



W A V E R L E Y
COUNCIL

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

URGENT BUSINESS ITEMS

TUESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2014

Waverley Council
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**THE FOLLOWING URGENT BUSINESS ITEMS ARE SUBMITTED FOR
COUNCIL'S CONSIDERATION**

10. Urgent Business

CRD.73/14	Local Government Reform - Fit for the Future	3
NM.52/14	Electronic 'spaces available' parking sign for Wellington Street Car Park	9

Report Requiring Determination No. CRD.73/14

Subject: Local Government Reform - Fit for the Future
Trim File No.: A12/0619
Author: Arthur Kyron, General Manager



Recommendation:

That:

1. Council receives the Officer report, Local Government Reform - Fit for the Future.
2. The General Manager prepares a process for Waverley Council to discuss and respond to the reform Package.
3. The Mayor and General Manager meet with the Mayors and General Managers of Woollahra and Randwick Councils to discuss and determine the response to the reform package.

1. Executive Summary

The announcement of the 'Fit for the Future' package outlines the NSW Government's intention to support and facilitate significant Local Government reform. Waverley Council is now required to respond by 30 June 2015 with a proposal for meeting the NSW Government's reform agenda.

A series of first steps are proposed that include consultation with Councillors and the community. A program of work will be developed so that Council's response can be constructed appropriately over the coming nine months.

2. Introduction/Background

On 10 September 2014, the 'Fit for the Future' package for Local Government reform was announced. The announcement is the NSW Government's response to the findings of a comprehensive three-year independent review of local government. The Fit for the Future reform package provides for up to \$1billion of support and incentives for Councils to reform.

For Waverley, the final report of the Local Government Independent Review Panel, 'Revitalising Local Government' outlined a number of recommendations and importantly signaled a proposal for amalgamation.

Council's stated position has been one of support for local government reform but is not supportive of the proposition for Waverley becoming part of the "global city" with City of Sydney. Instead, the investigation of the possibility for merging with neighbouring councils Woollahra and Randwick is preferred provided benefits for the community can be demonstrated.

The 'Fit for the Future' package requires that councils submit a proposal to an independent expert panel by 30 June 2015 on how they will become Fit for the Future and will need to demonstrate how council plans to meet a series of independently-established criteria.

Key resolutions from Council are included below.

CRD.11/14 Draft Submission on the final reports of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and the Local Government Acts Taskforce (A12/0619 & A03/2631)

MOTION: (Betts / Kay)

That Council endorse the amended submission on the final reports of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and the Local Government Acts Taskforce and forward this to the Minister by 4 April 2014, and that the overview letter be amended accordingly to reflect all the amendments made in the table.

The submission can be found here:

http://www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/67579/Extraordinary_Council_Agenda_-_24_March_2014.pdf

Main points taken from the Exec Summary:

Waverley Council, along with its neighbouring councils, has openly expressed concern with proposals for a Global Sydney Council. Nevertheless, over the past year we have continued to participate in discussions with our two neighbouring councils, Randwick and Woollahra, to consider and develop a more informed view of the potential benefits and disadvantages of a smaller Eastern Sydney City Council potentially comprising Waverley, Woollahra and Randwick. These discussions have been conducted on an exploratory basis. As part of the effort to determine the benefits and disadvantages that may arise for the communities of these LGA from a merger, the three councils are in the process of developing a draft community survey. If this survey is undertaken the intent will be to ascertain the community's view of the merits of the Panel's proposal for a Global Sydney model, compared with the perceived merits of an Eastern Sydney model and no amalgamation at all.

In this context, Waverley Council's submission generally supports and promotes voluntary mergers and recommends the encouragement of '...voluntary mergers of councils through measures to lower barriers and provide professional and financial support.' (p.78).

1212.6.3**Independent Local Government Review Panel – Local Government Reform – Resource Sharing with Woollahra and Randwick Councils (A12/0619)****MOTION / DECISION (Betts)**

That Council:

1. Note the release of the Local Government Independent Review Panel's paper 'Case for Sustainable Change' and the emphasis on significant consolidation of Sydney Councils.
2. Resolve that Waverley should commence discussions with Woollahra and Randwick Councils regarding the local government reform process including possible resource sharing, joint tendering, and potential boundary adjustments, identifying benefits and drawbacks whilst ensuring that any changes that take place protect the integrity of Waverley's financial position and product delivery to its residents.
3. States clearly its opposition to forced amalgamations by this or any State Government without demonstrated benefits to the Waverley community that cannot otherwise be achieved in our current structure and size.

BACKGROUND

The NSW Government established an Independent Local Government Review Panel in 2011 and their report "The Case for Sustainable Change" was released in November 2012.

The report comments on Metropolitan Sydney outlining the different populations within the 41 councils and says "a critical element in future metropolitan governance will be the role of the City of Sydney as a centrepiece" of the local government system.

The Panel is seeking further evidence on the benefits and drawbacks of amalgamations in different circumstances.

The three Councils should work together to clearly understand the benefits and possibilities of further resource sharing or joint tendering and any drawbacks from any boundary changes.

3. Discussion

The announcement from the State Government, whilst stating that there will be no forced amalgamations, makes it clear to the sector that change is imminent and has provided incentives for councils to voluntarily amalgamate. The incentive package is by far the most historic in Australian local government transformation terms because of the quantum of

money allocated to local governments who proceed to amalgamate. The model put forward by the State Government shifts the burden of the impact of amalgamation from the ratepayers to the State. Other Australian models have left the burden on the ratepayers with fringe benefits, at best, on offer from the State.

