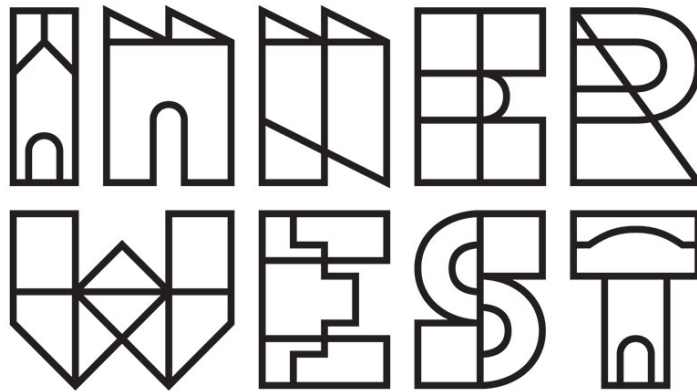


SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA 2

Distributed on 27 October 2020



COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2020

6.30pm

Location: Remote

MEETING AGENDA – PRECIS SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS

The following report appear as late item as information required for the preparation of the report was not available at the time of distribution of the Business Paper.

1 Mayoral Minute

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2 Mayoral Minute with Confidential Information

Reports appearing in this section of the Business Paper are confidential in their Entirety.

The confidential information has been circulated separately.

ITEM

C1020(2) Item 21 Mayoral Minute: Appointment of Interim CEO

Item No: C1020(2) Item 20
Subject: MAYORAL MINUTE: STRONGER COMMUNITY GRANTS
From: The Mayor, Councillor Darcy Byrne

MOTION:

THAT Council:

- 1. Writes to Councils who met the guidelines to qualify for a grant from the NSW Government's Stronger Communities Fund, but were excluded from applying, and LGNSW, to request their support to pursue the matter, collectively, so we can fight for all our communities; and**

- 2. Requests the General Manager to report back to Council on the written legal advice, once received, of the likely financial commitment to pursue legal action and the willingness of other Councils or the wider industry to support us, ultimately for the purpose of making the decision to proceed or not.**

Background

Council wishes to again raise a matter of significant concern and injustice, not only for its community, but for many communities across the State. We are referring, of course, to the Stronger Communities Fund. Council has made a commitment to residents to pursue the injustice of missing out on \$24m in grants under this scheme.

As you will recall, this issue was first raised in a Mayoral Minute at the 9 June 2020 Ordinary meeting.

The Stronger Communities grants fund was supposedly established to help with infrastructure needs in merged Council areas as the Government's forced amalgamations have been very expensive for ratepayers.

Not only did Inner West and Canterbury-Bankstown (two of the biggest merged Councils) not receive a cent from the fund, the NSW Office of Local Government actually kept secret from us that the fund existed at all - we weren't even allowed to apply.

Worse still, \$90 million of the \$250 million was secretly allocated to Hornsby Council, despite the fact that Hornsby Council wasn't even amalgamated.

Through this highly improper method, 95 per cent of the funds in the program went to Liberal and National Party electorates. The Inner West Council did not receive a cent and was cheated out of \$24 million, which would have paid for its infrastructure backlogs.

The requirement to provide proper written authorisation for public spending, through a signed, transparent document, is a basic tenet of government in NSW.

Without this statutory requirement, the Premier and her Ministers would be able to dole out taxpayer's money to anyone they choose without the public being able to find out.

This appears to be precisely what has occurred with this slush fund.

Together we must continue fight hard for transparency and for the return of the \$24 million in funding that our community has been cheated out of for investment in local roads, footpaths, parks and playgrounds.

We, along with Councillor Khal Asfour, Mayor of Canterbury Bankstown, have recently sought advice from one of this country's brightest legal minds, Bret Walker SC, and have now had some initial discussions on the possibility of challenging this enormous injustice.

There is an opportunity to draw a line in the sand, set a precedent and hold this Government to account.

While we're still awaiting final written advice and an estimate of costs to take legal action, what will be of great assistance is the unity and solidarity of the sector in addressing this.

We need to exhaust all avenues to uphold the integrity of grants schemes and to ensure that justice for our community is delivered.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil.