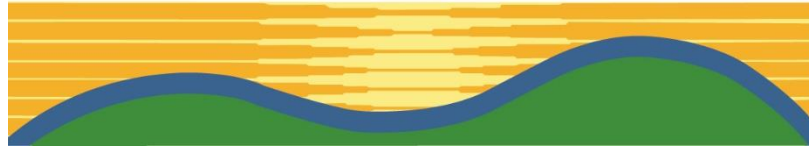


MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL



**COMMUNITY QUESTIONS
AND HEARINGS COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

MONDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

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**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY QUESTIONS AND
HEARINGS COMMITTEE OF THE MITCHELL SHIRE
COUNCIL HELD AT MITCHELL CIVIC CENTRE, 113 HIGH
ST, BROADFORD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2017**

THE MEETING OPENED: 7.00pm

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cr Annie Goble Central Ward
Cr David Atkinson Central Ward
Cr Bob Humm Central Ward

Cr Rhonda Sanderson North Ward (Chairperson)
Cr Fiona Stevens North Ward

Cr David Lowe South Ward
Cr Rob Eldridge South Ward
Cr Bob Cornish South Ward

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Mr Laurie Ellis Acting Chief Executive Officer
Ms Nicole Maxwell Acting Director Governance and Corporate Performance
Ms Mary Agostino Director Advocacy and Community Services
Mr Jeff Saker Director Development and Infrastructure
Ms Lidia Harding Governance and Corporate Accountability Coordinator

1 GOVERNANCE DECLARATION

The declaration was read by Cr R. Eldridge

2 APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

MOVED: CR. B. CORNISH

SECONDED: CR. A. GOBLE

THAT the apology for this meeting received from Cr Bill Chisholm be accepted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3 DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Section 79 of the Local Government Act 1989.

Nil

4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

In accordance with Clause 66 of Local Law No. 4 – Meeting Procedures.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

MOVED: CR. D. LOWE

SECONDED: CR. R. ELDRIDGE

THAT the Minutes of the Community Questions and Hearings Committee held 14 August 2017, as circulated, be confirmed

CARRIED

The vote resulted in as follows:

For:

CR. D. ATKINSON
CR. B. CORNISH
CR. R. ELDRIDGE
CR. A. GOBLE
CR. D. LOWE
CR. R. SANDERSON
CR. F. STEVENS

Against:

Abstained:

CR. B. HUMM

5 QUESTION TIME

Mr Christopher Baker of Kilmore asked Council if it can advise the number of ratepayers within the Shire who are suffering mortgage stress as defined by having their rates sent for collection, and what Council will do to reduce this stress on ratepayers who appear to not be able to meet the spiralling costs of rates in the shire?

Mr Laurie Ellis, Acting Chief Executive Officer advised that:

- Council has approximately 19,500 rates assessments.
- Currently 612 (or 3%) rates accounts with Council's debt collection agency.
- 429 have not had any legal action taken (283 have had payment arrangements established).
- 183 have legal action in progress.

Please note, the number of files in debt collection is not necessarily an accurate indicator of financial stress, as it includes ratepayers who can afford their rates, however may have overlooked making payment.

In addition to the arrangements above, 550 special payment arrangements in place to make payment easier.

Since July 2017, council has received 20 hardship applications.

Council's financial hardship policy enables the deferment of outstanding rates and the reduction or waiver of interest to ratepayers suffering financial hardship. When ratepayers experiencing difficulties paying their rates contact Council's rates department (or the debt collection agency) special payment arrangements are discussed. Where ratepayers indicate that payment of their rates and charges may cause financial hardship, assistance available is discussed and hardship applications are invited.

To apply for financial hardship assistance for the payment of outstanding rates, the applicant must meet with a financial counsellor, complete Council's application form and indicate a regular payment amount that they are able to afford.

The Rates and Charges Hardship policy is due for review and will be updated this financial year. As part of this review the rates team will be seeking further training through an organisation specialising in the early identification and support avenues for those facing financial hardship.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Community Questions and Hearings Committee meeting is scheduled to be held on 9 October 2017 at the Mitchell Civic Centre, 113 High St, Broadford, commencing at 7.00pm.

6 CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed at 7.06pm.

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Chairperson
Mayor, Cr Rhonda Sanderson