AGENDA

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

18\textsuperscript{TH} JUNE 2019

at 6:00 p.m.
Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 82 (1) of the Local Government Act 1999, a Special Meeting of Council will be held in the Council Chambers, 19 Wilson Street Berri SA, on Tuesday 18th June 2019 commencing at 6:00 p.m.

KARYN BURTON
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

13/06/2019
Opening: Council Prayer / Acknowledgement of Country

1: PRESENT:

2: APOLOGIES:

3: MEMBERS DECLARATION OF INTEREST:

4: CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CONSIDERATION:

5: REPORTS:
   5.1 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget 2018/2019 Submissions

6: CLOSURE:
Opening: Council Prayer / Acknowledgement of Country

1: PRESENT:

2: APOLOGIES: Mayor Hunt, Cr Sindos and Cr Winnall

3: MEMBERS DECLARATION OF INTEREST:
   Elected members are required to:
   1. Consider Section 73 and 75 of the Local Government Act 1999 and determine whether they have a material, actual or perceived conflict of interest in any matter to be considered in this Agenda.
   2. Disclose those interests in accordance with the requirements of Section 74 and 75A of the Local Government Act 1999 on the approved form.

4: CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CONSIDERATION:
   Elected Members request for additional information required for the ‘public interest test’ for proposed confidential items in the Agenda.

5: REPORTS:

5.1 Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget 2019/2020 Submissions

   REPORT AUTHOR: ACEO
   RESPONSIBLE MANAGER: ACEO
   RECORDS REF: N/A
   STRATEGIC LINKS: Yes; Strong Internal Capability and Capacity; Objective 2
   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:
   Impact Nil
   Budget Description N/A
   Allocation N/A
   Expenditure to Date N/A

SUMMARY:
To provide the submissions from the Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget 2019/2020 public consultation.

REPORT:
Public consultation period for the Annual Business Plan and Budget 2019/2020 ended at noon on Wednesday 12th June 2018 with Council receiving four (4) written submissions. Copies of the submissions are attached for information and consideration by Elected Members.
Several suggestions by Mr Linc Gore have merit and have been taken on board and changes will be made within the Annual Business Plan providing additional information to ratepayers. The other concerns expressed within the submissions received are primarily regarding the proposed rate increases.

Appropriate responses or contact will be made with each correspondent as directed by Council as well as thanking them for their interest and time taken to lodge submissions.

Since the draft Annual Business Plan has been released for public consultation further scrutiny of Council expenditure has been carried out resulting in a reduction of the forecast deficit from $85,283 to $5,354.

With the concerns expressed by the community regarding rate rises Council may wish to consider a reduction in the proposed rate rise to that of 1.3% increase to the rate in the dollar. The effect of this adjustment would mean the forecast deficit will be $62,394. Council may wish to further consider whether this minor deficit can be carried into the financial year with the intention of identifying savings as the year progresses or Council may make adjustment within the proposed budget at this time with the intention of adopting a balanced budget at its June meeting.

Conclusion:
N/A

RECOMMENDATION:
That Council,
1. having considered Report 5.1 titled “Draft Annual Business Plan and Budget 2018/2019 Submissions” as presented to the Special Council meeting, receive and note the report.
2. receive the submissions regarding the 2019/2020 Annual Business Plan and Budget.

ATTACHMENTS: Yes
List
Attachment 1 – Submission from Mr Linc Gore
Attachment 2 – Submission from Mr Terry Ridley
Attachment 3 – Submission from Ms Cherie Cooper
Attachment 4 – Submission from Mr Collis Marrett
Karyn Burton
Acting C.E.O. Berri Barmera Council
Wilson Street
Berri 5343


Karyn, Mayor Peter & Councillors:

I submit the following as part of the public consultation process for the Annual Business Plan.

As was discussed at the recent public meeting - that the introduction page include any increase to the service charges for waste management and wastewater management charges along with a chart clearly showing any rate rise amounts for the minimum rate followed by $100,000 increments up to $500,000 value. Traditionally Council has quoted an average residential rate increase but with our Council area having so many lower valued homes it sends a clouded message. It is a meaningless figure. Waste & wastewater amounts are shown later in the document but by also having them in the opening page shows a willingness to be upfront about increased costs to the ratepayer.

The Strategic Plan Goals – Does this include mention of increasing temperatures and a predicted rainfall reduction (less river flows)? – Where is there mention of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) or are we content to plod along blind to such solutions?

Under Council Activities & Services – Page 7 – All Councils have basic responsibilities under the Local Government Act….include - …. – Recommend including “street trees” as Section 232 of the Act sets out specific responsibilities of Council about street tree management.

