



**muswellbrook  
shire council**

**Muswellbrook Shire Council**

# **ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING**

## **SUPPLEMENTARY BUSINESS PAPER**

### **31 MARCH 2020**



# Order of Business

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## 11 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

### 11.5 RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM MANEX MEETING HELD 26 MARCH 2020

<b>Attachments:</b>	Nil
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Fiona Plesman - General Manager
<b>Author:</b>	Derek Finnigan - Director - Community Infrastructure
<b>Community Plan Issue:</b>	<i>A Council that is well managed, efficient and properly resourced and that is responsive to its communities and stakeholders</i>
<b>Community Plan Goal:</b>	<i>Maintain a strong focus on financial discipline to enable Council to properly respond to the needs of the communities it serves.</i>
<b>Community Plan Strategy:</b>	<i>Appropriate matters are reported to Council in a timely manner in accordance with the Financial Control and Reporting Policy.</i>

#### PURPOSE

The report requests Council's endorsement of the recommendations arising from the meeting of Council's MANEX team conducted on Thursday, 26 March 2020.

#### OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

**Council endorses the recommendations detailed in the report.**

**Moved:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Seconded:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### BACKGROUND

Council's MANEX team, led by the General Manager, meets on a regular basis in order to consider a range of operational matters impacting upon the business of Council. In order to streamline the Council meeting process under the current electronic meeting arrangements, it is suggested that a range of operational matters be considered by MANEX, for which recommendations are made for Council's consideration through the medium of a consolidated Council MANEX report.

#### CONSULTATION

Consultation with Council's Mayor, Councillor Rush, and Council's General Manager, Ms Fiona Plesman, has been carried out in relation to the report.

#### CONSULTATION WITH COUNCILLOR SPOKESPERSON

No consultation has been carried out with Council's Councillor Spokespersons in relation to the report.

#### REPORT

Council's MANEX team is Council's senior management team, led by Council's General Manager. The MANEX team meets on a regular basis to consider a range of operational matters that either currently or may in the future influence the operational business of Council.

As a result of the electronic meeting arrangements required now for Council meetings, it is considered that the provision of a single report, consolidating MANEX's recommendations that require Council's

endorsement, would streamline both the Council meeting process and Council business. The matters reported through this report are generally intended to be operational matters only. Previously, the matters included in this report would have required discrete reports to be submitted to Council.

## **1. INCREASE OPERATIONAL FUNDING – ANIMAL SHELTER**

### **Synopsis**

It is anticipated that there will be insufficient funds to cover veterinary expenses related to the operation of the Animal Shelter. The report requests a permanent annual increase of \$5,500 for veterinary services. Further, the report seeks an increase in funding to enable weekend operations, and delegations for the General Manager to move funds from Salaries to Materials and Contracts, as necessary, to maintain the Animal Shelter operations using contract staff.

There are expected to be insufficient funds in the Impounding budget to cover the cost of Veterinary Services and weekend staffing of the Animal Shelter. A minor increase in funds will ensure Council can meet the requirements of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*.

### Funding for weekend operations

The 2019-20 budget allocation for Salaries and Wages (Impounding Expenses Casual) on 1 July 2020 was \$7,000. Expenses to 1 March 2020 have been \$6,659. With four months to go, the final expenditure for Salaries and Wages (Impounding Expenses Casual) is estimated to be approximately \$10,000.

An annual increase in Salaries and Wages (Impounding Expenses Casual) is being requested.

### Flexibility for staffing on weekends

There are two veterinary clinics in Muswellbrook, and a number in the upper Hunter. As these clinics have a similar requirement to provide care for animals on their premises 7 days per week, and their staff generally have Cert III training in Animal Studies, it is suggested that a reliable approach to managing weekend care of animals, and helping with the workload when the Animal Shelter Coordinator is on leave, is to seek quotes from the veterinary clinics to provide this resource. A transfer of funds from Salaries and Wages (Impounding Expenses Casual) to Materials and Contracts would be required to enable this to occur. As there is expected to be a trial of the proposal, where both casuals and veterinary clinic staff may be used, it is requested that the General Manager be provided a delegation to move funds between the two budget areas as requested.

### Increased veterinary services budget

The 2019-20 budget allocation for veterinary services on 1 July 2020 was \$10,404. Expenses to 1 March 2020 have been \$11,556. With four months to go, the final expenditure on veterinary expenses is estimated to be approximately \$16,000. As it is considered unlikely that there will be a future reduction in animals passing through the animal shelter, an ongoing annual budget increase in this area is being requested.

For 2019-20, it is requested that this budget be increased by \$5,500 through the March Budget Review.

### **Financial implications**

An identified source of funding for the requested adjustments in funding is the Legal Expenses budget in the Environmental Planning Area. Since Council employed a Corporate Lawyer, the planning and building team have had only limited need to seek external legal advice. The allocated Legal Expenses budget in the Environmental Planning area for 2019-20 was approximately \$31,000, and to date no expenses have been incurred against this budget. A permanent reduction in this budget area by \$15,500 would still leave funds for incidental legal expenses.

### **Chief Financial Officer's comments**

The proposed Legal Expenses budget line item sits in the Environmental Planning Business Unit, so if this funding request is approved, it will require the transfer of \$15,500 from the Environmental Services legal budget to the Sustainability Business Unit for 2019/20 and the transfer of \$15,900 from the legal budget to the Sustainability Business Unit in 2020/21.

### **MANEX recommendation**

- i. That the 2019-20 budget adjustment requests be considered through the March 2020 budget review process; and
- ii. That the requested ongoing structural budget adjustments be considered through the 2020-21 budget development process.

## **2. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE RECRUITMENT**

### **Synopsis**

The report requests consideration of two structural wage adjustments that will facilitate the employment of two positions. In neither case are additional wages being requested. The report requests only the adjustment of existing budgeted wages:

- i. The Water & Wastewater Coordinator role is to be realigned to a Customer Service and Administration Team Leader role. The current grading of the role is Grade 3 Level 5. The Water & Wastewater Coordinator position is funded from the Water Reserve. The report requests the reallocation of the Water Fund wages for this role to be moved to the General Fund in order to fund the Customer Service and Administration Team Leader position.

If this can be done, then we will be able to offset the wage adjustment by reducing the overhead that the Water Fund pays the General Fund. This will result in zero net budgetary effect, and the expenditure will be located in the correct fund.

- ii. Following the resignation of the Water & Wastewater (W&W) Operator (P108-1), recruitment to the position has been carried out, and the preferred candidate is an internal Council officer who currently holds the position of Works Operator (P168-30). The W&W Operator (P108-1) position is graded at Grade 2 Level 2. The Works Operator (P168-30) position is graded at Grade 2 Level 4. In order for an offer of employment to be made to the preferred candidate for the W&W Operator (P108-1) position, it is requested that the Grade and Level for the two positions be switched. That is, the grade of the W&W Operator (P108-1) position becomes Grade 2 Level 4, and the grade of the Works Operator (P168-3) position becomes Grade 2 Level 2. This would result in zero net budgetary impact.

### **Financial implications**

As no increase in wages is being requested, if approved, the requested wage adjustments will have no net budgetary impact.

### **MANEX recommendation**

The wage adjustments identified in the report are to be managed through the March 2020 budget review process.

## **3. AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP CEREMONIES CODE**

### **Synopsis**

The new *Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code (2019)* took effect in September 2019. The report seeks Council's endorsement of suggested changes to the existing Australian Citizenship process within Muswellbrook Shire.

The following list represents examples of some of the Dress Codes which have been included on Citizenship Ceremony invitations by other Local Government Areas (*Source: Department of Home Affairs*):

- i. Smart casual, national/cultural dress welcomed;
- ii. What you wear should reflect the significance of the occasion. You may wear national or cultural dress if you wish;

- iii. Neatly dressed or business attire respecting the significance of the ceremony;
- iv. Formal, business or smart casual attire. Conferees are welcome to wear traditional, national or cultural dress; or
- v. Formal or smart casual clothing, and groomed to reflect the significance of the event.

Staff recommend option (ii), as this implies that the conferees should wear clothing that reflects the significance of the occasion to them. It is further noted that staff are preparing a review of Council's Governance Policy, which will recommend the inclusion of the following policy statement: *Citizenship ceremonies will be conducted in accordance with all Federal Government regulations as amended from time to time.*

### **Financial implications**

Each Citizenship Ceremony has costs associated with event organisation, gifts and catering. These costs fall within the existing budget(s) provided by Council.

### **MANEX recommendation**

Council:

- Endorses the Dress Code for Australian Citizenship Ceremonies to option (ii) of the report;
- Endorses that the Dress Code will be reflected in future invitations to Australian Citizenship conferees; and
- Through the General Manager, will advise the Department of Home Affairs of Council's decision in relation to the Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Dress Code.

### **OPTIONS**

Council may decide to endorse all of the MANEX recommendation listed in the report, to endorse one or more of the recommendations, or to endorse none of the recommendations.

### **CONCLUSION**

The recommendations made by MANEX are based on the best available knowledge at the time, and have been made with the best interests of Council and the community in mind.

### **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Consolidation of a suite of operational matters into one report for Council's consideration streamlines the reporting process and provides more time for Council to consider other matters that are not purely operational.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Each listed item contains a Financial Implications section.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Nil known.

### **STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

Nil known.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Nil known.

### **OPERATIONAL PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

The submission of the report assists with the realisation of related actions in Council's Operational Plan.

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**RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Nil known.

**18 ADJOURNMENT INTO CLOSED COUNCIL**

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1993, and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005, in the opinion of the General manager, the following business is of a kind as referred to in Section 10A(2) of the Act, and should be dealt with in a Confidential Session of the Council meeting closed to the press and public.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Council adjourn into Closed Session and members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting of the Closed Session, and access to the correspondence and reports relating to the items considered during the course of the Closed Session be withheld unless declassified by separate resolution. This action is taken in accordance with Section 10A(2) of the Local Government Act, 1993 as the items listed come within the following provisions:**

**19.4 TENDER 2019-2020-0406 - MUSWELLBROOK AQUATIC CENTRE UPGRADE (RE-ISSUE)**

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**Moved:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Seconded:** \_\_\_\_\_