

Gympie Regional Council Meeting – 30 October 2024

A big thank you to those that turned up on Wednesday to the Gympie Regional Council meeting. What a great turn out as the gallery seats were full.

It has become apparent that there is only two councillors that are prepared to deliver the acknowledgement to the traditional owners and custodians of the land. Cr Lahn and Cr Milne are the only councillors that have delivered the acknowledgement since the April meeting.

The meeting opened with the prayer from the pastor who spoke about how councillors, mayor, CEO and staff are entrusted with the welfare of the Gympie people. They face the weighted task of balancing power of authority with what is best for the community.

Item 6.1 **2024/2025 Operational Plan Quarter 1 Update**

Work programs for the 2024/2025 period and their alignment to council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 Strategic Priorities are outlined within this report. There are 80 line items listed in the Operational Plan that hold the 2023 – 2024 Key Performance Indicator / Success Measures that are to be met to meet the outcomes of the Corporate Plan.

Cr Maudsley stated under line item 49, the measure identifies as Ninety per cent of building and plumbing applications are processed in accordance with legislative timeframes, to provide customers with a positive service experience with the action ongoing and on track.

However, the Quarter 1 update reports that 90% Commercial plumbing applications processed within timeframes. 87% Residential plumbing applications processed within timeframes. 32% Building applications processed within timeframes (not including Voluntary Housing Buy Back (VHBB) Demolition Permits).

Cr Maudsley asked the question if people could use private certifiers to speed up the process.

Cr Hartwig responded that yes, people could use private certifiers to expedite the process.

The Director Infrastructure Services supported the use of private certifiers.

Cr Maudsley asked the question on line item 66 which is to Increase community-focused communications and engagement through the implementation of a Road Maintenance web page, with the aim to publish fact sheets and work programs by Q3 2024/2025.

The Director reported that is still on target for delivery in quarter 3.

Cr Milne asked if the bush fire risk management plan had been developed?

The Director stated that an appropriate consultant will be engaged and the plan will be returned to council in workshop.

Cr Curren asked if council was making these two items a propriety now the Gympie Bypass was open. The two items being item 18 a Regional Economic Development Strategy and plan of action finalised to enhance and create a strong, diverse and innovative economy Q1 2024/2025 and line item 20 Create a Destination Management Plan to capitalise on tourism, sporting, arts and culture and recreation opportunities to develop the region as a destination of choice by Q1 2024/2025.

The Director responded that yes, these items are now a priority and council will be developing a workshop to discuss with councillors.

Cr Milne stated that the report says No feedback has been received from the Elected Members in relation to this presentation. The final report to be presented to Council by Q2 2024/2025 but advised she had responded and questioned why her response was not recognised.

The Director responded saying that the Tourism Strategy, which was previously known as the Destination Management Plan, may have included her comments but the New Directions 2024 - 2026 which was presented to council in August 2024, this included tourism and destination events have not been responded to.

Cr Lahn asked is the **fluoride petition** action going to be included into the Work programs for the 2024/2025 period as that will be part of the process for the fluoride.

The Director responded saying that **council will be presenting a paper at the November meeting** on the direction council will be undertaking over the coming months with regards to fluoride.

Cr Hartwig stated that to have it included into the operational plan would require review of the Corporate Plan 2022-2027 Strategic Priorities.

Cr Curren asked if it a requirement to lead within each report with the acknowledgement of country, as he feels it is acknowledged at the start of the meeting and feels it lessens the acknowledgement. He stated that he just breezes over it and feels it should be left to important events such as citizenships ceremonies.

Cr Hartwig asked the governance consultant is it a requirement under legislation.

The consultant advised there is nothing in the laws to say you must have it but once you have it included it sets the path for council. He stated that it is purely up to this council on whether they include it.

Note: No one else commented on the item raised by Cr Curren.

Cr Milne referred to item 1 of the plan that Cr Maudsley will be partnering with other organisations at Imbil to deliver community recovery and resilience activities in December.

Item 6.2. Frequency Council Meetings in 2025

The report proposed that Ordinary Meetings will generally be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, commencing at 9.00am in the Boardroom, Town Hall, 2 Caledonian Hill, Gympie, unless otherwise determined. Cr Curren stated that although we have a full gallery here today, there are many that can't attend due to work commitments and asked if council could look at night time meetings for others excluded by work. Cr Hartwig suggested it could be looked at.

Item 6.3. Quarterly Questions Taken on Notice Report July 2024 to September 2024

This update is a requirement following a recommendation adopted at the Ordinary Meeting 21 September 2022. The update requires that Council requests the CEO ensures all questions 'taken on notice' at an Ordinary Meeting of Council must be given context with the question and answer to be presented at the next available Ordinary Meeting along with the presentation of a quarterly report presented to Council."

Cr Lahn asked the question does anyone record traffic crashes on council roads so that it is recorded as an ability to identify high risk roads from crashes.

Cr Hartwig responded that the data Cr Lahn was asking for was recorded by QPS but only significant crashes, not minor driver error type crashes.

Cr Polley stated the information is reported to the council traffic advisory committee by QPS and is their information and not available to the public.

Cr Lahn stated the information could assist in priority of which roads have more crashes.

Item 6.4. Council Endorsement of the Gympie Local Disaster Management Plan

The review included updates to the titles of agencies, organisations and businesses, especially the Queensland Police Service reforms which impacted both the Queensland Fire Department (QFD) and the State Emergency Services (SES). The report also aligns with the corporate plan to foster and support inclusive and connected communities including providing opportunities for, and **forming partnerships with, traditional owners, cultural, environmental, and other community groups** together with supporting and developing intergenerational volunteering.

Cr Milne asked if council was still looking to help community groups set up as operational groups.

The Director stated that council is working to assist other areas outside of Gympie township such as Imbil and Kilkivan for example.

Cr Curren again asked if it a requirement to lead within each report with the acknowledgement of country as it does not recognise human rights.

Note: No one responded to his comment.

Item 6.5 September 2024 Finance Report

Note: The percentage of outstanding rates at 30 September 2024 was 17.30% compared to 17.74% for the same period in the prior financial year.

Reminder notices were issued on 27 September 2023 and any outstanding rates and charges balances will continue to be managed in accordance with Council's outstanding rates and charges collection policy and procedures.

Note: Previously since the July 2023 meeting, council has been questioned by Cr Polley what the Qld Government expects to be a reasonable percentage for outstanding rates and the answer has been given by the Director Corporate Services the government sets the percentage of between 2 and 3 percent as acceptable. No mention was made in the meeting with regards to the percentage of outstanding rates.

Council's unrestricted cash balance of \$44.5m results in an unrestricted cash expense cover ratio higher than the benchmark required for Gympie Regional Council of 3 months. The allocation of cash funds to restricted and unrestricted cash balances continues to be monitored and updated accordingly to reflect the release of restricted cash as relevant projects incur expenditure.

Total Cash held excluding Trust Balance YTD 2024/25 is \$92,292,000.

Item 7.1. Community Sustainability Directorate Report

This report provides a summary of the key achievements and planning for each of the business units within the Community Sustainability Directorate.

Cr Maudsley asked was the increase in attendances because people were paying their rates.

The Council officer agreed that was the reason.

Cr Maudsley asked about the free trees for ratepayers and asked how community groups can access them.

The council officer stated they just need to contact council.

Cr Maudsley asked if anyone read the report and saw how much of the landfill is green waste.

Item 7.2. Tin Can Bay Dog Park Engagement Outcomes

A fenced off-leash dog park in Tin Can Bay was first identified in Council's 2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OS&RP) as a medium-term action item to be delivered within 5-10 years and there have been a number of general enquiries in support of the facility over the years. Budget was assigned in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years for delivery of a fenced dog off-leash park in Tin Can Bay.

At the commencement of the project, it became apparent that the previously identified location in the OS&RP at H.A.Chooky Mallet Park may no longer be the preferred location for the community and a round of stakeholder engagement on the location for the park was undertaken commencing January 2024 to determine an appropriate site for the facility.

H.A Chooky Mallet Park, Norman Point, Wes Mitchell Park and the vacant portion of land in front of the Council works depot - corner of Gympie Road and Coral Trout Drive were selected as appropriate potential sites for the facility and for engagement with the community. All sites had their own positive and negative aspects, tabled below for information.

Cr Milne asked how the sites were identified?

The council officer stated they were identified through a survey.

Cr Milne stated the survey did not identify the preferred dog park location and further comments. It did not ask if they were a dog owner.

Cr Milne asked if the adjoining properties to **Council determined location of the dog park in Tin Can Bay to be at Wes Mitchell Park** have been consulted?

The council officer responded of the 6 properties adjoining the Wes Mitchell Park, 3 properties affected by council's decision had been contacted and 3 had not. Of the three properties that responded they were not happy with the location.

Cr Milne asked if the property selected was the preferred property from the survey?

The council officer said the number 1 spot was another park, not the selected site.

The council officer said the decision was made on a score generated through a weighting system within the online survey platform.

Cr Milne said that was the preferred location Norman Point and that the Wes Mitchell Park came in 3rd out of four locations.

Cr Milne attempted to speak about the information she had received personally as the elected member of the area but was interjected by Cr Hartwig who said the information Cr Milne wanted to speak about was irrelevant to the information received in the survey online.

Cr Curren called a "Point of Order Mr Chairman", saying "that as elected members we are happy to sit around this table and have other councillors vote on other divisions interests and know we are right".

Cr Hartwig stated that he was not stopping Cr Milne from speaking but emphasised the work the council officers had done to take all aspects of the sites into consideration and that is how they came to the weighting scale for the preferred location.

NOTE: CR POLLEY RAISED THE POINT THAT AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING COUNCIL AGREED TO A LEASE AGREEMENT FOR THE CHOOKY MALLET PARK!!!!

Note: This raised an immediate response from both Cr Jensen who quickly jumped in stating that that is something that cannot be spoken about unless in a workshop meeting!!!!

Meaning, the PUBLIC are NOT to KNOW about the LEASE ARRANGEMENT!!!!!!!

Cr Hartwig quickly supported that statement from Cr Jensen saying staff may not be aware of the agreement.

Cr Curren stated that staff may not be aware of the plan and suggest that maybe it should not be on the list.

Cr Warne advised that access to Chooky Mallet Park is not council owned or operated land and may not get access to the park.

Cr Hartwig spoke in favour of the council selected site through the survey information even though it was a weighted survey.

Again, council officers and councillors have ignored the elected representative for the division and used a preferential system weighted in favour of Council's preferred location, against the wishes of the ratepayers and residents.

Item 7.3. Community Grants Program 24/25 - Round 1 Funding Recommendations

A total of 48 applications were received, 1 application was withdrawn, leaving 47 applications to be assessed, with total funding requests of \$505,358 across 7 grant categories. Applications were assessed against the eligibility and assessment criteria detailed in the Community Grants Guidelines 2024/2025 and recommendations provided in line with the Community Grants Policy. Officers have recommended 31 applications for funding totaling \$311,665, which is within the 2024/2025 Community Grants budget **allocations**.

Item 9.1. Sports Facilities Planning

This item is **closed (in-committee)** in accordance with the following:

- s254J(3)(g) of the Local Government Regulation 2012 - negotiations relating to a commercial matter involving the local government for which a public discussion would be likely to prejudice the interests of the local government.

Item 9.2. Procurement of Industrial and Residential Land Investigation Assessment

This item is **closed (in-committee)** in accordance with the following:

- s254J(3)(g) of the Local Government Regulation 2012 - negotiations relating to a commercial matter involving the local government for which a public discussion would be likely to prejudice the interests of the local government.

The following link will take you to the Gympie Regional Council website for the Agenda and attachments.

<https://gympie.resolve.red/web/UserControls/pdf/web/DocPDFWrapper.aspx?p=1&aoid=35&token=3eb101a1-bc95-455e-b1d7-d0e57a229d5c>