Council is not a charity. Council supports charitable organisations – Foodbank and the fact that non-government agencies providing emergency housing do not pay rates are two examples.
Under 12.13 the rebate of rates: Where Council has by concession granted a rebate – especially where land is being used by an organisation that in the opinion of Council provides a benefit or service to the local community – During a fiscal year that organisation should be required to appear before Council and show what benefits they do provide so that next year, if Council decides on the presented evidence to again grant a rebate, it will be on justifiable grounds.

Council has budgeted $18,874 towards the Star Club Membership. Star Club provides Clubs with active assistance in gaining three tiers of grants from Government – In fact if Clubs are not a member they are unlikely to receive a grant – In the past Council has assisted many Clubs from their Community Grants allocation. If this allocation is still to exist (I could not find mention of it in the proposed budget) then this allocation should now be substantially reduced and Clubs directed to the Star Club membership direction. To do otherwise begs the question – Why is Council making this Star Club allocation?

The budget: We and the rest of our Nation are in tight financial times – Wage growth is non-existent – Superannuation returns are dwindling. Basic costs to Council and residents are increasing. Although logically it should not affect Council’s decision about rate adjustments the rates set by our neighbouring Councils are subject to constant public comment. Our Council, in recent years, has made good advances in providing services to the Community – which come at a cost.
Adverse publicity has been directed towards Council – The 2018 C.E.O. appointment disaster - Criticism of the river front development which now has a budget of $100,000 for a retrofit – The air conditioning extra costs for the Stadium – And just this last week a Jarvis Street resident queried – “Is Council out of its depth with the two preceding subjects plus the flooding control for Jarvis Street which infrastructure changes took a long time and needed adjustment and is yet to be tested by a sudden down pour?” I expect more adverse comment once people realise that those great big hunks of metal masquerading as history telling art on Crawford Terrace are to remain or fearfully more to be erected.

For the sake of good governance, Committees that get a budget allocation, and include non-elected members of the Community, must have their recommendations for expenditure come back before Council for final decision. That way the rate payers are guaranteed that the financial spending of Council accords with democratic principles.

Public confidence in our Council is at a low point. To rectify this – Re-analyse the budget – Lead by example with Chairpersons’ of Committees who may be entitled to a ‘sitting fee’ rejecting this fee (as they do in Renmark/Paringa). - Council may have authorised a non elected member/s to receive a sitting fee as chairperson but that person does not get a Councillor allowance. Present a zero rate rise by rejecting some of the proposed operating projects and/or getting Council Managers to come back with the required percentage efficiencies (savings). –

The cost of our Halls – An ‘emotional’ issue – Surely there is room for some rationalisation here – The Bonney Theatre area is finally getting more use but would welcome more – The Berri Stadium (along with the Senior Citizens hall and the soon to be completed Berri Cottage Homes hall) and the Field Day site Pavilion, are excellent facilities so is there a need for the Berri Council Hall in Wilson Street? - Could that space be better utilized for any future Council office expansion? The Glossop Hall is used by the Gem and Mineral Club – How many members? – Can they be better accommodated somewhere else and that ‘Hall’ disposed of – The Winkie Hall is looked after by the Croatian Community – My understanding is that their ranks are thinning – Has there been a sit down with them to ascertain the likely future direction?

Frankly, where the local public perception is at the moment, plus the local economic situation, self serving projects like office refurbishment must be carefully and frugally considered. There would be more acceptance of it if there was no rate rise.

Is it time for an outside independent body to examine the justification of what operating plant Council holds? – I challenge the Audit committee to examine that factor. An open mind may see other plant required so it is not just about cutting things out.

On the other hand we have witnessed consultant costs ending up costing Council – The Barmera Fountain and the Berri Riverfront Precinct being two recent examples. I believe that Council has much cost saving required expertise within their own ranks – especially for initial planning stages.

My understanding is that (and I stand to be corrected) a number of Council employees are paid above award rates – I know that many freely give of their time for Community events. The payment of above award rates should bring a motivated enthusiastic work force and costs of upskilling these workers must be supported. It also brings a responsibility to carefully examine work practices to ensure efficiencies.
**Street trees** – A controversial subject – Maintenance costs over $200,000 – Where a tree is of sound structure but the resident wants it removed or reduced for ‘border line’ reasons should that resident share the cost with Council or bare the total cost themselves?

Under 12.16 – Sale of land for **non-payment of rates** – so that people understand the magnitude of the problem – I recommend that the total amount of outstanding rates (over 3 years old) be quoted.

Under 7.1 – With the **drought communities money** – Many projects – Along with all the other necessary maintenance and proposed projects does Council have the personnel to have them all completed this coming financial year – I doubt it – In consultation with the relevant managers would it be wise to revisit all the proposed projects and only those that can realistically be completed within the time frame be listed and funded this coming financial year.

