

CITY OF WEST TORRENS



Notice of Special Council Meeting

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN in accordance with Sections 82, 83 and 84 of the *Local Government Act 1999*, that a

Special Council Meeting

of the

CITY OF WEST TORRENS

will be held in the Civic Centre
165 Sir Donald Bradman Drive, Hilton

on

**TUESDAY, 31 MARCH 2020
at 6.00pm**

**Angelo Catinari
Chief Executive Officer (Acting)**

City of West Torrens Disclaimer

Please note that the contents of this Council Agenda have yet to be considered by Council and officer recommendations may be altered or changed by the Council in the process of making the formal Council decision.

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1 MEETING OPENED

2 PRESENT

3 APOLOGIES

4 DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

Elected Members are required to:

1. Consider Section 73 and 75 of the *Local Government Act 1999* and determine whether they have a conflict of interest in any matter to be considered in this Agenda; and
2. Disclose these interests in accordance with the requirements of Sections 74 and 75A of the *Local Government Act 1999*.

5 REPORTS OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

5.1 Interim Covid-19 Support Measures for West Torrens' Residents and its Sporting, Arts and Business Community

Brief

This report proposes a number of interim measures to support those in the community adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended to Council that the following support measures be introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic:

1. Fees, charges and outgoings associated with the leasing of Council buildings by sporting, arts and community organisations be waived for the 6 month period commencing 1 March 2020.
2. Quarterly fines and monthly interest penalties on overdue rates not be imposed for a 6 month period commencing 1 April 2020.
3. Debt recovery action on unpaid rates be suspended for 6 months commencing 1 April 2020.
4. Final notices for outstanding rates be modified to be in the form of a reminder notice only, with references to legal action removed.
5. Action not be taken to sell any properties in the area for non-payment of rates under Section 184 of the Local Government Act 1999.
6. A review be undertaken of Council's *Rate Rebates, Remission and Postponement Policy*, especially provisions involving hardship, in order to ensure a robust, efficient and effective process is in place to manage ratepayer applications for Council support.
7. Inspection fees and charges associated with food businesses be suspended for the 6 month period commencing 1 April 2020.
8. Parking permit fees for residents and businesses of the Council area be suspended for the 6 month period commencing 1 April 2020.
9. Information be circulated widely throughout the community to advise of the support Council is providing.

Introduction

This report proposes a number of interim measures to support those in the community adversely impacted by Covid-19. The need for further measures beyond those recommended is also expected to be necessary and this will be the subject of further reports, including reports related to small businesses and not-for-profit organisations.

An accompanying confidential report has also been prepared which addresses the interim measure for the commercial lessees and licensees of Council property.

Background

Recent announcements by the State and Federal Governments in respect of Covid-19 have had major impacts on the West Torrens' community, including sporting, arts and community organisations, businesses, residents and ratepayers. There is pressure already from organisations and individuals who are experiencing the financial impacts of the situation for Council to offer its support until the situation eases. This report proposes a number of interim measures.

Discussion

Leases and Licences to Sporting, Arts and Community Organisations

The City of West Torrens has lease and licence arrangements in place with a number of sporting, arts and community organisations, and those currently being invoiced are listed in **Attachment 1**. These organisations have all been impacted by Covid-19, particularly recent decisions in relation to mass gatherings and social distancing, with all forced to cease their activities. This puts them in an extremely vulnerable position. Clubs and sporting organisations are not-for-profit and rely heavily on things like membership income and bar and kiosk sales to cover costs. Their ability to survive through times of forced inactivity is a significant risk, not just to the organisations themselves but to the social fabric of the community of which they are such an important part.

The closure of non-essential local government services was mandated under the Emergency Management Act 2004 on 25 March 2020 and this led to lessees and licensees being formally advised of lease and licence arrangements being suspended and facilities being closed until notified otherwise. This included advice to lessees of new facilities at Camden, Weigall and Lockleys Ovals where leases were in the process of being finalised. These agreements will not be executed and handover will not be taking place until after the crisis passes.

As a result, it is recommended that, all rental fees, charges and outgoings associated with leases and licences to sporting, arts and community organisations be waived for six months commencing 1 March 2020.

The estimated value of this recommended support package, including the value of the delayed leases, is \$190,000.

Ratepayer Relief

The city has almost 31,000 ratepayers, 90 per cent being residential. Rate and rate equivalent income raised in the 2019/20 financial year totalled \$59.4 million of which \$12.7 million remains unpaid. 59 per cent (or \$35 million) of the amount raised involves residential property, with the remainder being non-residential

While the current crisis is in its infancy, there is no doubt that an increasing number of the city's ratepayers will experience some form of financial difficulty from the current crisis. It is therefore incumbent on the Council to consider a number of interim relief measures to help those affected to deal with these difficulties. These measures need to be well considered and balanced against the backdrop of the medium to long term effects on Council's financial sustainability and its capacity to help stimulate the economy.

As a result, it is recommended the Council provide support for a number of measures to help ratepayers, which include:

- Not imposing fines and interest penalties on overdue rates;
- Suspending debt recovery action on unpaid rates;
- Not taking action to sell properties under Section 184 of the Local Government Act 1999;
- Converting final notices for rates into reminder notices that make no reference to the taking of legal action for non-payment.

It is proposed that these arrangements be in place for a six month period from 1 April 2020.

Policy arrangements are already in place to deal with financial hardship, with rate remission and rate postponement available. This policy and associated administrative practices will be reviewed to streamline the process of dealing with hardship applications, given an expectation of high demand for support to be provided.

The estimated value of this support measure is \$80,000. This value does not include hardship relief, as it is not possible at this stage to estimate the value of any rate relief that might be provided on hardship grounds.

Inspection Fees for Food Businesses

Food businesses have been devastated by measures introduced to contain the coronavirus, with many forced to close, but a number continue or have been converted to operate on a takeaway, delivery or drive through basis. An increased level of education and inspection by Council's Environmental Health Officers will be required and these services would normally incur fees and charges.

As a result, it is recommended that fees and charges associated with this education and inspection work be waived for a six month period commencing 1 April 2020.

The estimated value of this support measure is \$10,000.

Parking Permit Fees and Exemptions

The City has established a number of parking controls and parking zones to help manage parking demand in city streets, controls that help optimise the use of limited kerbside parking space. Council then allows the use of various forms of parking permits and exemptions to ensure those impacted by parking controls have access to kerbside space.

Council's parking permit and exemption framework caters for residents, businesses, community service providers, and visitors.

As the crisis unfolds, Council is already fielding enquiries from residents now working at home about parking in time limited streets adjacent to where they live. Given parking permits are available,

As a result, it is proposed that the usual fee be waived for all applications received in the six months period from 1 April 2020.

The estimated value of this support measure is \$7,000.

Community Service Support Measures

Following the imposition of Covid-19 related restrictions on the Hamra Centre Library, Thebarton Community Centre, Plympton Community Centre, Cowandilla Community Hall and Mellor Park Hall, the Community Services Department has been working on new and innovative ways to provide services, support and keep the community connected.

Click and collect library services now being available with the mobile truck garage being opened up for drive through collection. In addition, customers are encouraged through Council's media channels to use our online services, such as Kanopy (video streaming), e-books and e-magazines. Themed packages of books are available for people who do not want to browse online while home library delivery services, normally provided to frail older people, are being extended to more people. This also enables our staff to check on the well-being of clients.

More regular checks are being made to support vulnerable and isolated clients who have no family, to monitor their wellbeing and provide assistance when required. Assistance includes transport to essential appointments (using taxi service), with the assistance of Drakes Supermarket the delivery by Council staff of packages of essential items (e.g. toilet paper, Panadol and non-perishable food), or just a social phone-call. A package of menus from local restaurants who will accept phone orders and then do delivery is being compiled and arranged for vulnerable residents who do not have online access. Commonwealth Home Support Services are currently being maintained with strict hygiene and personal distance protocols.

The school holiday program will be delivered on-line for the first time with the very popular Story-time, Toddler-Time and Baby-Time sessions also being provided live on Facebook at their usual scheduled times. The 2020 Art Prize Exhibition has been postponed and the art submission time has been extended until 31 August 2020, giving artists more time to work on their art and make submissions.

Other new and innovative services with associated service delivery methods to our community are currently being developed and implemented.

Other Measures – Small Business

In recognition of the plight of small businesses within West Torrens, the Administration is currently preparing information and options for Council to consider to help support and raise the profile of small businesses during the Covid-19 crisis. This includes participating, along with other councils in the Small Business Commissioner's *Small Business Friendly Council initiative*. Other measures include:

- Adding information to Council's webpage with links to COVID-19 support resources specifically for business.
- As a partner in the Western Adelaide Alliance of Councils, \$6,000 has been allocated to establish a dedicated small business support hotline through the Adelaide Business Hub. The support hotline is a proactive way that Western Adelaide councils can support businesses in the western region in a timely way with advice and support in this challenging time. The hotline will be tested week commencing 30 March, and is expected to be in operation as early as the middle of that week.
- Committing to the Small Business Friendly Council initiative in recognition of the plight of small businesses in the local area and to help support and raise the profile of small business.
- Contacting food and drink businesses in the Council area to provide information on establishments that are still open for take-away during the current restrictions on trading to promote via webpages and social media. This will assist the community as well as businesses.

Council staff are actively providing links to small businesses to assist them to access grant funding to keep them operating. They have also provided through its website and social media avenues information and links to the City of West Torrens' grant finder. This portal makes available all Covid-19 funding in one place to assist businesses that are struggling. Local businesses may be eligible for support funding either by grant, tax relief and PAYG refunds.

A strong focus has been given more recently to the lodgement / pursuit of government grants to help Council with the support of its businesses and the broader community. The Brownhill Keswick Creeks Stormwater Board is also intending to pursue grant funding support from the Commonwealth Government.

Enquires made with both the Minister for Industry and Skill and the office of the Small Business Commissioner, have clearly highlighted a focus for both on the provision of assistance to small business as opposed to assessing impact. Their focus continues to be in "doing" rather than analysing, given the unprecedented nature of this pandemic. This mirrors the current approach of the Administration. The LGA has advised recently that it is working with the SA Centre of Economic Studies on how best to target support and local stimulus, and we intend making use of the information that comes from this work.

