

Gympie Regional Council 27th September 2023 - Update

Thank you to those that could attend yesterday's meeting. Although we didn't have the numbers that we usually have to fill the public gallery, we still made a presence. Hopefully we build the numbers back up for next month.

As we have been saying since attending the meetings of the corporate council since January, we have noticed the way councillors have changed their behaviour to try and demonstrate they have the ratepayers in mind when discussing council items on the agenda, they think the public like to hear how great a job they are doing for the people.

Item 6.1 – 2023 Update of Corporate Plan 2022-2027

Discussion on the corporate plan which is identified within the document by the Mayor that the Corporate Plan 2023-2027 is the most important key strategic planning tool your council has developed because it defines their vision of the future of the Gympie region, but the sole most discussed point was whether the word "Safety" should be included under the values section within the "Accountability" value.

The Corporate Plan provides a roadmap for council to deliver on the approved vision, key priorities, and the short, medium, and long-term goals for the region according to the CEO, but the most discussed point was whether council should focus on including safety into the values.

This is a document that includes council's framework, its strategic plan that is vital to ensure this council is effectively responding to the immediate and emerging needs of the community, but having the word safety included in the values section was a priority with the council meeting.

This corporate plan is under the direct input and control of the Qld government. The Gympie Regional Council is mandated to develop the corporate plan within the requirements of the Qld government Regulation 2012 which includes the state governments 30 year plan and planning scheme requirements. Gympie's direction for the future is not led by the people of Gympie as the people have absolutely no say or input into it, as it is developed by the elected councillors, with support from council staff with no involvement of the people, however a strategic plan that will control the future development and community gives no ability for the people to have a say as its sole direction comes from Brisbane.

Item 6.2 - Procurement Panel Report

This report provides a summary of the Panel's activities including items endorsed by the Panel for procurement that exceed the financial delegation of the Chief Executive Officer. Council received tender documents submitted from Hastings Deering and GCM Enviro in response to the request for tender to Supply and Delivery of One (1) Landfill Compactor Plant.

Questions were asked by mayor as to the value of purchasing the plant recommended by the procurement team as there were a number of unanswered questions and requested the mayor recommended to delegate authority to the CEO to investigate the implementation to purchase the most appropriate machine including the servicing of the equipment.

The mayor noted that the lighter 38000kg machine may cost ratepayers in airspace for compaction rate as to a 45000kg machine. The estimated cost for the plant purchase is \$1.167M.

Item 6.3 - August 2023 Finance Report

For such an important item of the agenda you would think that a very detailed report summary would be highly discussed and reviewed, but this month's financial report was tabled with little to no scrutiny by mayor or councillors. Little to no conversation was held on the total cash on hand at the end of August 2023 being \$103.1m and of these funds, \$100.8m was invested with the Queensland Treasury Corporation. This coincides with an increase in revenue from the rates increase and the higher than forecast cash balance has resulted in increased interest and investment revenue received to date. The overall actual year to date performance to 31 August 2023 is a surplus of \$47.6m. Questions were not asked by those that are there to represent the people on why there was a rates increase when there is over \$100m in cash reserves and an overall operating surplus of over \$47m.

The report included notification there is a 62% decrease in community equity caused by the removal of the rail assets to the ratepayers. Not only has the Rattler deal cost ratepayers a suggested \$42m - \$48m, now assets owned by the people are being handed over to the Rattler Corporation for free.

This is nothing more than a scam that is leaving families and the community in despair. This council does not see the fact they are a money making business that is doing its job for the corporation to make a profit and not acting on behalf of the people's best interests.

Item 6.4 – 2023-24 Budget Amendment

The report included the intention for the carry forward budgets to be absorbed into the 2023-24 capital program and for a corresponding amount of the 2023-24 capital program be held over to the 2024-25 financial year. The individual projects that are identified as part of the \$3.45m to be held over until 2024-25 capital program will be reported as part of the next budget review, which will to be presented to Council at the October General Meeting. The proposed capital program for 2023-24 totals is maintained at \$111.96m, so the question needs to be asked, "where does the rest of the rates, fees and charges income go"?

7.1 Community Sustainability Directorate Update

The Operational Statistics for the period June – August 2023 was attached to the report identifying key activities for the period including:

- Rates peak period (rates issue date 4 August 2023) The percentage of outstanding rates at 31 August 2023 was 60.99% compared to 62.97% for the same period in the prior financial year.
- Quarterly Councillor Reports provided to all Councillors

How many ratepayers receive a monthly report or update from their councillor on what the council is doing to manage the people's money and assets?

Of particular interest in the report was the update on Gympie Saleyards. The Saleyards has facilitated over \$11M in gross sales during the June to August 2023 period. The low-per-kilogram-prices are expected to continue until the markets clear stock flooded by the USA and Brazil, and grazing conditions improve. The saleyards are an important element withing our farming community and businesses.

In 2022/2023 the delivery of all council grants and funding provided to the community was brought into one program administered by the Community Development Team. This included new categories for events and recovery as well as environment grants that were previously administered separately to the Community Grants Program. External funding was sourced by the Community Development Team to provide an additional \$210,000 in grant funding to the community in response to COVID-19 and disaster recovery.

Cr Devereaux asked if council had thought about holding grant writing courses and could they be made available to the grant applicants? The council officer advised that if council writes the grant application it can carry liability.

The CEO advised that council employs a grants officer who assists applicants with the application process. The council officer advised they are compelled to follow the competitive neutrality legislation, as council has the ability to charge low fees where there is no public service being provided, however there may be conflict if such a service is available.

The report also includes ASF biosecurity officer training where Council biosecurity officers are undertaking **African Swine Fever (ASF)** prevention and early detection training. This training is designed to help participants understand what they can do to protect our agricultural industries and communities from ASF. The course uses images, videos and interactive scenario-based activities to provide a detailed and engaging picture of the potential impacts of ASF, how to prevent its introduction and establishment, and how to recognise and report the signs of ASF to ensure early detection, if the disease does make through Australia's defences. They are trying everything to normalise the fear program into the community.

7.2 Grant Funding Recommendation - Community Halls Insurance Category

The Community Halls Insurance category for of Council's Community Grants Program has a maximum grant amount of \$5,000 for independently owned halls and is part of the Rolling Round.

The maximum grant amount is \$1,500 (Council owned /trustee halls) \$5,000 (independently owned halls) where No co-contribution from the applicant is required. Council approved the grant application from Theebine Memorial Recreational Centre Inc for an amount of \$5,000, being for a Community Halls Insurance Category grant. The total cost to the Theebine Memorial Hall for insurance was \$15,000.

7.3 Review of Gympie Regional Council's Infrastructure Charges Resolution

With the exception of Kilkivan and Goomeri the resolution approved in the July meeting to make an amendment to clause 1.3 Section 113 of the Planning Act 2016, resulted in new rates applicable to development in the Region being equivalent to the maximum amounts prescribed by the State in the Planning Regulation. Note there is an ability to council to decide the percentage rate of increase recommended by the Qld government but this council has decided to increase the rate to the maximum amount. This is about **revenue raising** and controlling the people and nothing more.

This is clearly demonstrated by the revised adopted charge for **Material Change of Use for Tourist Park fee** of \$10,956.25 for each group of 2 or less camp sites and \$15, 338.75 for each group of 3 or more camp sites.

The definition of camp site states: "**Camp site**" means a space for a single Recreational vehicle or Caravan or Camper Trailer, or an area of no more than 60m² for a group of people camping together with no more than 3 tents. Where a camping group comprises of more than 1 Recreational Vehicle or Caravan or Camper Trailer, or more than 3 tents, this will constitute multiple 'camping sites'.

Confusion has arisen with the interpretation of "3 ('or more', to be removed) camp sites" (referred to in Column 3 and 4 of the table on pg 45 of 174) when the definition of 'Camp Site' itself references "a group of people camping together with no more than 3 tents" and also an assertion that the rate for 3 camp sites is the maximum council can charge. The intention of the Resolution was to charge per group of tents. The Planning Regulation (extract below) prescribes a maximum rate based on each group of three (3) sites. Although, no definition of 'site' is provided. Council adopted the changes so a larger amount for fees and charges could be levied against the applicant.

Cr Devereaux stated that you usually get a discount with more. The council officer responded saying that council gets more money back towards infrastructure charges?? The council officer also stated that no feedback had been received and was surprised how easy the fees and charges had been accepted with some large amounts of money being paid recently.

7.4 Contract Variations Eastern Cell Construction Bonnick Road Landfill

The council officer stated that variations were always expected and that they were factored into the budget. The mayor went on for quite awhile trying to sell to the public gallery that the council officers had done a great job and they had saved ratepayers millions of dollars in transport costs. There was no evidence to support this claim.

Cr Devereaux asked if this was going to affect the budget as a quick calculation by him was that a 30% variation cost was worth approximately \$1m. Included in the variation is the decision by council staff to purchase another permanent weighbridge to be installed at the Eastern Cell at Bonnick Rd.

8.1 Flood Hazard Area Update for the Building Regulation 2021

In late 2019, Council commenced a major exercise to improve flood information for the Region. The new information addresses shortcomings in the existing flood information for the Gympie Region by:

- applying current rainfall data and computerised modelling techniques and more recent and accurate terrain data for rainfall prediction and flood modelling.
- predicting a range of smaller and larger flood events, not just the 1-in-100-year event.
- providing flood velocities and hazard mapping for disaster preparedness and management, building design and planning approvals, and infrastructure planning and design.
- assessing the possible impacts of climate change.
- covering a number of areas where there has been little or no flood information previously.

The report states council is now using a new system required to be followed from the Qld government. The **Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP)** refers to the probability of a flood event occurring in any year. The probability is expressed as a percentage and is determined by undertaking flood modelling in accordance with industry standards and best practice.

A flood event with a 1% AEP is a flood that is calculated to have a 1% chance of occurring in any one year. It is also known as the 1-in-100-year Average Recurrence Interval (ARI) or Q100 event. Currently, it is the flood event used as:

- the “adopted flood level” in Council’s Planning Scheme
- the “defined flood level” under the Building Regulation 2021. It should be noted that a 1% AEP flood will not necessarily occur only once every 100 years or that it will occur in every 100-year period.

This new modelling being forced upon the people of Qld by the state government will now include previously unaffected residents into this model. This sounds like a perfect SMART city model as when Cr Smerdon asked if this was based on future climate change scenarios set down by the Qld government?

The council officer agreed that the new modelling is a legislative requirement set down for all local governments of Qld.

Cr Stewart stated that this has been predicted 150 years ago. (Is that fact checked?) He said we have to rely on the “Science”. Is that the same as follow the money.

Cr Smerdon asked would this modelling going to impact insurances on the affected properties that were previously excluded from the flood plan? The council officer responded that he had no ability to respond for insurers. The same council officer stated that the forecast is to a future climate scenario still being a 1-100 year model, but new information and modelling will change what that modelling looks like.

The following is an excerpt from the agenda that tells the story on how this modelling is being adopted by council.

Climate Change

One anticipated impact of climate change is increased rainfall intensity which is likely to result in increased flood levels. All flood studies include both:

- a “current climate” 1% AEP flood event (which does not include a specific allowance for climate change), and
- a “future climate” 1% AEP event which allows for climate change to the year 2100.

The State Government, via the State Planning Policy 2017, requires that flood hazard areas in Local Government planning schemes must “align with climate change factors for increased rainfall intensity in the Australia Rainfall and Runoff (AR&R) projections”.