Under 7.1 – The funding and work for **Lake Bonney Surrounds** – Must be a priority – I note once again a ‘local’ taking yet another elected member around the Lake showing the environmental damage caused by ‘free campers’. If another year goes by with nothing happening the people who care will despair.

Although maybe not the relevant time to make a comment – $12,000 is in the budget for the Wood Carving Gum Tree Dean Drive Barmera – This tree lends itself to having a large angry feral cat, hind legs to the sky, bearing down from above on the present carvings – Along with an appropriate information board this would give a drastic point of difference to this presentation and I would anticipate enormous media coverage and social media comment.

Linc Gore
36 Derrick Street
Berri
11th June 2019.

lfskgore@internode.on.net
To whom it concerns

The council is proposing a rate increase of around 2%+, I believe, WHY?
Surely the council members have a responsibility to act in the best interests of ratepayers, and consider the financial situation of the area. Why cant they adopt a zero or as Renmark 1% increase. Every year we see increases of the rate level. Always up. Why cant you, reduce the amount of the council office refurbishment, and the wharf cost.
You need to manage the budget better instead of just using ratepayers as a financial cash cow.
Households have to cut their cloth to suit their needs, its about time council Elected members bite the bullet and review the proposed budget. Ratepayers do not have a bottomless pocket of money please consider this.

I dont expect you to take any notice of this email, as U never have done before, but its about time U listened to the public.

Gloria and Terry Ridley
Hi Karyn

Please see the attached.

Regards,
Cr Adrian Little
Area Councillor
Berri Barmera Council

Begin forwarded message:

From: Cherie Cooper <cheriecooper@bigpond.com>
Date: 28 May 2019 at 5:38:00 pm ACST
To: <crlittle@bbc.sa.gov.au>
Subject: Re council rates

Dear Mr Little,
I am expressing my concern at the article, in the Murray Pioneer, last Friday informing us that our council rates will be rising by 2%.

As a rate payer, I would like to know if our rates are going up due to the work that will need to be done to fix the error on the Berri Waterfront as well as to pay for the extra air conditioners in the new stadium?

The townships of Berri and Barmera have an eclectic population. We have an older population, where some work and others are retired, unemployed youth and adults and
employed youth and adults.

Many of these residents struggle week by week paying their living expenses. Many parents pay for their children to play sport and this can be expensive with fees as well as uniforms. Some families may have to stop these extra activities due to rate rises.

There will be families who will not be able to pay for school events like camps and excursions due to the rate rises.

Have the Council thought about the impact on their residents? If they have less money to spend, the businesses will miss out due to people buying less in their stores.

We have enough empty stores in both towns and we certainly do not need any more to close!

Isn’t your goal to encourage growth and new businesses and jobs?

It is disappointing to see the extra money we will have to pay to fix your mistakes! Why do we have to pay?

Renmark Council rates are less than ours. Loxton Waikerie Council rates are staying the same. Why are we different?

Have you thought to go out and speak to your residents and ask them what they think? After all, they voted you in and are expecting you to work for them and make life a little easier.

I look forward to your reply.

Regards
Cherie Cooper

Sent from my iPhone
Dear sir/madam,

I wish to strongly object to the Berri Barmera Annual Business Plan 2019/2020.

The CPI for the 12 months to the end of March 2019 is 1.3%, down from 1.8% the previous quarter.

Your "Budgeted Income Statement for the three years ending 30 June 2020 to 2022" proposes general rate rises of 6.2% for the year ended 30 June 2020 and 3.5% the following year. At a time of flat wages, rising cost of living expenses and our region facing water restrictions in the coming summer, this is fiscally unacceptable and once again highlights the lack of connect between the council and the community.

Even more so when the other two councils in our region are proposing 0% and 1% rate increases. Given that the Berri Barmera Council has the highest council rates in the Riverland, instead of spending more money, the Berri Barmera Council should responsible enough to tighten its budget and freeze council rates until such time as they fall in line with the other councils. As it currently stands with your proposed budget, instead of closing the gap between the Berri Barmera Council rates and the other Riverland councils its actually going to increase! This is totally unacceptable!!

I request that the Berri Barmera Council revise it's Annual Business Plan for 2019/2020 to reduce spending sufficient to freeze rates at current levels until such time as they fall into line with the other Riverland Councils. You have an obligation to your community to demonstrate fiscal resposnibility and lumping a struggling region with the highest council rates in the state is not only making our region uncompetitive, but is totally unacceptable.

Yours sincerely,
Collis Marrett

0418 857 674
5: CLOSURE: