Station was nominated as one of 16 Priority Precincts (known as Planned Precincts in the North District Plan) to be coordinated by the then DP&E with Transport for NSW, state agencies and local councils. Council wrote to Landcom seeking clarification of the status of the MOU signed in 2015.

In August 2017, Landcom responded to Council's correspondence confirming its intention to progress the technical studies for the entire Cherrybrook precinct in accordance with its obligations under the MOU.

In June 2018, the DP&E released a proposed amendment to State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011 (SEPP) to make the Minister of Planning and Environment the consent authority for future development on identified government-owned land, if the development meets the criteria of State Significant Development. At its meeting on 8 August 2018, Council resolved to:

1. *Forward the submission attached to Group Manager's Report No. PL21/18 concerning the proposed amendment to State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011 and objecting to the appointment of the Minister for Planning as the consent authority for future development on identified Government-owned land, if the development meets the criteria of State Significant Development, prior to the finalisation of the Precinct Plan for the Cherrybrook Station Precinct.*
2. *Write to the Minister for Planning requesting an urgent update concerning the progression of the technical studies to inform planning for the Cherrybrook Station Precinct including the finalisation of the Integrated Transport and Land Use Plan.*

In November 2018, Council considered a Notice of Motion concerning the Cherrybrook Planned precinct and resolved to write to:

1. *The Hon. Anthony Roberts MP, Minister for Planning raising concerns about the length of time it has taken to progress the planning for the Cherrybrook Planned Precinct and the*

ongoing lack of certainty about timing for finalisation of the project and to reaffirm Council's position that:

- a) *Any proposal to focus on the Government-owned land diminishes the importance of, and potentially prejudices the outcomes of, an overall strategy for education, health, housing diversity, community facilities and open space and infrastructure (including road improvements) for the entire region.*
- b) *Any proposal for rezoning of land within the Cherrybrook Planned Precinct will be accompanied by technical studies to demonstrate any increase in density would be supported by the provision of infrastructure and services for the growing community.*
- c) *Traffic and transport studies for the precinct must address impacts of development for the region and incorporate infrastructure schedules with clear identification of funding mechanisms to deliver necessary improvements to the road network.*
- d) *The lack of commitment by the State Government for the timing for the release of the technical studies for the entire precinct is resulting in significant angst and speculation in the community which must be addressed as a priority with clear commitment to project timeframes.*
- e) *Proponent led rezoning planning proposals within the Cherrybrook Planned Precinct should not be supported until planning for the area has been completed.*
- f) *The State Government should continue to consult with Council and the community in the preparation of plans for the Government owned land.*

2. *Local State members to seek their support for Council's resolution.*

In December 2019, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces advised that the State Government land at Cherrybrook Station is a matter of State planning significance that should be investigated as a State Significant Precinct (SSP).

DISCUSSION

In December 2019, Council received a letter from the Minister inviting Council to participate in a collaborative working arrangement with DPIE for the assessment of the rezoning proposal and advising that draft study requirements for the SSP would be circulated to Council before finalisation.

Following receipt of the advice from the Minister, a meeting was held in January 2020 between Council staff and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) representatives to discuss the SSP process and the opportunity for Council involvement. At meeting, Council staff indicated that any draft study requirements and terms of reference would need to be reported to a formal Council meeting and requested at least 6 weeks to provide feedback. The DPIE representatives indicated that the draft study requirements would be circulated to Council by the end of February.

