



MELTON CITY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the Melton City Council**

19 May 2020

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MELTON CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MELTON CITY COUNCIL
HELD VIA A VIDEOCONFERENCE ON 19 MAY 2020 AT 7:00PM

Present: Cr L Carli (Mayor)
Cr S Abboushi (Deputy Mayor)
Cr K Hardy
Cr G Kesic
Cr K Majdlik
Cr M Mendes
Cr S Ramsey
Cr Y Sebire
Cr B Turner

Mr K Tori, Chief Executive Officer
Mr M Heaney, General Manager Community Services
Mr L Shannon, General Manager Planning and Development
Ms LJ Mellan, Executive Manager Property and Projects
Ms C Denyer, Manager Legal and Governance
Mr J Whitfield, Governance Coordinator
Ms R Bartlett, Governance Officer

1. APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Nil.

2. DECLARATION OF ANY PECUNIARY INTEREST, OTHER INTEREST OR CONFLICT OF INTEREST OF ANY COUNCILLOR

Nil.

3. RESUMPTION OF DEBATE OR OTHER BUSINESS CARRIED OVER FROM A PREVIOUS MEETING

A meeting was held on Thursday 14 May 2020 commencing at 7pm to consider financial hardship mitigation measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic See **Appendix 1** for the Agenda report for the 14 May 2020 meeting. (Please note that this report in **Appendix 1** has its own Appendices 1 and 2)

By 10.30pm Council had not reached a decision as to the financial hardship mitigation measures. Specifically, debate had not yet commenced in relation to a motion, moved by Councillor Ramsey and seconded by Councillor Turner.

A resolution to extend the meeting by 45 minutes was not carried. Notwithstanding the lost procedural motion, Council then resolved to hold a meeting on 19 May 2020 to deal with the un-debated motion.

The un-debated motion, moved by Cr Ramsey and seconded by Cr Turner is set out below:

1. *That Council vary its Financial Hardship Policy, effective immediately, to:*
 - a) *On application, provide each eligible ratepayer experiencing financial hardship access to a waiver of \$200 for the 4th quarter 2019/20 rates*
 - b) *Accept as evidence of eligibility for financial hardship the possession of a Current Personal Centrelink Reference No (CRN) and in receipt of a welfare payment (child care rebates excluded)*
 - c) *Require alternative evidence of Financial Hardship, to the satisfaction of the General Manager Corporate Services, from applicants without a CRN*
 - d) *Council review all programmes to find savings that would underpin Budget shortfall.*
 - e) *Councillors review Capital Works initiatives in the Draft 2020/2021 Budget.*
2. *That officers provide a report to the September 2020 Council meeting detailing the number of ratepayers who have received the waiver under this provision and the cost to Council to allow Council to measure the success or otherwise of the waiver.*
3. *That Council officers prepare a draft 2020/21 Budget for Councillor consideration that is based on a 2% general rate increase, with a general financial hardship waiver pursuant to Section 171 of the Local Government Act applied to residential owner occupied properties, of the amount equivalent to 2% of the general rate levied on each property with the objectives of:*
 - a. *stimulating the local economy;*
 - b. *easing the financial burden on owner occupier ratepayers during an unexpected period of severe financial downturn; and*
 - c. *assisting those residential owner occupier ratepayers to be able to meet their rates liability when amounts become due and payable,*

and that the waiver apply, based on Council's records and without the need for any current eligible rate payer to apply for such waiver, to the 1st quarter instalment of the 2020/21 general rate.

Cr Majdlik foreshadowed the following Motion:

1. *Council officers also include in the 2020/21 Draft Budget an option for Councillors to consider a Zero percent increase on rates.*
2. *If the rates for an owner-occupier has increased (due to the valuation of their property from the previous year) council consider waiving that amount (upon application) to ensure that no owner occupier rate payer is disadvantaged.*
3. *Include in a future Budget briefing the Net Effect that a 2% increase and a 2% waiver will, in reality, have on ratepayers particularly in the 2021/2022 year.*
4. *Council consider in the 2020/21 Draft Budget a general hardship waiver pursuant to section 171 of the Local Government Act applied to residential owner occupied properties, including residents who are renting within the municipality, on an agreed amount, to help assist residents to pay for either their animal registration, kindergarten fees, or waste management fees within the 2020/21 financial year, to help stimulate the local economy and help ease the financial burden of our residents during the COVID-19 Global Pandemic.*
5. *The above details to be discussed during future Budget deliberations.*

Cr Kesic foreshadowed the following Motion:

That Council:

- a. *grant a waiver of \$100 to residential owner occupiers pursuant to section 171 of the Local Government Act 1989 based on a general financial hardship resulting from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic who would not fall within the category under Point 1 under the Motion in Item 3.1 in tonight's agenda.*

Motion

Crs Ramsey/Turner

1. That Council vary its Financial Hardship Policy, effective immediately, to:
 - a) On application, provide each eligible ratepayer experiencing financial hardship access to a waiver of \$200 for the 4th quarter 2019/20 rates.
 - b) Accept as evidence of eligibility for financial hardship the possession of a Current Personal Centrelink Reference No (CRN) and in receipt of a welfare payment (child care rebates excluded).
 - c) Require alternative evidence of Financial Hardship, to the satisfaction of the General Manager Corporate Services, from applicants without a CRN. That the Financial Hardship Policy be reviewed by Council.
 - d) Council review all programmes to find savings that would underpin Budget shortfall.
 - e) Councillors review Capital Works initiatives in the Draft 2020/2021 Budget.
2. That officers provide a report to the September 2020 Council meeting detailing the number of ratepayers who have received the waiver under this provision and the cost to Council to allow Council to measure the success or otherwise of the waiver.
3. That Council officers prepare a draft 2020/21 Budget for Councillor consideration that is based on a 2% general rate increase, with a general financial hardship waiver pursuant to Section 171 of the Local Government Act applied to residential owner occupied properties,

of the amount equivalent to 2% of the general rate levied on each property with the objectives of:

- a. stimulating the local economy;
- b. easing the financial burden on owner occupier ratepayers during an unexpected period of severe financial downturn; and
- c. assisting those residential owner occupier ratepayers to be able to meet their rates liability when amounts become due and payable,

and that the waiver apply, based on Council's records and without the need for any current eligible rate payer to apply for such waiver, to the 1st quarter instalment of the 2020/21 general rate.

CARRIED

Cr Ramsey called for a division thereby setting aside the vote.

For:

Crs Abboushi, Carli, Hardy, Kesic, Majdlik, Mendes, Ramsey, Sebire and Turner

Against:

Nil

The Mayor declared the Motion CARRIED

Motion

Crs Majdlik/Kesic

1. Council officers also include in the 2020/21 Draft Budget an option for Councillors to consider a Zero percent increase on rates.
2. If the rates for an owner-occupier has increased (due to the valuation of their property from the previous year) council consider waiving that amount (upon application) to ensure that no owner occupier rate payer is disadvantaged.
3. Include in a future Budget briefing the Net Effect that a 2% increase and a 2% waiver will, in reality, have on ratepayers particularly in the 2021/2022 year.
4. Council consider in the 2020/21 Draft Budget a general hardship waiver pursuant to section 171 of the Local Government Act applied to residential owner occupied properties, including residents who are renting within the municipality, on an agreed amount, to help assist residents to pay for either their animal registration, kindergarten fees, or waste management fees within the 2020/21 financial year, to help stimulate the local economy and help ease the financial burden of our residents during the COVID-19 Global Pandemic.
5. The above details to be discussed during future Budget deliberations.

CARRIED

Cr Majdlik called for a division thereby setting aside the vote.

For:

Crs Abboushi, Carli, Hardy, Kesic, Majdlik, Mendes, Ramsey, Sebire and Turner

Against:

Nil

The Mayor declared the Motion CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.

The meeting resumed at 8:23pm.

Cr Kesic withdrew his foreshadowed Motion.

3.1 COVID-19 FINANCIAL HARDSHIP MITIGATION MEASURES

Author: Kel Tori - Chief Executive Officer
Presenter: Kel Tori - Chief Executive Officer

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To determine the Council's financial hardship mitigation measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

RECOMMENDATION:

No officer recommendation.

REPORT

1. Executive Summary

At its advertised Meeting held Monday 11 May 2020, the Council resolved to hold a Meeting of Council on Thursday 14 May 2020 to consider financial hardship mitigation measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Officers have provided Councillors with all relevant financial and legal information in order for a decision to be made including but not limited to the report set out at Item 12.9 of the agenda for the 11 May 2020 Council Meeting, of copy of which is attached at **Appendix 1**. The legal advice obtained on this matter is also attached at **Appendix 2**.

2. Background/Issues

At its advertised Meeting held Monday 11 May 2020, Council considered at Item 15.5 Notice of Motion 689 (Cr Carli).

Notice of Motion 689 proposed as follows:

That Council:

- a) *Grant a waiver to residential owner occupiers pursuant to Section 171 of the Local Government Act 1989 based on general financial hardship resulting from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the objectives of:*
 - a. *stimulating the local economy;*
 - b. *easing the financial burden on owner occupier ratepayers during an unexpected period of severe financial downturn; and*
 - c. *assisting those residential owner occupier ratepayers to be able to meet their rates liability when amounts become due and payable.*
- b) *Apply the waiver, based on Council's records and without the need for any eligible rate payer to apply for such waiver, to the 4th quarter instalment of 2019/20 general rate, and*
- c) *Determine the waiver to be in the amount of \$100 per eligible rateable assessment.*

Cr Ramsey foreshadowed a Motion should this Notice of Motion be defeated.

Notice of Motion 689 was debated, then voted on and was Lost.

Cr Ramsey then moved the foreshadowed Motion (seconded Cr Mendes) as follows:

That Notice of Motion 689 (Cr Carli) be deferred to a meeting of Council to be held at 7:00pm on Thursday 14 May 2020 and that in the interim our Mayor convene a Councillor workshop at 7:00pm on Wednesday 13 May 2020 to explore all options.

This Motion was debated, then voted on and was Carried.

Officers have provided Councillors with all relevant financial and legal information in order for a decision to be made including but not limited to the report set out at Item 12.9 of the agenda for the 11 May 2020 Council Meeting, of copy of which is attached at **Appendix 1**. The legal advice obtained on this matter is also attached at **Appendix 2**.

3. Council and Wellbeing Plan Reference and Policy Reference

The Melton City Council 2017-2021 Council and Wellbeing Plan references:

1. A proud, inclusive and safe community: A City of people leading happy and healthy lives
 - 1.2 A safe and equitable community.

4. Financial Considerations

Financial considerations were set out in in Item 12.9 of the 11 May 2020 Council agenda at **Appendix 1**. These will be further explored at the Councillor workshop scheduled for 13 May 2020.

5. Consultation/Public Submissions

There has been no direct public consultation on this issue.

All Consultation has been between Councillors and/or Councillors and staff.

A Councillor workshop is scheduled to occur on Wednesday 13 May 2020.

Councillors have been provided with various financial briefings by staff over the last few weeks as minuted and reflected in the Agenda of 11 May 2020.

6. Risk Analysis

The financial effects and risks to the Council, as an entity, will depend on the financial hardship mitigation measures Council resolves to put in place. Different financial scenarios and their effect must be considered, including the impact (if any) to existing and planned services and/or capital works.

The effects of any mitigation measures upon Council as an entity must then be balanced against the effects of any mitigation measures to Council as a local government area, that is, the effects upon the community. Financial measures may have the effect of stimulating the local economy, allowing residents to better survive and allowing residents to more easily meet their rates liability.

Highly dependent on the quantum and also the details as to entitlement/process of any mitigation measures, the reputational risks include being perceived as financially reckless, financially strategic or somewhere in between.

7. Options

To be determined.

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Item 12.9 - Melton City Council COVID-19 Program Report - dated 11 May 2020
2. Email and Legal Advice - dated 24 April 2020 - **CONFIDENTIAL**

Designated as confidential by the Chief Executive Officer pursuant to Section 77(2)(c) and Section 89(2)(f) of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

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12.9 MELTON CITY COUNCIL COVID-19 PROGRAM

Author: Peter Bean - General Manager Corporate Services
Presenter: Peter Bean - General Manager Corporate Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Council with an overview of Council's response to date to the Covid-19 pandemic impact on the community and businesses in the City of Melton.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council note the report.

REPORT**1. Executive Summary**

The Federal Government activated the Federal Emergency Health Response Plan in February 2020 due to the emerging concerns of the CoronaVirus (Covid-19) and its rapid spread of infection in certain parts of the world. On 11 March 2020 the World Health Organisation declared Coronavirus COVID-19 a pandemic which was immediately followed by the State Government declaring Victoria to be in a State of Emergency. A first ever National Cabinet has been established to coordinate a national response. Respective Federal and State Government health and economic packages have been announced.

Having considered all financial support packages being provided by both Federal and State Governments to support members of the public as well as business owners, Council staff have formulated a position that integrates in with the offerings at both a Federal and State level but also provides in areas that other opportunities have missed.

2. Background/Issues

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most serious and pressing public health, social and economic issue facing the local community. Melton already experiences a number of poor socio-economic issues across the community, and is particularly vulnerable to both the health and economic effects of an ongoing and prolonged COVID-19 crisis.

Melton staff began putting measures in place in late February and continued to elevate in accordance with official advice and information – notwithstanding the required rate of change and significance of the impacts is unprecedented and has required a complete re-prioritisation of Council's internal and external activities. The relief package that has been developed is a whole-of-council staged approach, with a focus on short term relief and direct support measures and a longer term strategy to assist the recovery of the community and local businesses.

In developing these measures, consideration has been given to various State and Federal government support and economic stimulus packages. The relief packages developed by other Councils has been of assistance to staff to ensure we are consistent with what others are putting out and ensuring that we are seen to be responding appropriately in the eyes of our community.

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Council must continue to manage its revenue streams from an intergenerational perspective so as to continue to deliver critical services and infrastructure to the community, and to ensure it does not disadvantage future generations both in any consequent borrowings or significant variations from Council’s rating strategy that could compromise the Council’s sustainability as a consequence. It is most important to recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic will cause significant financial hardship for some members of the community and Council can, in certain circumstances, provide assistance, however must ensure it has the resources necessary to support the community in the recovery phase.

A number of Councillors have requested that Council’s ability to provide a general waiver in respect of the final instalment of 2019/20 rates be investigated as an option to provide immediate support to residential owner/occupier ratepayers. In order to do this Council must form the view that a “class” of ratepayers are in “financial hardship” as a collective. Council could then apply a general hardship waiver at a specified level to that “class” of ratepayer.

Developing the relief package it has been necessary for Council to recast its financial forecasts, and Council has deferred the Draft 2020/21 budget deliberations in order to take account of the pandemic impact, and as best it can to provide for funds to support the most vulnerable residents in need. It is not possible at this stage to accurately forecast the full economic impact of COVID- 19, therefore a degree of agility underpinned by regular financial monitoring and reporting will be required.

The relief package for Melton residents currently is as follows:

<p>Service Delivery</p> <p>Personal Care – continued for those who are most vulnerable and have no support Delivered meals (MOW) – expanded service Property Maintenance – essential safety services only Taxi support for medical appointments Care Assessments – on the phone Virtual Storytime – Library website Library e-collections available on-line with expanded offering Frozen all Library fines and extended hiring dates New Parent Groups online and are supported by new Facebook groups. Animal Registration - No follow up on reminder notices, failure to register or Domestic Animal Businesses will occur until October. No infringements being issued (Cost \$186K) Waiver of impoundment pet release fees for residents experiencing financial hardship (Est Cost \$4K)</p>
<p>Sporting Clubs</p> <p>Ceased all fees and charges for Sporting Clubs and Associations Reviewing our assistance level for Sporting Clubs and Associations that are experiencing financial hardship</p>
<p>Community Support</p> <p>For all community facilities, we are no longer taking bookings for dates within the next six weeks. Bookings are being accepted for facility hire for dates after the 1 May, however these are being treated as tentative bookings only at this stage. For providers/groups cancelling room hire, they are being provided a refund if they have already paid for the hire. All hirers, casual or ongoing have been contacted and informed of the cancellation of their bookings.</p>

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<p>All casual hirers that had paid for a booking up to 30 June 2020, that has now been cancelled, have been provided with a 100% refund. All bookings (ongoing or casual) have been cancelled up to 30 June 2020. We have put in place a new maximum room capacity limit for all bookable spaces. Room setups and seating has been adjusted to observe these limits and the social distancing model</p> <p>External third parties with room bookings can still utilise their bookings (within the social distancing guidelines) - Only if the booking of the room/space at our facility is considered a place of work and these few organisations have been advised to abide by all social distancing requirements.</p> <p>The municipal emergency response team has been meeting to enable our ability to provide assistance to community members as appropriate. The Community Care team is integral to the community facing efforts in relation to a pandemic emergency. Ceased all Council delivered community events and programs.</p>
<p>Local Business Support</p> <p>Free A-Frames provided to cafes and restaurants in retail precincts to promote they are open for business Open for Business Campaign - weekly newspaper ads in the Star Weekly. (\$25K) Venture Melton Business Network – free membership (\$79,200) Planning fees waived for six months relating to commercial use and development Waiver of 2020/21 business permit renewal fees \$540k (Food Act renewals, Street Trader, Outdoor Dining Permits, A Frame Permits and Health Act)</p> <p>Amenity Protection – Waived Street Trader Permits (\$4k) Relaxed Parking enforcement (Revenue loss \$90k / month) Health & Building - Food & Health Registrations have been waived (\$380k) Added 6 extra immunisation sessions for eligible residents to attend for influenza vaccination.</p>
<p>Financial Support</p> <p>COVID-19 Financial Assistance Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waiver of interest on rates (To date cost \$160k) - Relax deferral rates and charges - suspension of all legal action for rates & charges

3. Council and Wellbeing Plan Reference and Policy Reference

The Melton City Council 2017-2021 Council and Wellbeing Plan references:

1. A proud, inclusive and safe community: A City of people leading happy and healthy lives
 - 1.2 *A safe and equitable community.*

4. Financial Considerations

The financial implications for the program being offered are still being calculated but the isolation rules also have seen the ceasing of any functions, events, and gatherings which

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has led to savings. This also includes not hosting training and development classes through the neighbourhood houses.

The general "hardship waiver" referred to above for residential owner occupied properties would cost an additional \$4million approx. for each \$100 in value.

5. Consultation/Public Submissions

The Melton Council COVID-19 Crisis Management Team has been meeting and working daily on this issue, and has been responsible for engaging and consulting internally and externally in relation to the development of its Response & Recovery Strategy.

Council have been informed as to the active program to contact businesses to establish what support is required. Sporting and Service Clubs have also been spoken to about Council's desire to work with them during these challenging times

6. Risk Analysis

The risks and challenges associated with what needs to be done in this response environment is considered and addressed daily via the Crisis Management Team. A recovery team has been meeting infrequently to ensure it is capable of meeting any immediate needs going forward.

7. Options

Staff believe that all immediate and foreseen needs are being worked through and addressed via the Crisis Management Team.

The provision of specific relief to ratepayers through a form of general hardship waiver in respect of the 4th instalment of 2019/20 rates can be incorporated into the package should Council so determine.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Nil

4. URGENT BUSINESS

Nil.

3. CLOSE OF BUSINESS

The meeting closed at 8:24pm.

Confirmed

Dated this

.....CHAIRPERSON