The Independent Local Government Review Panel report, in respect to Waverley, Woollahra, Botany and Randwick, recommends that they be incorporated within a greater City of Sydney model. The statements from the respective Councils indicate that the greater City of Sydney model is universally not supported. The councils each have their individual positions; they oppose forced amalgamations and that they wish to retain their currently gazette boundaries.

The Waverley Council Mayor and General Manager have over a period of time, with the Mayors and General Managers of Randwick and Woollahra Councils, been discussing the prospect of amalgamation. There has been no overall joint position agreed at these meetings or combined response to the findings of the Independent Local Government Review Panel's report. However, the meetings have resulted in the preparation of evidence to evaluate the impacts of amalgamation should the combination of the three councils be pursued by either the State Government or voluntarily by the three councils.

The views of the communities of Waverley, Woollahra and Randwick have yet to be determined by way of a statistically valid survey as to their attitudes to amalgamation and other options. Whilst each council may have conducted their own survey there needs to be an agreed consistent approach to the survey instrument and method applied across all councils for the results to be comparable.

The councils are also consistent with their statements to date that amalgamation must result in benefits to the community. The community benefit has yet to be tested and demonstrated.

The State Government, both in its local government review information and at the recent meeting on 11 September with the Premier and the Minister for Local Government, has stated that they are reviewing, through IPART, the rate setting method for local governments. The disproportionate rate impacts that will arise through the amalgamation of the three coastal councils, for example, will be a significant barrier to the development of a Fit for the Future proposal that satisfies all parties in their pursuit of demonstrable community benefit.

4. Conclusion

It is important to position our Council in light of the State Government's proposal. The approach adopted by this government, whilst offering substantially more by way of incentives to local governments that voluntarily amalgamate, also seems to imply that if the voluntary approach is not adopted then the government's model for amalgamation will be implemented.

This is similar to the approach taken by the WA State Government. However, the NSW State Government legislation does not have the same restrictive provisions that the WA Local Government Act has and as such has less onerous legal constraints to implement forced amalgamations.

If Waverley and our neighboring councils adopt entrenched positions of no amalgamations, then without an amalgamation scenario, our local governments will not be in the best position to respond when amalgamation occurs.

As we have yet to establish the position of the Council about amalgamation and a response to the Fit for the Future proposal, it is important that the Councillors discuss the implications of the Government's position, explore the options for amalgamation with its neighbors and prepares a proposal outlining our plans for becoming Fit for the Future by the deadline of 30 June 2015.

A series of first steps are suggested:

- Establish a taskforce of representatives from neighboring councils to investigate the option of amalgamation.
- Conduct a series of workshops to explore the views of Waverley Councillors about the impact of amalgamation on Waverley and the cost/benefit of amalgamation with other councils.
- Convene a joint meeting of Elected Members from across the three councils of Waverley, Woollahra and Randwick to explore shared understanding/concerns/benefits of amalgamation.
- Conduct a "Lessons from WA Local Government Reform" seminar for local government in NSW given the similarity of approach the two state governments have adopted.
- Conduct a survey of residents across the three councils to gauge their views about amalgamation.

5. Relationship to Waverley Together 3 & Delivery Program 2013-17

The relationship to *Waverley Together 3* and *Delivery Program 2013-17* is as follows:

- *Direction:* G1 - Inspiring community leadership is achieved through decision making processes that are open, transparent, corruption resistant and based on sound integrated planning.
 - Strategy:* G1c - Our leaders advocate on our behalf to promote the area's interests and win resources
 - Deliverable:* Council advocates for Local Government Reform outcomes that maintain and enhance community services.
- *Direction:* G2 – Our community is actively engaged in well-informed decision processes.
 - Strategy:* G2a – Promote and require strategic directions that are inclusive and reflect the views of the community.

- Strategy:* G2b – Provide opportunities in a variety of forums for all stakeholders to contribute to community decision making.
- Deliverable:* Council engages the community in the Local Government Reform agenda.

6. Financial impact statement/Timeframe/Consultation

Given the complex and comprehensive nature of the deliverables required for the 30 June 2015 submission deadline, the workshops and consultation required and the coordination with neighbour councils, it is proposed that a high level project timeline be developed.

Councillor workshops are anticipated to be a key first step and these should be scheduled as soon as practicable.

Financial impacts are yet to be determined, however it is possible that some financial allocation will be necessary to coordinate efforts and in tasks that require specialist expertise, for example the development of a robust and valid community survey. Details of any financial impact will be determined in the coming weeks.

7. Attachment/s:

Nil.

**Notice of Motion
No. NM.52/14**

Subject: Electronic 'spaces available' parking sign for Wellington Street Car Park

Trim File No.: A02/0637-02

Submitted by: Councillor Strewe

MOTION

That Council installs an electronic digital spaces available parking sign on either Bondi Road at Wellington Street or Wellington Street at Wellington Place that will advise people wishing to park in the car park of the number of available spaces in the Wellington Street Car Park.

BACKGROUND

This car park is still relatively unknown and businesses in the area have requested a digital electronic sign board. The action would also include the necessary works in the car park.