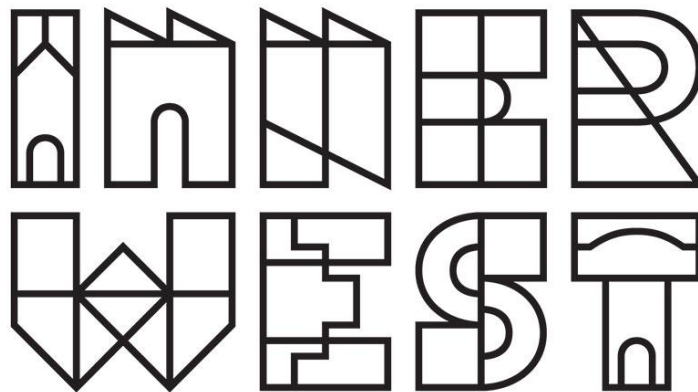


SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA 1

Distributed on 30 July 2021



COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY 3 AUGUST 2021

6.30pm

Location Remote Meeting

MEETING AGENDA – PRECIS SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS

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

1 Reports for Noting

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Item No: C0821(1) Item 24
Subject: COVID-19 FINANCIAL SUPPORT
Prepared By: Daryl Jackson - Chief Financial Officer
Authorised By: Peter Livanes - Acting Director Corporate

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council:

1. **Endorse the redistribution of a portion of Council’s annual Community Wellbeing grant funding by allocating \$25,000 to Addison Road Food Pantry and \$25,000 to Bill Crews Exodus Foundation to support the increased demand for food insecurity for families in the Inner West;**
2. **Support the redeployment of IWC staff where appropriate, to assist the work of local agencies;**
3. **Support the redistribution of \$20,000 from the Targeted Early Intervention funding from Department of Communities and Justice, in keeping with guidelines to key services, working with vulnerable families and young people in the outreach and early intervention areas;**
4. **Note that since Council’s meeting on the 20 July, the State and Federal Government announced to expand the existing COVID-19 Support measures;**
5. **Note that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on Council’s budget with \$13.8M in 2020/21 and the forecast impact for 2021/22 could be as high as \$11.7M; and**
6. **Council’s response be reviewed should further impacts arise.**

BACKGROUND

This report responds to the Mayoral Minute C0721(2) Item 11 Mayoral Minute: Council’s Covid Actions for the Community during the Council Meeting on 20 July 2021.

THAT Council:

1. *Expresses thanks to the residents of the Inner West, the officers of Inner West Council and all of the frontline workers who have dedicated themselves to saving lives and protecting public health during this latest COVID-19 lockdown;*
2. *Thanks NSW Health, the NSW Police and other emergency services for their collaboration in responding to the crisis;*
3. *Thanks the local NGOs and charities working to provide outreach services to vulnerable citizens, and resolves that Council officers contact the NGOs to find out how it can support them in their efforts to address food security and outreach services;*
4. *Extends the availability of the Summer Hill Depot as a COVID-19 testing centre until the end of September 2021;*

5. *Notes the successful City of Ryde financial assistance package for ratepayers implemented during last year's lockdown and tables a report to the next Council meeting identifying options for providing financial assistance, up to \$400, to ratepayers who have lost income to assist in ameliorating the financial impacts from the present lockdown. This should include advice from the Office of Local Government on how financial assistance can be provided to ratepayers;*
6. *Writes to the relevant Federal and State Ministers to urgently request that all of Council's frontline workers are prioritised to receive vaccinations;*
7. *Ensures that tenants of Council properties will not be evicted during this lockdown, and that affected businesses receive a deferral of rental payments in accordance with Council's previously adopted policy;*
8. *Notes this existing policies and measures Council is implementing to assist residents and businesses including:*
 - a) *Sporting clubs are not to be charged fees for sporting fields and facilities that are closed and unable to be used during this COVID-19 crisis;*
 - b) *Sporting fields, tennis and basketball courts (other than Henson Park and Tempe Reserve) are being illuminated until 9pm for the duration of the lockdown to allow more opportunity for safe exercise; Council Meeting 20 July 2021*
 - c) *Council rangers have been directed to prioritise safety not issuing fines in residential streets. Rangers are also monitoring main streets to ensure there is adequate parking for residents to access essential services; and*
 - d) *Council's social media channels are available, upon request, to not-for-profit community organisations and local service providers to promote resources, services, donations and volunteerism in response to the crisis.*
9. *Write to the Prime Minister urging him to immediately lift the rate of the Jobseeker Allowance and Student Allowance to \$600.00 per week so that people in receipt of Jobseeker Allowance and Student Allowance, many of whom work casually, do not lose income during the current round of restrictions that seek to manage Covid-19;*
10. *Further seek the Prime Minister's urgent support for the voice of local government around Australia to be part of National Cabinet through the participation of the President of the Australian Local Government Association;*
11. *Receive a report back regarding United Services Union that includes the adequacy of the support offered by Council to its casual aquatic centre workers, with any proposals by the union to be reported to Councillors for consideration.*
12. *Receive a report back at the next Council meeting on turn off all parking meters during the lockdown period.*

DISCUSSION

COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the Inner West and Greater Sydney communities. Resolutions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 have or are in the process of being implemented.

This paper will focus on the three (3) resolutions set out below:

1. Impact of COVID-19 on the community as reported by NGOs (Resolution 3)
2. Financial assistance for ratepayers (Resolution 5)
3. Update on Aquatic Centre Casuals and Council's discussion with United Services Union (USU) (Resolution 11)
4. Options for turning off parking meters during the lockdown period (Resolution 12)

1. Impact of COVID-19 on our community as reported by NGOs

Officers have reached out to local NGOs and acknowledged and thanked the services for their ongoing support of the community. The NGOs are open or providing community support and report their workloads are stretched.

The feedback from the groups is that this lockdown is more severe and there is generally more distress in the community. The biggest issues they are addressing are food insecurity, mental health, loss of income, safety (increases in DFV), navigating systems for the disaster payments, access to electronic devices / technology, managing work and home schooling (including access to technology) and referring people to other services.

The services report there is a lack of organisational capacity and the resources to meet the increasing demand. In addition, organisations have reported a loss of income during this period and there has been a reduction in the number of community members available to volunteer.

The services have reported there are requirements for:

- donated food (maintaining food supply to meet demand)
- funding for food or food vouchers
- funding for access to masks and hand sanitisers
- ongoing support and access to accommodation for people sleeping rough
- support for donations or access to digital devices and connectivity and
- advocacy to State and Federal Government regarding job keeper payments and rent relief payments

In 2020 Council provided a total of \$250,000 as ten individual COVID response grants at \$25,000 to the following partner organisations: Addison Road Community Centre, Asylum Seekers Centre, Exodus Foundation, Headspace Ashfield, Inner West Neighbour Aid, Leichhardt Women's Health Centre, Marrickville Youth Resource Centre, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre, and St Vincent de Paul Society Inner West.

These funds have been acquitted, with a diverse range of positive outcomes delivered directly to the Inner West community including additional food hampers provided to vulnerable households, further supports to boarding house residents, increased mental health supports to young people, telephone and online outreach to seniors and families, training and redeployment of volunteers.

To further support the Inner West community, it is proposed to redistribute \$50,000 of the existing \$150,000 annual Community Wellbeing grant funding to Addison Road Food Pantry \$25,000 and Bill Crews Exodus Foundation \$25,000 to support the increased demand for food insecurity for families in the Inner West.

Furthermore, it is proposed to redistribute \$20,000 of the Targeted Early Intervention funding from Department of Communities and Justice, in keeping with guidelines to key services, working with vulnerable families and young people in the outreach and early intervention areas. This is specifically for the purposes of access to digital devices, data and food hampers. Officers will liaise with the appropriate NGOs to determine where these funds are allocated to ensure it is in keeping with the requirements of the funding ie within designated areas such as South Marrickville.

Where appropriate Council officers could also support NGOs through assistance from IWC staff. Council staff will continue to stay connected to agencies and keep community informed by providing current information for emergency food relief services, mental health support, domestic violence supports and ways for people to stay connected and active in covid safe way via website, social media and networks.

2. Financial assistance for ratepayers

Council resolved to identify options to provide financial assistance to ratepayers who have lost income similar to the support Ryde Council provided/is providing their impacted residents in 2020 and 2021.

Legal advice obtained last year confirmed that Council was unable to provide a rate rebate but Council's recent legal advice confirmed that financial assistance can be provided under s356 of the Local Government Act 1993. *Council could provide the \$400 payment from its consolidated fund, provided the moneys used were not special rates or charges or money otherwise required for a specific purpose under the Local Government Act or any other legislation. Before doing so, Council would need to give public notice of its intention to grant the financial assistance.*

Further advice has been sought through the Office of Local Government (OLG) who advised that funding for this one-time financial assistance will be required to be provided in accordance with s356 of the Local Government Act 1993.

- i. s356 of the Local Government Act 1993 states councils can provide financial assistance to ratepayers if there are funds available that have not been collected for a specific purpose.
- ii. Council is required to resolve to adopt the financial assistance and the proposal be placed on public exhibition for 28 (twenty-eight) days

The OLG further advised that there are several financial assistance packages being provided by both State and Federal Governments to help those impacted by Covid-19.

2.1 Eligibility

The eligibility set out below is based on Ryde Council's criteria. To be eligible, a ratepayer would have to have received one of the following support measures meaning they have already received and may be eligible for increased levels of support:

- Commonwealth COVID-19 Disaster Payment
- Small and Median Business Support Payment
- Federal/State Grants program for Micro Businesses

The initiative would be available until 31 December 2021 and applicants would apply on-line or via mail.

2.2 Financial implications

It is difficult to predict the number of applications Council would receive as there is no way of knowing how many individuals or companies are receiving or will receive State or Federal Assistance. The COVID-19 impacted industries include retail, construction, arts and recreation, accommodation and food service which happen to be some of the major industries our residents are employed in.

Ryde Council advises the initiative cost \$150,000 based on 0.69% of their 54,000 rateable properties applying for the program.

The following table provides an indication of the financial impacts of the initiative to Inner West Council, noting this does not include any administrative costs.

Number of applications	% of total Council rateable properties (79,150)	Cost to Council (\$)
546	0.69%	\$219,886
791	1%	\$316,636
7,915	10%	\$3,166,360
15,830	20%	\$6,332,000
39,575	50%	\$15,831,800
79,150	100%	\$31,662,000

Council's adopted 2021/22 Operating Budget reflects a budget deficit after operating grants of \$4.4m. As noted above, s356 of the Local Government Act 1993 requires this program would be funded from Council's working funds.

If Council resolves to adopt this assistance program, a funding source will need to be identified and if a funding source is identified, it would be prudent to cap the maximum funds available. It should also be noted that this program would be providing additional funds to businesses and the community that are already receiving financial assistance from the State and Federal Government. Furthermore, this program provides no benefit to members of our community who are not property owners.

It is important to note that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on Council's budget. In 2020/21 the impact is reported as \$13.8m. For 2021/22 the forecast impact to the end of the proposed lockdown only is \$5.4m. This is due to the loss of income from aquatic centres, community facilities, sportsfields and compliance.

The table below provides the forecast lost revenue by month to the proposed end of lockdown. The recovery from this current lockdown is expected to be slow and based on last year's recovery will result in a forecast impact of \$11.4m for the full year.

Month	Amount
July 2021	\$2.4m
August 2021 (proposed end of lockdown)	\$3m
Total	\$5.4m

If further lockdowns are imposed or other restrictions are put in place inhibiting business as usual operations, further budget impacts will be realised of approximately \$3m for every additional month of lockdown. Again, this will be followed by a slow and staggered recovery to the end of 2021/2022.

