



AGENDA FORUM
MINUTES

16 APRIL 2013

Departmental Guideline for Agenda Forums

Council Forums

Local government forums range from a once-only event to discuss and explore a particular issue, a number of sessions to address matters such as a specific project or the compilation of a report for internal or external use, through to forums held at regular intervals with a consistent structure and objectives.

Regular forums run in local governments exhibit two broad categories which we have titled *agenda* and *concept*. They are differentiated by the stage of development of issues which are discussed by elected members and staff. The two types are described below along with the variations in procedural controls and processes suggested for each.

Agenda Forums

For proper decision-making, elected members must have the opportunity to gain maximum knowledge and understanding of any issue presented to the Council on which they must vote. It is reasonable for elected members to expect that they will be provided with all the relevant information they need to understand issues listed on the agenda for the next or following ordinary Council meetings. The complexity of many items means that elected members may need to be given information additional to that in a staff report and/or they may need an opportunity to ask questions of relevant staff members.

Many local governments have determined that this can be achieved by the elected members convening as a body to become better informed on issues listed for council decision. Such assemblies have been termed *agenda forums*. It is considered they are much more efficient and effective than elected members meeting staff on an individual basis for such a purpose with the added benefit that all elected members hear the same questions and answers.

To protect the integrity of the decision-making process it is essential that *agenda forums* are run with strict procedures.

There must be no opportunity for a collective council decision or implied decision that binds the local government to be made during a forum.

Agenda forums should be for staff presenting information and elected members asking questions, not opportunities to debate the issues. A council should have clearly stated rules that prohibit debate or vigorous discussion between elected members that could be interpreted as debate. Rules such as questions through the chair and no free-flowing discussion between elected members should be applied.

Procedures Applying to Both Concept and Agenda Forums

The Department recommends that councils adopt a set of procedures for both types of forums which include the following:

- Dates and times for forums should be set well in advance where practical;

- The CEO will ensure timely written notice and the agenda for each forum is provided to all members;
- Forum papers should be distributed to members at least three days prior to the meeting;
- The mayor/president or other designated elected member is to be the presiding member at all forums;
- Elected members, employees, consultants and other participants shall disclose their financial and conflicts of interest in matters to be discussed;
- Interests are to be disclosed in accordance with the provisions of the Act as they apply to ordinary council meetings. Persons disclosing a financial interest will not participate in that part of a forum relating to their interest and leave the meeting room;
- There is to be no opportunity for a person with an interest to request that they continue in the forum; and
- A record should be kept of all forums. As no decisions will be made, the record need only be a general record of items covered but should record disclosures of interest with appropriate departures/returns.

Procedures Specific to Agenda Forums

The Department recommends that councils adopt specific procedures for *agenda forums* which include the following:

- Agenda forums should be open to the public unless the forum is being briefed on a matter for which a formal council meeting may be closed; and
- Items to be addressed will be limited to matters listed on the forthcoming agenda or completed and scheduled to be listed within the next two meetings (or period deemed appropriate).

Meeting Record

Meeting Name	Agenda Forum	Meeting No.	4 - 2013
Meeting Date	16 April 2013		
Meeting Time	5.30pm		
Meeting Location	Chambers, Cathedral Avenue		
Attendees	Mayor I Carpenter Cr N Bennett Cr D Brick Cr J Clune Cr R deTrafford Cr P Fiorenza Cr C Gabelish Cr R Hall Cr N Messina Cr I Middleton Cr R Ramage Cr T Thomas Officers: A Brun, Chief Executive Officer P Melling, Director of Sustainable Communities B Davis, Director of Treasury & Finance A Selvey, Acting Director of Creative Communities N Arbutnot, Director of Community Infrastructure K Seidl, Manager Community Law and Safety M Connell, Manager Urban and Regional Development B Robartson, Manager of Land and Property Services A Zinetti, <i>Meeting Secretary</i>	By Invitation	
		Member of Public	3
		Press	1
		Leave of Absence	Cr N McIlwaine
		Apologies	Cr S Van Styn Cr R Ashplant C Wood, Director of Organisational Performance
	Absent		
	Distribution		

1 Declaration of opening

The Presiding member opened the meeting opened at 5:30pm.

