

MINUTES OF THE **SPECIAL** MEETING OF THE THIRTEENTH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY
26 MARCH 2020 AT 5:30PM IN ALICE SPRINGS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this special meeting was held via Zoom teleconference.

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Opening of the Meeting by the Mayor (Chair)

The Mayor Damien Ryan declared the meeting open at **5.33pm** and welcomed all present to the meeting.

Mayor Ryan acknowledged the Central Arrernte people who are the traditional owners and custodians of Alice Springs.

PRESENT

Mayor D. Ryan (Chair)
Deputy Mayor M. Paterson
Councillor M. Banks
Councillor J. Cocking
Councillor E. Melky
Councillor J. Price
Councillor J. de Brenni

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr R. Jennings – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Mr S. Allen – Director Technical Services
Mr S. Duke – Acting Director Community Development
Ms S. Taylor – Director Corporate Services
Mrs E. Williams – Executive Assistant (Minutes)

2. APOLOGIES

Councillor G. Auricht

Moved – Councillor Cocking

Seconded – Councillor Paterson

CARRIED (20843)

Cr Banks joined the meeting at 5.37pm

Cr Banks left the meeting at 5.46pm due to technical issues

Cr Banks returned to the meeting at 5.49pm

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Nil

4. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

4.1. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

4.1.1. Alice Springs Town Council First Round of COVID-19 Community Support Measures.

Report No. 50/20 cncI

COVID-19 has been changing life across the world and in this respect, Alice Springs is and will be no different. Whilst NT Government has key responsibility through its Departments, Elected Members have expressed their mandate to support our community through this event and beyond.

1. Background

Humanity is progressing through the early and middle phases of the COVID – 19 pandemic as it makes its way across our global population. Council, in its multiple roles as a supplier of services and facilities to the community (some of them essential), advocate and representative, has a role to play in supporting the NT Government to manage the current and future impacts of the pandemic.

2. Discussion

Whilst the situation continues to change quickly, there is no doubt that the work of Council to support our community is just at the beginning of a multiple year journey. In the future, de-briefs and adjustment to a new future will need to be held; however, at this time, the focus must be on the preparedness phase of the incident cycle, which forms the second of the four-phase process of Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

Council continues to work with NT Government in actioning the priorities of the Department of Health and NT Police. To this extent, the following actions have already been taken:

- Ensuring the ongoing provision of essential services such as waste and roads through redundancy and supply actions
- Numerous actions to ensure the safety of our staff and the public
- Cancellation of Council events and activities in alignment with our facilities and events management processes
- Closure of the Alice Springs Aquatic and Leisure Centre (ASALC) facility on Monday 23 March 2020

- Closure of the Library on Tuesday 24 March 2020
- Restriction on funerals in accordance with the Prime Minister's directives
- Moving all public meetings to Zoom where possible

Elected Members have expressed deep concern for our community and this report provides the proposed next level of response initiatives to support the community. The following measures are proposed:

1. That the local weighting criteria for Council procurement be increased from 10% to 30% weighting in Council's *Procurement of Good and Services Quotations and Tenders Policy*.
2. From 27 March 2020, the charging of interest on outstanding rates balances is suspended until 30 June 2020.
3. The rates payment due dates for the last quarterly payment will be extended from 3 April 2020 to 3 June 2020.
4. Fees and charges – as from 27 March 2020:
 - a. Fees associated with the civic centre public toilet shower usage will be waived until June 2020.
 - b. All Alice Springs Aquatic and Leisure Centre (ASALC) memberships and 10 visit passes are extended until the centre is reopened.
 - c. Library late fees waived until the library is reopened.
 - d. The Sports Facility Advisory Committee participation levy will be waived until 30 June 2020.

Council will also meet to consider further measures as part of its 2020/21 financial year budget deliberations that will coincide with the important recovery phase (and potentially the response phase) of the pandemic. A thorough consideration of the budget with assumptions on how COVID will impact the finances as well as the opportunities that Local Government has through its operations will allow Elected Members to most effectively support our community.

Beyond the more serious impacts of COVID -19, there are a number of technical matters that proceed from the pandemic, including:

Council meetings such as the Ordinary Council Meeting, Standing Committees and Committees will be held via Zoom wherever possible. The attendance of public and media at meetings will be cancelled until further notice. Written submissions based on the online Agenda are still welcomed and will be addressed by Council in the relevant section of the Agenda. The recording of the meetings will be made available as quickly as possible to allow the responses to the questions to be disseminated.

3. Policy Impacts

Numerous policies will be impacted by the pandemic and their ongoing influence will be documents in future reports.

4. Financial Impacts

There will be considerable financial and project impacts. These impacts will be considered more thoroughly as part of the 2020/21 financial year budget deliberations and the results of the various master plan discussions that have occurred to date.

Consideration of appropriate infrastructure projects to support the economic recovery will be paramount.

5. Social Impacts

The social impact of emergency events is often the greatest factor in a successful community recovery. Along with incorporating a social recovery philosophy into the infrastructure projects, specific social support in partnership with the Department of the Chief Minister's statutory role should be planned.

6. Environmental Impacts

As part of the preparation and subsequent phases, the environmental impacts will be documented in future reports.

7. Public Relations

Council has been and will continue to deliver messaging on COVID matters in alignment with Australian Federal Government and NT Government announcements.

It is recommended that Council undertake the following first round of measures to support the Alice Springs community during the response phase of the COVID -19 pandemic:

- 1. That the local weighting criteria for Council procurement be increased from 10% to 30% weighting in Council's *Procurement of Good and Services Quotations and Tenders Policy* until 30 June 2020**

Councillor Melky requested an explanation around the formula used to consider the use of 20% and why not more? Is there a timeline in place for this? He raised concerns about procurement and projects with delivery timelines, suppliers, trades so a set time or review date would be required.

The CEO advised that it was a weighting that seemed appropriate. This can be reviewed in the second round and that it will be through the response phase of the pandemic and at this stage it will run until 30 June 2020 after which it can be reviewed.

The Mayor advised that the Policy will still be followed and that further discussion will take place in the budget discussions if required.

Councillor Melky requested that an amendment be made to the Motion with the 30 June 2020 be added.

UNANIMOUS
CARRIED (20844)

2. From 27 March 2020, the charging of interest on outstanding rates balances is suspended until 30 June 2020.

Councillor Melky asked if this is for those who are existing and incurring interest or is it new rate payers that have just come under hardship due to COVID-19?

The Mayor advised that it is from the date of this recommendation and asked the Director Corporate Services to confirm. Old interest charges will remain but no new interest will be incurred.

The Director Corporate Services advised that this advice by the Mayor is correct.

3. The rates payment due dates for the last quarterly payment will be extended from 3 April 2020 to 30 June 2020.

The Mayor advised that those on quarterly payments due on 3 April 2020 will be given an extension until 30 June 2020 to pay their rates.

The CEO responded that the finance team have given advice that this is consistent with what the community is requesting hence the basis of this decision.

Councillor Cocking asked how as a Council can we target this so it's more for those that are in hardship rather than the whole community? This allows for some income rather than none.

Councillor de Brenni agreed with the recommendation of extension and advised landlords are also allowing rent exemptions in town. Those that can afford it will generally pay it.

Councillor Paterson agreed and that those that have budgeted for it will generally pay. We would ask that those who can afford to pay to please do. This can be discussed in our budget discussions.

Councillor Price asked how Council will determine who of those are in hardship? Do we leave it up to the ratepayer to make the decision? How do we implement it as an organisation?

Councillor Cocking supported what was being stated but outlining a specific approach to apply for hardship and we potentially extend the period past 30 June 2020.

The Mayor suggested that those facing hardship be invited to approach Council to discuss options if they can't pay.

The CEO advised that the current process does allow for hardship and that rate payers are currently asking for one – two months. There is an administration process around this and this can be used as a test and apply for 2021 budget year.

Councillor Melky said for many hardship has only just commenced therefore we need to look at the quarter coming and what is due in the next financial year. Those that are under hardship will then make a request.

Director Corporate Services advised Councillor Melky that there are payments made late and interest charged on those late payments. Still undertaking financial analysis but this extension date won't impact the budget much at this stage.

The Mayor advised the Director Corporate Services that the financial analysis undertaken in February showed there was approximately \$6.6m owing to Council, he asked whether this figure had decreased by much?

The Director Corporate Services took the question on notice.

Councillor Melky asked for a review of the Regional Waste Management Facility fees.

The Director Technical Services advised that this had been discussed, gardening waste is already free of charge and vouchers can still be utilised. This can be reviewed as the situation unfolds.

Councillor Melky also asked for a review of parking fines until 30 June 2020.

The Mayor did not support this suggestion as the Council don't want the public taking advantage especially with disabled parking. There is more than enough parking available especially with town being quieter at the moment.

Acting Director Community Development advised that concerns have been raised by local businesses regarding government workers currently abusing parking times and this in turn affecting their business.

Councillor Paterson suggested that in terms of the Regional Waste Management Facility perhaps an additional voucher can be provided to ratepayers but this discussion can take place during budget discussions.

Councillor de Brenni, Councillor Cocking, Councillor Satour and Councillor Banks all agreed that parking should stay as is and to look at additional vouchers for the Regional Waste Management Facility during budget discussions for the next financial period.

Councillor Melky disagreed and that the community needs assistance now and not in the next financial year.

Councillor Satour and Councillor Paterson reminded the other Elected Members that this is stage one of the response.

4. Fees and charges – as from 27 March 2020:

- a. **Fees associated with the Civic Centre public toilet shower usage will be waived until June 2020.**
- b. **All Alice Springs Aquatic and Leisure Centre (ASALC) memberships and 10 visit passes are suspended to resume upon reopening.**
- c. **Library late fees waived until the Library is reopened.**
- d. **The Sports Facility Advisory Committee participation levy will be waived until 30 June 2020.**

Councillor Paterson enquired what the start date for the Sports Facility Advisory Committee levy waive will commence?

Director of Technical Services advised that due to the extent of the season this year, the full cost will be charged but it will be reviewed for next year.

5. Council will meet to consider further measures as part of its 2020/21 financial year budget deliberations.

Moved – Councillor Paterson

Seconded – Councillor de Brenni

CARRIED (20845)

5. MATTERS FOR MEDIA ATTENTION

Media matters will be covered via the media attendance at this meeting.

6. ADJOURNMENT OF SPECIAL MEETING

Mayor Damien Ryan declared the meeting adjourned at **6.25pm**

Moved Councillor Cocking

Seconded Councillor de Brenni

CARRIED (20846)

Confirmed on _____

CHAIRPERSON _____

Date _____