3. State and Federal Government additional financial support measures

It is important to note that since Council’s meeting on the 20 July, the State and Federal Government announced on the 28 July to expand the existing COVID-19 Support measures listed in the following tables and is summarised below.

For individuals including those in the Inner West who have had their work hours reduced because of the lockdown will be in line to receive additional payments.

Those who have lost more than 20 hours of work per week are already eligible for the federal government's COVID-19 disaster payment, worth \$600 per week. This will be increased by \$150 per week.

People who have lost less than 20 hours of work per week were eligible for \$300 per week under the COVID-19 disaster payment. This will be increased by \$75 per week.

For businesses, the program providing weekly payments for businesses suffering (revenue down 30%) because of the lockdown will be expanded. This support is based on keeping headcount in businesses with the amount a business is eligible for based on its weekly payroll and annual turnover. This could be \$1500 per week with the maximum amount now increased from \$10,000 to \$100,000. Sole traders who prove their turnover has reduced by 30% will be eligible to receive a weekly \$1000 payment which can be backdated to July 18.

Welfare recipients who are already receiving Commonwealth income support, such as youth allowance or a carers’ payment, are entitled to claim the COVID-19 disaster payment. They will get a top-up of \$200 a week, on top of their existing benefits, if they have lost more than eight hours of work.

The table below outlines the current support State and Federal support available before the 28 July announcement.

Support for individuals		
What support is available?	What is it?	What period of lockdown does it cover?
COVID-19 Disaster Payment	<p>A payment for workers who have been unable to earn income due to the COVID-19 lockdown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$325 – \$375 if you lost 8 – 20 hours of work per week or a full day of your usual work hours • \$500 – \$600 if you lost more than 20 hours per week 	<p>Eligibility depends on where you live and work*</p> <p>1 July – 15 July 2021 at lower rates (\$325 / \$500)</p> <p>15 July onwards at higher rates (\$375 / \$600)</p>
Support with my tenancy	<p>Protection from eviction for residential tenants who have suffered a 25% or more loss of income due to the lockdown Land tax relief or grants for landlords who reduce the rent of lockdown impacted tenants</p>	<p>Land tax relief is provided to landowners who reduce rent for COVID-19 affected tenants between 1 July and 31 December 2021 up to 100% of their 2021 land tax liability. Landowners who do not pay land tax can alternatively apply for up to \$1500 grant per residential tenancy</p>

Support for small to medium businesses (including sole traders) and small non-profits		
What support is available?	What is it?	What period of lockdown does it cover?
COVID-19 Micro Business Grants	Fortnightly tax-free grant of \$1,500	From the start of the lockdown
Support with my tenancy	Landlords can't evict retail or commercial tenancies without mediation Land tax relief for landlords who reduce the rent for impacted tenants, up to 100% of their 2021 land tax liability	These protections will last for the whole lockdown Land tax relief is provided to landowners who reduce rent for COVID-19 affected tenants between 1 July and 31 December 2021
COVID-19 Business Grants	One-off tax-free grant of \$7,500 to \$15,000 depending on your business's revenue decline	The first three weeks of the lockdown
Job Saver	Tax-free payments of 40% of pre-COVID weekly payroll, from \$1,500 to \$10,000 per week (paid fortnightly); \$1,000 weekly for non-employing business	From 19 July 2021
Payroll tax support	25% reduction in FY22 payroll tax for eligible businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payroll tax payments deferred until 7 October 2021 for all businesses • Interest free 12-month repayment plans for deferred payroll tax 	The full lockdown period
Support with my tenancy	Landlords can't evict impacted retail or commercial tenancies without mediation Land tax relief for landlords who reduce the rent for impacted tenants up to 100% of their 2021 land tax liability	These protections will last for the whole lockdown

Industry specific support		
What support is available?	What is it?	What period of lockdown does it cover?
Support for the creative arts sector	Tailored payments to non-profits, commercial theatres, and commercial music venues, to help with the cost of current productions	From 26 June 2021
Support for accommodation providers	Available for providers that can demonstrate room cancellations during the school holiday period; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2,000 for losses of up to 10 room nights • \$5,000 for 11 or more room nights 	26 June to 11 July 2021 inclusive

4. Support measures provided by Council

A report was provided to the Council meeting of 28 April 2020 providing progress on numerous resolutions relating to the impact of COVID-19.

A rate relief program remains in place. The program allows approved applicants to defer their rates payment up to 12 months with no interest charged. Council continues to receive applications from both residential and business and to date has resulted in:

- of the 329 residential rates applications that were approved; to date only 24 have been signed and returned totalling \$33k in deferred residential rates payment
- of the 56 business rates applications that were approved, to date 32 applications have been signed and returned totalling \$334k in deferred business rates payment.

Other support measures include:

- establishing a dedicated COVID-19 page on Council's website with all relevant information to keep our community informed including:
 - the latest Health advice including Public Health Orders
 - links for Government support including financial support
- working with tenants in Council owned properties ensuring no tenants will be evicted and working with tenants depending on their circumstances
- established a list of food businesses that are open for takeaway or delivery, and a social media campaign encouraging residents to support their local restaurants and cafes
- Council's parking officers will prioritise public safety over other enforcement activity during the lockdown period
- main Street parking meters in Leichhardt, Rozelle and Balmain shopping strips turned off after 7pm to help the night-time economy
- abolishing outdoor dining fees, saving local businesses \$1.5 million over three years
- holding public meetings to inform our community with officials from Health and Police
- providing links to relevant community groups and support organisations to support vulnerable people during this difficult time
- Council has created a support page for the local arts and cultural sector, which lists relevant grants, information and resources, including mental health support
- provided additional lighting hours to our parks and sportsfields to extend the hours available for exercise.

5. Update on Aquatic Centre Casuals and Council's discussion with USU

Support for employees during COVID-19 workplace closures is set by the Local Government (COVID-19) Splinter Award 2021, which Inner West Council is following, and has already begun paying out the Leave it provides.

The COVID-19 Splinter Award commits Council to a range of payments initiated by workplace closures. Workplace closures represent significant loss of Council revenue.

It appears every Council in NSW has now opted into coverage of that award, demonstrating that Councils are not setting up their own support arrangements. Neither party to that Award, the USU or LGNSW sought to cover casual employees.

The majority of casual employees work less than 20 hours per week. Casual employees who are not provided with work are eligible for Australian Government assistance (Jobkeeper etc). Council has assisted employees with information on accessing those payments. Council will continue to assist employees individually and believes it has worked very cooperatively with all unions' requests. This has been confirmed with USU representatives.

Council intends on re-engaging all casual aquatic staff when there is available work. Aquatics management are keeping in touch with all staff not currently working.

Council management and HR staff are in constant communication with the USU, including discussions in the past week. No issues have required escalation or been left unresolved and both parties are happy to continue that and always have productive discussions and will continue to meet whenever requested.

6. Parking Meter Operations During Lockdown

Free parking for 30 minutes is available on all main streets. A review of parking ticket volumes indicates Council's 30-minute free parking tickets remains high at 66% of normal level as opposed to paid parking tickets which are at only 18% of normal levels. This demonstrates that visitation has continued to the main streets for short-stay activities, but medium-stay activities have fallen significantly (dining, retail browsing, etc).

It is not recommended that parking meters be turned off for the following reasons:

- It allows employees of local businesses to park for long periods of time on main streets therefore limiting the number of spaces available for potential customers
- Long stay parkers may increase in metered residential streets adjacent to the main street thereby reducing the parking for residents
- Previous engagement (2018) regarding turning off parking meters at 7pm and extending free parking in the Balmain, Leichhardt and Rozelle communities received low levels of support
- While the parking meters can be turned off remotely, this change would need to be communicated to all motorists. This would involve placing signage on every parking meter across the LGA. It is estimated the preparation and installation of this signage would take approximately one week.
- Parking meters in Newtown operated with same tariffs as City of Sydney which are still operating

ATTACHMENTS

Nil.