2 Apologies/leave of absence (previously approved)

Existing Approved Leave

Councillor	From	To (<i>Inclusive</i>)
Cr C Gabelish	27 March 2013	15 April 2013
Cr N McIlwaine	12 April 2013	23 April 2013
Cr N Bennett	27 June 2013	22 July 2013

3 Declarations of conflicts of interest

Nil.

4 Review of the Agenda Items for the forthcoming Ordinary Meeting of Council dated 16 April 2013

Please Note that this forum does not allow for debate or decision making on any item within this agenda. Briefings will be given by staff or consultants for the purpose of ensuring that elected members and the public are more fully informed

The Presiding Member will call each Report in the Agenda and open the floor to deputation, questions and statements.

Members of the public may verbally ask make presentations or ask questions on the item relating to the Draft Report to Council, subject to the provision in writing of the statement or question on the prescribed form.

Councillors may ask questions (strictly no debating) relating to each item as it is called the Presiding member.

There is no general public questions or statements permitted on matters not contained in the set agenda Council Agenda Forum. Any Questions relating to general matters or matters not in the agenda of the current Council Agenda Forum should be asked at Public Question time at an Ordinary Meeting of Council.

Petitions, Deputations Or Presentations

Nil

Significant Strategic Matters

Nil

Audit and Risk Management

Nil

Strategic & Policy Matters

OP0038 New Policy – CP 061 Keys To The City And Freedom Of Entry

Nil.

TF054 Special Direct Debit Payment Arrangements for Rates

Question

Cr deTrafford asked what the implications are if this monthly payment service is made available to everyone?

Response

B Davis advised that yes, it can be made available for people with instalments, but it becomes a question whether or not it is made available under the same conditions as for those under hardship. If it is made available without the charge that is provided for people that pay by instalments and without the interest payment that is charged for payments by instalments, the City may possibly lose between \$200,000 to \$400,000 in revenue depending on the actual change adopted. That is why, in this report it is suggested that we defer that question as a question to be dealt with when we do the final framing of the budget. What we do want to do with this policy is to cement in place is the special arrangement we've made for people in hardship, because we time-framed it for a single year last year. This continues that arrangement for the coming year, and we can consider the issue once we've gone through the process of coming up with a rating model, then we can look at the issues of other forms of revenue and that is the interest and charges part something you need to take into account before you get to a final budget position.

Question

Cr de Trafford asked what is the final hardship? In the report, it states you had to get letters from Council. Is it that stringent or is it that an officer makes the determination?

Response

B Davis advised that no, the City has a defined position on this as per the interim policies adopted last year. The City gets the person who claims hardship, to go to seek independent verification of their claim. They make an assessment of the person's capacity to pay and their ability to pay rates, the advisor writes a letter to the City.

Noted:

Mayor I Carpenter confirmed that there is a replacement of the template as the original copy had the wrong template attached, the right template is on the table for Councillors.

Question

Cr Gabelish sought clarification on the report which mentions the Resource Centre and not sure who it is referring to or whether it is referring to the place that he works for, if it is the place he works for whether it is a conflict of interest and should he be asking questions and sitting in the discussion in the first instance.

Response

B Davis advised that yes, it does refer to the group that Cr Gabelish works for. But the Resource Centre is a free service that is available to the general community.

Question

Cr Gabelish asked in that case then, given that advice, he will pose some questions. Predicating that there has not been any discussion between the City and his employer with about 250 additional people seeking services. If both organisations get the same numbers through and assuming that most of these people are setting up these arrangements within a short period of time after budget.

Response

B Davis advised that the City, last year, in total, had seen 200 to 220 odd people in hardship a significant proportion of those came forward from the prior years, so there may have been a another dozen or so added to that number. This is a process and it has been going since the Geraldton - Greenough merger and some people choose to go to their bank where they get free counselling.

