



Extraordinary Meeting

Supplementary

Date of meeting: 15 March 2022
Location: By audio-visual link
Time: 6:30 p.m.

BUSINESS PAPER

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

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SECTION 2 – Mayoral Minute
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SUPPLEMENTARY

SECTION 2 – Mayoral Minutes

Item: 061

MM - 2022 Flood Emergency - (125610, 79351)

BACKGROUND:

I would like to pay tribute to our emergency services personnel, volunteers, Council staff and the broader community for their response, generosity and compassion during the ongoing flood emergency.

As we are unfortunately well aware, there are however significant works and challenges ahead and Council will need to work in partnership with other levels of Government in managing the clean up and recovery process.

Many properties and dwellings have been inundated and damaged, and whilst it is not yet possible to inspect or quantify these properties, it is clear that the clean up of damage will once again be a major and high priority task.

Council Activities

To date, Council has initiated a number of actions in regard to the flood emergency:

- Providing regular updates to the community through a range of channels including social media, website, media releases, radio and television about waste services, flood waste, Council facilities, getting around and donations
- Council has been using the emergency and disaster dashboard to provide regular updates on closures of local roads and also closures of regional and state roads which are located on livetraffic.com
- Development of the Flood Information page on our website with all the most up to date information on the disaster and recovery
- Arranged road crews to close roads, assess road conditions and undertake road repairs and pothole filling
- Provided sand for sandbags at Council's Wilberforce Depot
- Shared information about GIVIT, being the official way to donate to the flood emergency
- Maintained a limited domestic waste collections service west of the river, with waste transported to Lithgow Council's waste facility
- Council has staff located in evacuation centres to support the Department of Community and Justice
- Closed the majority of Council services such as Libraries and Pools
- Operated Council's call centre over the weekend of the 4 and 5 March 2022.

Flood Clean up

The NSW and Australian Governments have indicated that support will be provided to undertake clean up works, with Public Works Advisory acting as the lead agency on the clean up. The removal of waste will be via the placement of skip bins and dump trucks at various locations. This support is typically provided for a period of 21 days, post-event. Experience from the 2021 flood event tells us that a three week period is unlikely to be sufficient time for residents to clean up their properties.

Whilst the NSW Government has waived the Waste Levy for flood waste until 31 August 2022, significant costs will still be incurred by Council and the community to dispose of this waste, beyond any 21 day period. As such, I am recommending that Council advocate now to ensure that this support is provided to our residents until 31 August 2022.

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Flood Recovery

Our experience following the 2021 Flood Disaster was that Council was responsible for the repair and replacement of a significant volume of local infrastructure, including roads, bridges, flood mitigation, parks and other infrastructure. Whilst funding for contractors and materials is recouped from the NSW Government, management of the recovery has placed a significant strain on the organisation's ability to deliver on its other priorities. It is not sustainable or fair on our community that this situation should be repeated, and I am recommending that Council advocate now for additional support so that this burden is not placed solely on our small community.

Sandbags

The timely provision of sandbags to the community, on both sides of the river, is critical in a flood emergency. The formal responsibility for the provision of sandbags to the community lies with the SES, rather than Council. On 4 March 2022 the SES provided sandbags in Windsor, with support from Non-Government Organisations. In response to unmet community demand, Council provided sand for sandbags (bags provided by SES) at Wilberforce on 5 March 2022. I am recommending that Council work with the SES to develop a protocol for Council to be involved in the provision of sandbags when flood warnings are issued or at another appropriate trigger.

Application Fees for Flood Affected Properties

Following the 2021 flood, applications submitted to Council to carry out construction or reconstruction works on a property either directly affected by the flood event or subject where residents are affected by prolonged disturbance as a result of road closures, did not have to pay the relevant fees. I now propose that Council extend these existing fee waivers from the existing deadline of June 2022 until a new timeframe of 30 June 2023.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

1. Request that the NSW Government provide its operational and financial assistance for flood waste removal until the 31 August 2022.
2. Request additional support from the NSW Government in the form of funding for dedicated Infrastructure Recovery staff for the next year.
3. Request that the Local Emergency Management Committee adopt suitable protocols for the provision of sandbags and/or sandbag supplies on previously agreed trigger points.
4. Extend the existing waivers of development application fees for flood affected properties until 30 June 2023.
5. If needed, make an appropriate adjustment in the March 2022 Quarterly Budget Review.

ATTACHMENTS:

There are no supporting documents for this report.

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End of Supplementary Business Paper

This business paper has been produced electronically to reduce costs, improve efficiency and reduce the use of paper. Internal control systems ensure it is an accurate reproduction of Council's official copy of the business paper.