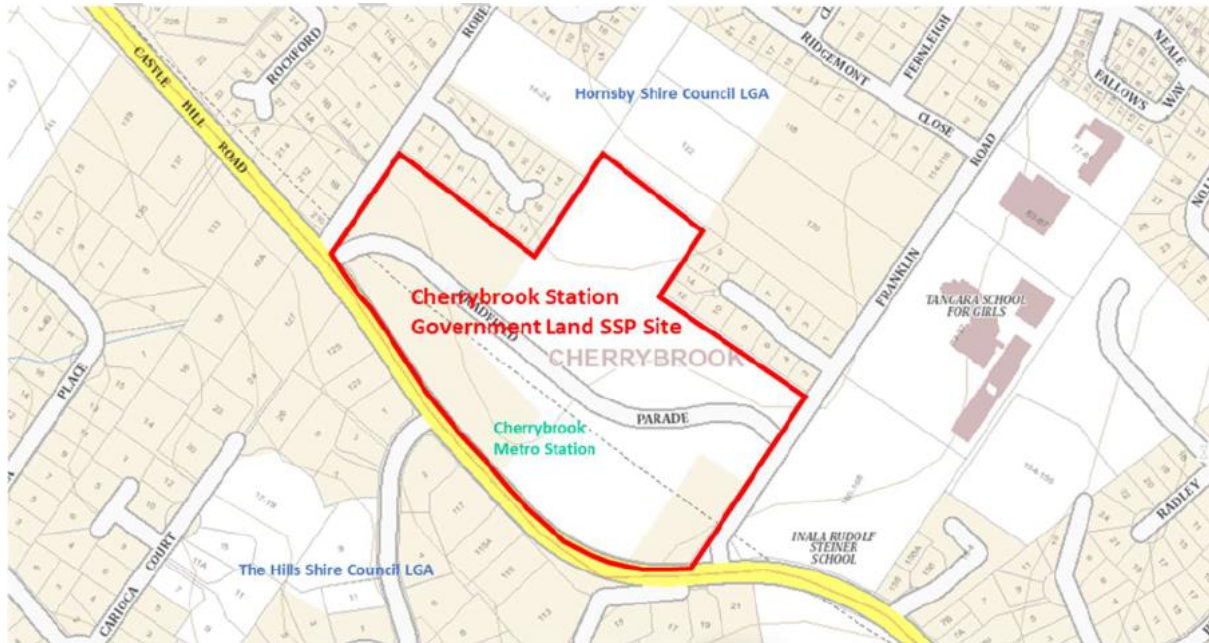
The study requirements were received on 20 April 2020 (attached), with feedback requested by 1 May 2020. A request for an extension of time has been requested to allow a report to Council and for due consideration to be given to the draft study requirements

Draft Study Requirements for Cherrybrook Station Government Land

Under the State led, State Significant Precincts approach to the rezoning of the Government land site at Cherrybrook Station, a set of study requirements has been drafted for Council and other relevant

agencies to provide comment. The study requirements set out the scope of the technical studies required to support the investigations for the proposed rezoning.

The site area for the proposed SSP rezoning comprises Cherrybrook Station, the commuter carpark, the new station access road (Bradfield Parade) and vacant land to the east of the station which was used during construction. The site is bounded by Castle Hill Road, Franklin Road and Robert Road as depicted in the figure below taken from the attached draft study requirements.



The key study requirements include a series of technical investigations to support the rezoning which appear comprehensive. The requirements are discussed below, with comments which would form a formal submission to DPIE on the study requirements.

Vision, Strategic Context and Justification

The study proposes to prepare a place-based vision, principles and master plan for the SSP site, including adjacent sites, taking into consideration state and local policies and plans.

The vision, guiding principles and justification for the proposal should be expanded and supported by a robust planning framework that encompasses and reflects the strategic outcomes for the broader Cherrybrook Precinct, which the SSP site and adjacent sites form part of.

Urban Design

The study proposes to undertake detailed analysis of the context of the site to understand the opportunities and constraints to inform the preferred development option. The urban design analysis should include a holistic future urban form scenario for the larger Cherrybrook Precinct, including relative densities, height transitions and the associated impacts, to demonstrate how the SSP site will integrate with, and respond to, the larger precinct. The constraints and capacity of the entire precinct should be set out otherwise the development of the SSP site may become a benchmark for height and density within the remainder of the precinct.

The urban design principles should be based on ecologically sustainable design and best practice to ensure the development contributes to net zero emissions by 2050. The shadow and sun access analysis should include consideration of solar photovoltaics.

Public Domain and Open Space

The study requires the provision of a framework for the long-term provision of open space and public domain. Any analysis of open space requirements should account for the cumulative growth across the broader precinct and beyond, to avoid existing open space in Hornsby and The Hills Local Government areas being burdened as the area transitions in the future.

Urban Forest

A tree canopy audit and tree and planting strategy is required to be undertaken by a Project Arborist qualified in arboriculture to Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level 5 or above, consistent with Council's requirements. Additional references to be addressed by the study should include Council's draft Urban Forest Strategy which is nearing completion.

Land Use and Planning Controls

The study proposes to outline the changes required to the *Hornsby Local Environmental Plan (HLEP) (2013)* and *Hornsby Development Control Plan (2013)* to support the future land uses on the SSP site. The justification to support the changes to the HLEP and DCP should account for future development scenarios for the wider Cherrybrook Precinct and how the proposed changes to the SSP site informs the future planning of the larger area.

Housing, Economic Analysis and Feasibility

The study proposes to undertake analysis of the housing needs and forecast the number and mix of dwellings required, including for affordable housing, to support a sustainable outcome. It also proposes to investigate the market demand for the retail/commercial components of the SSP site.

The analysis of housing demand and retail/commercial components should be undertaken in the context of investigating the capacity of the larger Cherrybrook Precinct, including the potential impacts of the proposal on the capacity of the remainder of the precinct to meet housing targets under the metropolitan and district plans.

The economic analysis and feasibility assessment should include analysis of the trade area of the proposed new centre at the Cherrybrook Station to understand the impacts of the proposal on the existing shopping centres in both Cherrybrook and Castle Hill.

Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Heritage

A desktop study for Indigenous and European Heritage (including previous studies commissioned by Landcom) is required, including a desktop review of the possible existence or record of any archaeological material and sites (both Indigenous and European) on or immediately adjacent to the SSP site that may require an archaeological assessment to be undertaken at future development stages.

Where Indigenous cultural heritage values are identified, consultation with Aboriginal people must be undertaken and documented in accordance with the Aboriginal cultural heritage consultation requirements for proponents 2010 (DECCW).

The study requirements should be amended to require consultation with the Hornsby Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) and Hornsby Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee (HATSICC) in the preparation of the Indigenous and European Heritage study.

Biodiversity

The study requires identification and assessment of the key biodiversity attributes of the site and surrounds, including the recommendations of the soon to be released Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan and the approach to protecting the existing Blue Gum High Forest areas adjacent to the site.

The proposal should retain CEEC (Blue Gum and Cumberland Plain), with local offsets prioritised within the proposal to maintain on site biodiversity values and preservation. The Ecological report should discuss impacts on common species also, not just CEEC. The following references should be added to the Appendix – Best Practice Guidelines for Blue Gum High Forest, State of NSW and Office of Environment and Heritage 2008, Recovering Bushland on the Cumberland Plain, Department of Environment and Conservation NSW 2005 and Hornsby Shire Council Green Offsets Code.

Traffic and Transport

The study proposes to undertake traffic and transport analysis which broadly aligns with the previous Cherrybrook Station Precinct Traffic and Transport Assessment. However, the study area appears to be limited to the government land, which does not account for the impact of development on the wider road network.

The study area for traffic and transport analysis should be extended to account for the wider regional network and take into consideration the existing and future development scenarios for the remainder of the Cherrybrook Precinct. The analysis should include the service levels for connecting buses to Cherrybrook Station and for commuter carparking, and account for these impacts on the wider road network. Managing vehicular and pedestrian access to the station should be a priority.

Data to inform the transport analysis should be current and obtained at least six months after the opening of Cherrybrook Station and include the Thursday and Saturday peak periods. The analysis should include assessment of active transport and identify options to improve pedestrian and cycle mobility across the larger precinct.

The preparation of the traffic and transport assessment should include an assessment on the suitability and provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and parking.

Ecologically Sustainable Development and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

The study requires a Sustainability Plan to identify the key sustainability opportunities in design, construction and ongoing operations. A sustainability assessment of the proposed should be required to reflect the directions in the NSW Climate Change Policy Framework and draft North District Plan to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Council also has a target of net zero emissions by 2050 and welcomes the assessment of achieved both net zero buildings and a net zero precinct. To further improve the sustainability of the site, the draft study requirements should also include precinct scale sustainability initiatives such as renewable energy and waste management and the sensitivity analysis on the impacts of climate change should include the increase in wind/storm events in the future.

State, Regional and Local Infrastructure

The study proposes to analyse the existing and planned infrastructure for the SSP site and provide a delivery mechanism for development contributions. Consultation is required with Council concerning the provision of required infrastructure.

The analysis of infrastructure requirements should include assessment of the costs for the public domain / open space / active and passive recreation / community and other facilities to support the proposed development and provide the financial framework for local provision which ensures ongoing maintenance does not burden Council. Further, the analysis should consider integration with, and demands for infrastructure for the larger Cherrybrook Precinct. This would entail investigating the development capacity of the entire precinct and include analysis of the delivery mechanisms for staging and contributions at the precinct level.

The cumulative growth across the broader precinct should be acknowledged in the demand for certain infrastructure items. This ultimately should be resolved as part of the SSP process. Solutions for state and regional infrastructure should be identified, planned and committed to by Government so as not to unreasonably prejudice or burden future opportunities on privately-owned land in the Precinct.

Geotechnical and Contamination

The study requires an assessment of the soil in respect to erosion, salinity and acid sulfate soils and an assessment of the proposed land uses in accordance with State Environmental Planning Policy No 55 – Remediation of Land (SEPP 55). This should be updated to reflect the Section 9.1 Direction – 2.6 Remediation of Contaminated Land which requires consideration of contamination in the assessment of planning proposals. The study requirements should also note the application of Sydney Regional Environmental Plan 20 – Hawkesbury Nepean River, which requires development consent for remediation of contaminated land. The SREP should be added to the list of references in Appendix 1.

Utilities

The study requires a utilities and infrastructure report. This should account for the cumulative growth of the wider precinct and should be expanded to include undergrounding of all utilities such as powerlines and telecommunication.

Water Quality Flooding and Stormwater

The study requires a concept Stormwater Management Plan in accordance with Council's policies.

The relevant sections of the Hornsby Development Control Plan 2013 (Part 1C.1.2. Stormwater Management) should be referenced, which require a Water Sensitive Urban Design Strategy. Accordingly, the proposal should consider:

- Gross pollution screening, biofiltration/wetlands/raingardens, urban street tree landscapes systems, vegetated swales, infiltration buffers strips.
- Maintaining natural stream flows in watercourses.
- Conservation and enhancement of watercourses and tributaries.
- Protection of riparian corridors.
- Protecting and maintaining groundwater resources.
- Identification and protection of environmentally sensitive areas.
- Increasing the diversity of natural habitats within the suburban landscape.
- Minimisation of diffuse and point source pollution.
- Controlling surface water pollution at the source during development by applying erosion and sediment controls and soil and water management practices.
- Developing water consumption and conservation plans that include water recycling and re-use programs.

Noise, Vibration, Air Quality and Wind

The study requires a preliminary noise, vibration impact and air quality assessment for the proposal and demonstration that the proposal can meet the recommended noise, vibration and air quality standards and/ or appropriate mitigations measures can be achieved on the site. This includes any

noise or air quality impacts potentially generated from the metro tunnel and open cut station. There is also a requirement to address potential wind impacts and amelioration.

Bushfire

The study requires Planning for Bushfire Protection to be addressed and ensure any Bushfire Asset Protection Zones can be located entirely within the site. The Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Bushfire Risk Management Plan 2016 is referenced in the Appendix. However, the Hornsby Shire Council Bushfire Prone Land Map should also be referenced.

Consultation

A community consultation strategy is required, outlining an appropriate and justified level of consultation with the community, landowners, Hornsby Shire Council, The Hills Shire Council, other relevant State and Federal government agencies, local Aboriginal community, Inala school and associated facilities, Tangara Catholic School and other community/interest group stakeholders, noting that the Councils should have a high level of involvement throughout the process.

To achieve this, the study should require input from Hornsby Council, including directly from Councillors, on the proposed consultation and identification of all relevant stakeholders. The proponent should also work with Council to ensure residents are informed through the consultation process and aware of the opportunities and methods of feedback, noting that Council's role would be to share information and not to endorse the project.

Draft Terms of Reference for Cherrybrook Station Government Land

The December 2019 letter from the Minister advised that both draft study requirements and draft Terms of Reference would be circulated to Council to outline the process for the collaborative working between Council and the DPIE for the assessment of the rezoning proposal. However, these have not yet been received.

Council's submission on the draft study requirements should also include a request for an update on the draft Terms of Reference. The submission should confirm that Council welcomes the opportunity to engage with the DPIE throughout the process and should nominate the Director, Planning and Compliance and the Manager, Strategic Land Use Planning to be part of the collaborative working group.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to endorsement by Council, a submission will be sent to DPIE outlining the comments and issues raised in this report.

In addition to the issues outlined in this report, the submission will reinforce the concerns previously raised by Council that any proposal that is limited to the Government-owned land only will diminish the importance of, and potentially undermine the outcomes of, an overall strategy for the larger Cherrybrook Precinct.

The submission will confirm that Council welcomes the opportunity to engage with the DPIE through the SSP process and will nominate staff to be part of the collaborative working group.

BUDGET

There are no budgetary implications associated with this Report at this time.

CONCLUSION

This Report updates Council on the nomination of the State-owned land at Cherrybrook Metro Station as a State Significant Precinct.

The DPIE has invited Council to provide comments on the requirements for the draft study for the Cherrybrook State Significant Precinct.

Although the draft study requirements are comprehensive, it is recommended that a submission outlining the issues raised in this report be sent to DPIE to improve the robustness of the study and ensure a precinct wide approach to planning, and infrastructure assessments.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

The officer responsible for the preparation of this Report is the Manager, Strategic Land Use Planning, Katherine Vickery who can be contacted on 9847 6744.

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Attachments:

1.  Draft Study Requirements_Cherrybrook Station Government Land SSP

File Reference: F2012/00597-03
Document Number: D07902707

5 COUNCIL RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT EXTENDED POWERS OF PLANNING MINISTER

COUNCILLOR HEYDE TO MOVE

That Council write to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces seeking confirmation that:

1. The State Government's actions to adapt the planning system during the State of Emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure continued productivity and investment will not undermine well-established statutory opportunities for community participation in environmental planning and assessment.
2. The Planning System Acceleration Program will make it a priority to balance the imperative of economic stimulus with the other objects of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 including facilitating ecologically sustainable development, promoting the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage, and promoting good design and amenity of the built environment.
3. All Orders made under the terms of COVID-19 Legislative Amendments (Emergency Measures) Act 2020 will cease to have effect following the end of the State of Emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. That any proposal to implement permanent changes to legislation would only be considered after consultation with local government and the community.

Note from Councillor

The NSW Government has indicated it will cut red tape and fast-track planning processes to keep people in jobs and the construction industry moving throughout the COVID-19 crisis. However, the economic benefits of these changes in legislation must not come at the expense of the environment, the character of our Shire or community consultation. These are equally essential considerations in the planning process. Planning decision create permanent changes. Even in times of crisis, good planning decisions should be made in consideration of the impact of development on the environment, local communities and neighbouring residents.

I understand that the Planning System Acceleration Program aims to fast-track assessments of State Significant Developments, development applications and rezoning. Although no projects within Hornsby Shire have been identified within the first tranche of projects released by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, at a recent forum conducted by Local Government NSW, the Minister confirmed that additional projects will be added to the list each month. There is an expectation that assessments of these major projects will be completed within 4 weeks. I am concerned that the focus on economic stimulus and speed in decision-making may come at the expense of long-term, quality outcomes for our community and the environment.

On 25 March 2020, the NSW Government introduced the *COVID-19 Legislation Amendments (Emergency Measures) Act 2020*. The legislative changes allow the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to make an order for development to be carried out without the normal planning approval to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, I am aware the Minister has made seven orders including extending days for construction work, allowing flexibility for food trucks, temporary workers' accommodation, extending retail trading hours, expanding home businesses opportunities and supporting supermarket deliveries.

The preparation of planning controls should be community-led and local councils are best placed to make decisions about planning that is appropriate for their local area and constituents. Although these orders may seek to respond to short term demands created by the current epidemic, changes such as extended construction and trading hours have the potential to disrupt the amenity of adjacent properties and local communities through additional noise and traffic movements. Therefore, it is important that the Government confirm that these arrangements are temporary and local council controls and conditions of development consent will prevail when the current crisis ends.

Attachments:

There are no attachments for this report.

File Reference: F2004/07218-04

Document Number: D07909457

6 RE-ESTABLISHING THE SHIRE'S TREE CANOPY**COUNCILLOR TILBURY TO MOVE****THAT Council:**

1. Note the significant steps taken in improving our tree canopy by planting over 19,000 trees in the past year and a half as part of a comprehensive tree planting program despite challenges such as drought, major storms, community concerns surrounding bushfire risk and now the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Note that care has been taken by qualified arborists in selecting planting locations and appropriate tree species so that the right tree has been identified for the right location balancing the protection and enhancement of the urban tree canopy and ecology with the protection of human life and property as a key aspect of this program. This has given consideration to bushfire concerns and interaction with utilities such as overhead power lines.
3. Note that the planting program has specifically been designed to be participatory, with residents engaged and provided with the opportunity to have input into the tree species to be planted on their nature strip, or alternatively to decline to participate in the program. Residents have also been provided with free trees to improve their properties.
4. Note that tree planting is an effective stimulus project with long lasting economic, environmental and aesthetic benefits and accordingly actively seek opportunities for stimulus funding to support Council's tree planting program, particularly as it aligns with the Greater Sydney Commission's objective to increase urban tree canopy cover to 40% and the NSW Government's election commitment to plant 5 Million Trees by 2030.
5. Write to Ausgrid and relevant Local Members of Parliament, seeking a commitment to progressively place powerlines underground in high risk areas as part of their network maintenance and renewal strategy, as this would minimise major interruptions to residents and businesses associated with extended blackouts whilst improving the amenity of our streetscapes and allowing for enhanced tree canopy cover.
6. Maintain our commitment to enhancing our tree canopy by continuing our tree planting program into the future.

Note from Councillor

It is well established that a mature tree canopy provides a wide range of economic and environmental benefits including lower temperatures, improved air and water quality, and higher property values. Our community recognises this and has consistently identified the natural environment as key reason they value living in the Shire, with protecting our extensive tree canopy a priority.

Council has adopted an ambitious tree planting program that seeks to improve the environment and local amenity. This program is well advanced with over 19,000 trees planted to date despite challenges it has had to confront such as drought, major storms, community concern surrounding bushfire risk and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

The value of trees is also recognised by the Greater Sydney Commission who have an objective (objective 30) to increase Sydney's urban tree canopy cover to 40%, and the NSW Government who made an election commitment to plant 5 million trees by 2030.

Even with the above we recognise that some residents may hold concerns regarding trees, whether it is associated with perceptions about danger, bushfire or the like. These concerns naturally increase following major storms, or particularly severe bushfire seasons like the one we have just experienced.

Our tree planting program has been specifically designed by Council's arborists to balance the protection and enhancement of the urban tree canopy and ecology with the protection of human life and property and we need to ensure that this is effectively communicated to our residents. I personally have found that when the thoughtful way that our tree planting program has been designed is shared with residents many of their concerns such as bushfire, safety and sight lines can be addressed.

Overhead powerlines are also a regular point that residents raise with me, particularly after blackouts which in some areas are too frequent; and following storm events. We know that with a changing climate storms will become more frequent and intense – something that we have experienced in Hornsby in 2018/19 and 2019/20 and Council on behalf of our residents should call on Ausgrid and the NSW Government to progressively place powerlines underground. This would not only reduce the number of blackouts our residents experience but improve the amenity of our streetscapes and allow for enhanced tree canopy cover.

It would also form the basis of a successful stimulus project with long lasting economic, social and environmental benefits.

Attachments:

There are no attachments for this report.

File Reference: F2013/00811-015

Document Number: D07909695