Media / Communications approach of the Interim Support Measures

The local media has already reported on several councils that are offering support measures to their communities and more media is expected as other councils to do the same. To promote what we are providing, it is intended that we will:

- Have the Mayor contact a local journalist and provide information on what the City of West Torrens will be providing;
- Publish clear and concise information on our website;
- Push information out through social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter;
- Include a flyer with the next run of our quarterly rate notices;
- Provide information in the next issue of Talking Points.

A short video in which the Mayor speaks to camera may also be produced to outline what we are providing, and this could be uploaded to our website and pushed out through our social media channels.

Financial Impact of Recommended Support

Rate relief aside, the interim support measures recommended for West Torrens' residents and businesses, and its sporting, arts and community organisations are estimated to total \$500,000. An adjustment for this impact will be considered in the upcoming March budget review and is expected to be manageable considering the circumstances.

Wider and longer term impacts, particularly impacts on Council's rates income in both the current and the next financial year, are currently being assessed and will be the subject of a further report.

Climate Impact Considerations

(Assessment of likely positive or negative implications of this decision will assist Council and the West Torrens Community to build resilience and adapt to the challenges created by a changing climate.)

This situation has seen the community adapt and respond to changing circumstances, resulting in new perspectives and different approaches to how we operate. People are becoming more efficient and flexible and this is likely to have an overall positive impact on the environment.

Conclusion

This report proposes a number of interim measures to support those in the community adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Attachments

1. Schedule of leases and licences of Council land and buildings

Lease & Licence Revenue Projections 2019/20

	Outgoings 2019/20 Estimate	Insurance Annual Based on 19/20	Leases Annual Based on 19/20	Total Annual Based on 19/20	Total 6 Months Based on 19/20
Sporting, Arts and Community Group Leases					
Torrensville Bowling Club	874.28	1,876.68	2,283.12	5,034.08	2,517.04
SANFL	31,739.60	-	57,968.88	89,708.48	44,854.24
PHOS Sports and Social Club Inc	126.77	-	1,796.28	1,923.05	961.53
West Adelaide Football Club	3,665.56	-	33,928.68	37,594.24	18,797.12
SA Badminton Association Inc	14,144.57	3,636.88	11,000.04	28,781.49	14,390.75
MA Hawks Soccer Club	-	195.88	1,792.92	1,988.80	994.40
National Servicemans Association	-	1,241.72	1,537.96	2,779.68	1,389.84
Fulham Sea Scouts	-	-	34.30	34.30	17.15
Glandore Kindergarten	491.87	-	4,123.19	4,615.06	2,307.53
Glenlea Tennis Club	1,897.54	-	1,654.87	3,552.41	1,776.21
Kurralta Park Kindergarten	-	-	4,123.19	4,123.19	2,061.60
Lions Club of Richmond	3,567.15	2,667.76	760.89	6,995.80	3,497.90
Netley Kindergarten	265.12	-	2,061.59	2,326.71	1,163.36
Novar Gardens Bowling Club	7,039.80	2,654.04	3,570.54	13,264.38	6,632.19
Peake Gardens/Riverside Tennis Club	1,027.74	1,667.88	5,489.25	8,184.87	4,092.44
Western Youth Centre	1,460.09	-	110.00	1,570.09	785.04
Weslo Holdings Pty Ltd	60,568.62	-	65,928.48	126,497.10	63,248.55
Mighty Good Productions	10,690.93	-	17,929.38	28,620.31	14,310.15
Lockleys Riding Club	-	-	1,650.00	1,650.00	825.00
Hilton RSL	919.95	-	-	919.95	459.97
Camden Community Centre	2,506.28	-	-	2,506.28	1,253.14
GRAND TOTAL	140,985.85	13,940.84	217,743.56	372,670.25	186,335.13

6 CONFIDENTIAL

6.1 Interim Covid-19 Support Measures for Commercial Leases and Licences

Reason for Confidentiality

The Council is satisfied that, pursuant to Section 90(3)(g) of the *Local Government Act 1999*, the information to be received, discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item is:

- (g) matters that must be considered in confidence in order to ensure that the council does not breach any law, order or direction of a court or tribunal constituted by law, any duty of confidence, or other legal obligation or duty.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended to Council that:

1. Pursuant to Section 90(2) of the *Local Government Act 1999*, Council orders, that the public, with the exception of the Chief Executive Officer, members of the Executive and Management Teams in attendance at the meeting, and meeting secretariat staff, be excluded from attendance at so much of the meeting as is necessary to receive, discuss and consider in confidence, information contained within the confidential report Item 6.1 - Interim Covid-19 Support Measures for Commercial Leases and Licences, attachments and any associated documentation submitted by the Chief Executive Officer, specifically on the basis of the provisions of Section 90(3)(g) because the matter must be considered in confidence in order to ensure that Council does not breach any duty of confidence owed to the Commercial lessees and licencees.
2. At the completion of the confidential session the meeting be re-opened to the public.

7 MEETING CLOSE