The latest version of AR&R advises that two climate change scenarios (called Representative Concentration Pathways, or RCPs) should be tested when performing flood modelling. These are RCP4.5 which is a mid-range scenario, and RCP8.5 which is sometimes called the worst case scenario. AR&R provides increased rainfall intensities which are predicted to occur under each of the RCPs. Both scenarios have been tested in the Mary River flood modelling.

It is recommended that RCP4.5 be applied for climate change in Council’s flood modelling for the purposes of the building regulation. The inclusion of the RCP4.5 climate change factor provides a future climate 1% AEP flood, projected to the year 2100.

Comparison of New Flood Information with Previous Information for 1% AEP Floods

The newly modelled current climate 1% AEP flood heights differ from previous adopted 1% AEP flood heights for several reasons.

Flood modelling has been completed for some areas which had no previous detailed flood information. The Queensland Floodplain Assessment Overlay (QFAO) is statewide mapping produced by the Queensland Government to identify potential flood hazard areas in the absence of better, more refined flood modelling. The QFAO does not provide 1% AEP flood heights and, in many locations, does not relate well to ground contours. Some of Council's new flood modelling covers areas for which the QFAO was previously the only information available.

It is recommended that the new future climate 1% AEP flood information be adopted as of 01 January 2024 to give property developers, landowners, home builders, building designers and certifiers sufficient time to consider and apply the new information. (Section 37 of the Building Act also provides transition arrangements for building planning / applications / works which are in progress when a building assessment provision is amended.)

The primary source of flood information for the community will be Council's on-line mapping system (accessible through the website) which will allow access to:

- the flood hazard area as defined by the Building Regulation.*
- the 1% flood extent mapping (both current climate and future climate) via the on-line mapping system.*

*The report states the new information has been peer reviewed by climate change experts we presume, and is available to any interested party via Council's website. This is a Qld government direction this council is just complying with to meet its UN targets under the State Planning Policy, Council is **obliged** to consider for climate change in new flood hazard mapping. A council resolution is required to designate the new flood hazard area and apply the new flood heights for future building works. Council is obligated to ensure they operate in the best interests of the people as well and using predictive programming too build estimates on more than a 1-100 year flood to take back land on behalf of the state government is not working in the best interests of the people.*

One only has to go to the Qld government Climate Change page and see the WEF and UN agenda being set upon the people of Qld without our consent.

<https://www.stateoftheenvironment.des.qld.gov.au/climate-change>

The report recommendations were passed by vote and will now be used by council to decide where people can live and build and where they can't.

8.2 Returned & Services League of Australia (Queensland Branch) Gympie Sub-Branch Inc. - Proposed lease 39 Monkland Street, Gympie

The Returned & Services League of Australia (Queensland Branch) Gympie Sub-Branch Inc. (the Club) has approached Council with a proposal to enter into a long-term lease (ten years with a ten year option) over the building (previously known as the Telstra Shop) at 39 Monkland Street, Gympie. The building

(previously occupied by Gympie Medical Transport and Creative Arts Gympie Region) is currently vacant and uninhabitable due to the flooding events of 2022 and was never professionally remediated.

The Club has also advised that their Board may also consider the purchase of the site depending on the sale price with future flood liabilities to Council may be better mitigated by a sale rather than a lease, but the RSL decided their best option would be to lease the building.

The Club was looking for a long-term lease (ten years plus ten-year option) as a cost benefit for the funds they are investing into this project. The Club is not likely to consider a lease less than five years for this reason.

Following lengthy discussion on for and against the lease which raised the ire of the mayor stating that it would be a recommendation to move the discussion to a workshop, Cr's Milne and Devereaux both challenged the reason to take it to workshop as it required a reason to be tabled. The mayor stated there had already been breaches of the details from the previous workshop to the public today where there are people out in the community that don't operate in the best interests of the council.

I wonder what he is concerned about. The public actually hearing the truth and not the watered down version the Punch and Judy show that we see monthly.

Councillors voted on offering a 3 year lease to the RSL.

<https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4707/2023-09-27-ordinary-agenda>