Question

Cr Gabelish stated that he was not sure of any established relationships or ongoing relationship with the Resources Centre. He is concerned e.g. if people have money to go and see banks then what loss they are in. He also wondered about the bureaucratic nature of people that are saying 'I'm in financial hardship' and then a requirement being placed on them to attend an organisation which wasn't the case last year, it wasn't a requirement for them to provide a budget or a letter that says they are in financial hardship or anything like that.

Response

B Davis advised that it has been the City's standard procedure for years and so it has always been the case that we require them to get independent advice and they have been doing it.

Question

Cr Gabelish enquired as to how many letters the City received from financial counsellors last year?

Response

B Davis stated he will check how many letters were received and will advise Cr Gabelish.

Question

Cr Gabelish expressed a concern that he can anticipate that people are getting a message that they must attend and there is a free service available, they may not be able to get an appointment and there may not be the availability within the time frame to set up for these arrangements for people to be able to get that service. And whether or not it is really required and

when they get the letter when they get their budget. Is there any oversight and a bit confused for more bureaucracy for 250 people, particularly if there is quite a number of those that have been having these arrangements for quite some period of time. Why is there a real need for this added to levels of bureaucracy when people are claiming that they are in financial hardship?

Response

Mayor I Carpenter asked that Cr Gabelish's organisation and B Davis meet and discuss this offline at a separate meeting, to provide solutions and if there are any issues to get through then they can be solved, if possible, at that time.

Question

Cr Ramage asked what the intention of the City Treasury is in adopting the budget by the end of June which in most cases there would be a requirement on ratepayers to pay their rates by the end of July. This is well and truly ahead of the normal payments time which is around August/September.

There are a couple of Councillors alluding to the demographics of trying to set up the needs as to actually qualify for this special arrangement. It perhaps should be looked at in further context of shortening the period of it, but also make it generally available (saying we are going to lose money there), but at the same time if we should consider as done in the past by many shires, is to offer a discount for early payment. We should look at a balance of all those numbers as we move forward and as to how we handle these rates.

Response

B Davis advised that last year Councillors adopted the budget on 9 July which is a week to ten days difference from the target for this year. What the City did was to carry on previous arrangements for people in hardships. In reality, last year the City didn't change anything for people with hardships. Different arrangements were made for how they could pay. All the City did was to carry on arrangements that seemed to suit people. The City employs people who are not financial counsellors and are employed as our rates clerks. That is what they are/do. They are not social counsellors and not financial planners. The City leaves people the choice of where they seek advice and it just happens to be by coincidence a free service is available through the organisation.

Timing is not a critical issue and on the question of should the City offer a discount, the Council has not previously looked at that and Mr Davis is open to bring that up for the next series of workshops and just before the May and June meetings and is happy to consider this.

Question

Cr Ramage asked in normal context of normal payment arrangements, we do this on a quarterly arrangement which is normal for Council and suggests that Councillors could look at the whole situation and see how to better suit the ratepayers and at the same time the economics as far as the Council is concerned.

Response

Mayor I Carpenter, requested for B Davis to take the question on board from Cr Ramage.

Mayor I Carpenter added that if people pay quarterly, they pay a \$10 administration fees per instalment and 5.5% instalment interest is charge and in reverse of that, if people are paying upfront they are saving themselves that interest charge and the instalment fee.

Noted

Mr Davis will look at this and will give a report to Council.

Operational Matters

TF055 Proposed Rates & Minimum Payments For 2013-14Question

Cr Bennett made comment that the report is very easy to read and complimented B Davis on the report.

Response

B Davis expressed his thanks to Cr Bennett for the feedback.

Question

Cr Ramage commented that the Report doesn't give much detail of where the money is to be spent.

Response

B Davis advised that the premise for the estimates for rates works on maintenance of the services and programs from the prior year – that is what the policy says. The structure of the budget is taken from last financial year which has been in the public domain since July last year and that states where the money is going. What the report doesn't tell you is where any of the additional money might be allocated to when looking at the capital works program. This has yet to be workshopped with Council. It indicates already that the money is going into the same structure of services and programs as for the current financial year. That is what the policy says to do.

Question

Cr Ramage stated that the report has no detail and Mr Davis is just quoting policy.

Response

Mayor I Carpenter advised that it is the policy that Council has adopted.

Response

B Davis commented that this is not an adoption of a budget, what this report seeks from Council is simply a preferred rating model is nominated for the purpose of seeking public submission on that model. It is not adopting a budget with this. It is adopting something which says that in relation to rates

which makes up about 47% or 48% of the revenue side of the budget that is the rating model preferred for next year. This is all this report seeks to do.

This year, the City is offering it in a different way and offering an additional six weeks for submissions from the community with two agenda items at public forums, so that the City consult sufficiently and gives the community sufficient time to respond to proposals from Council. The detail is in last year's budget and that is the program structure.

Question

Cr Brick asked for an explanation on percentage allocated to working capital and the effect of different scenarios e.g. if it was '0' or if it is following the Executive Recommendation and asked for some input on that.

Response

B Davis advised that as in the report, the specific breakdowns of what is allocated to asset renewal working capital are largely irrelevant for the purposes of preferred rating model. After a series of workshops, then it will become an issue. There are multiple alternatives where there was a difference between the views of individual councillors on that kind of structural breakdown, for this purpose no decision needs to be made as yet. That will be at a later discussion. In real terms, when the issue of working capital is looked at, what you are effectively finding is for this financial year what you want the operating surplus to be. At the end point that is what you are defining.

This is not an adoption of the budget, what it seeks from Council is the purposes of finding that model. The rating model is a preferred model.

Question

Cr Fiorenza asked that looking at these figures and looking at last year's figures saying that we had a rate increase of 23% and if we go ahead with this Recommendation what is the actual rate increase that we could quote to rate payers?

Response

B Davis advise that this year is not a revaluation year. The change in the rate in the dollar is the same as the change in percentage of cash. Except for the minor items adjustments are being made for alignment between Mullewa and percentage shift is exactly the same as the rate in the dollar.

The examples in the tables and the summary of what it costs per year and per week the percentages can be seen (Page 26 of the report) there is no revaluation this year. The annual revaluation is the exception where farmers are going to get on the UV properties. The Valuer General gives the City a revised revaluation role for UV properties which typically reflects CPI adjustment in the revaluations each year. This is an annual process. GRV has been done on a 4 year cycle but the Valuer General will now change this to a 3 year cycle.

Response

The CEO confirmed that the increase was 27.1%

Question

Cr Clune asked on the 3 year cycle for revaluation, does this come from the request particularly from this Council or did they initiate that themselves. Last year after rates period we asked that they shorten the gap of their revaluations.

Response

B Davis responded that the understanding is Landgate and the Valuer General had independently reviewed their process.

Response

Mayor I Carpenter advised that WALGA discussed it at a broader level and their recommendation was to the Valuer General that it be Metropolitan and major regional centres that they can cut back from 4 years and the UV has followed the same regime.

Question

Cr Brick asked that from memory it was requested from Department of Local Government (DLG) and from indications of the time span that they were looking at, is there any feedback on that?

Response

B Davis advised an email response (the City communicated via email rather than by letter) from the DLG stating it has adopted a position that because so many smaller councils have not been in a position, firstly, to even report on any of the ratios related to asset renewal they are not in a position sufficiently be informed beyond the larger regional councils and metro councils, to know what the starting point is, so what they want to do, from 1st July this year, the new ratios come into force and we have to report them.

Next financial year will be the first year we have to report against the new financial performance sustainability ratios. That will give the DLG the first picture of what the starting point is, they are not (I don't think) looking at a single 'one size fits all'. What they will do is they may issue a more detailed guidelines in relation to timeframes and the parameters to use in determining the timeframe that councils will inevitably have to elect themselves. Every council is in a completely different circumstance.

The City is fortunate as we are ahead of the game by two years because we started when the draft standards were first issued and the Geraldton-Greenough Council made the first issues of a financial sustainability policy framework and set the 10 year timeframe. In the last two years we have actually kept spacing it out over the 10 years in the policy adopted last July and earmarked for 2022/2023 as the target year.

As pointed out, in relation to the asset base, at the same time because financial management regulations changed, the City has had to implement fair

value in the evaluation of our assets. The depreciated book value of City assets has gone up by \$80 million to \$100 million. Divide this depreciation on an average 40 year basis that soon adds multiples of millions of dollars to City's annual depreciation expense. The City's financial statements this year and next year are going to show our ratio going down badly because of that. It is known that every other council is doing this and a lot of smaller councils have not been able to get into the fair value assessment of all of their assets (they are not in a position to state the number of years) it was candid of them to come back and state that.

Response

The CEO added that the DLG, due to so many small councils, are not in a position to be informed to know what the starting point is. Next financial year is when it starts to get the full scale. There are more detailed guidelines and parameters in determining this. The City is in a favourable position for starting ahead of this.

Question

Cr Bennett stated that as a council it chose that we would do it in 10 years and that was a deliberate decision that was made.

SC096 Final Adoption Of Town Planning Scheme Amendment – Residential Rezoning, Bluff Point

Nil.

SC097 Final Adoption Local Planning Scheme Amendment – Development Rezoning, Karloo (Lot 21 Scott Road)

Nil.

SC098 Final Adoption Of Local Planning Scheme Amendment – Development Rezoning, Karloo (Lots 23 & 800 Moloney Street)

Nil.

SC099 Proposed Local Planning Scheme Amendment – Development Rezoning, Glenfield

Question

Cr De Trafford asked what is an example of an activity centre.

Response

P Melling informed that activity centres is a key node within a suburb and area where you can actually place a shopping centre and all of the other ancillary type of facilities that goes with that, as well which can include a doctors surgery etc. and where an activity centre also looks at residential components they are developing within that as well. It is to define it separately from the old terminology of say a local centre or a district shopping centre, it is a lot more than that as it accommodates a variety of different uses that supports that local community.

SC100 Final Adoption Of Local Planning Scheme Amendment – Highway Commercial Rezoning, Woorree

Nil.

SC101 Dog Act (1976) Authorised Officers

Nil.

SC102 Control Of Vehicles (Off Road Areas) Act Authorised Officers

Nil.

CI042 RFT44/1213 – Drainage Construction and Maintenance Services

Nil.

Reports to be Received/ Council resolutions etc.Question

Cr Bennett asked on item CI025 (Page 3) Construction of Eastern Breakwater – It needs fine tuning and a bit more updating to where we are e.g. it states - civic works to be completed in March 2013.

Response

N Arbutnot advised that it is correct. The civil works have been completed, the contract has been let for the structures and City is redesigning the pile foundations. With the jetty structures the City is seeking some estimated costs on that and will be able to come back to Council in May on this.

Question

Cr Gabelish asked on the lease on Data Centre Airport Technology Park – (Page 2). The Lease still has not been returned.

Response

Mayor I Carpenter advised that this lease was to be returned from Market Creations and asked has the lease been returned from Market Creations?

Response

B Robartson stated that he was not aware and would respond via a briefing note to Cr Gabelish to inform if the lease has been recently returned.

Question

Cr Bennett referred to CC091 - AFL State League match. This item needs to be removed.

Response

Mayor I Carpenter advised that CC091 will be taken off list.

Question

Cr Bennett asked regarding CC097 Sporting Futures Report, he is aware that it is completed and adopted. Knowing that it's an ongoing process for 10 years or so should it stay on as an ongoing item or in a different format?

Response

CEO advised the intent is that it is no different to any other policy that is adopted by Council it is an informant document for staff to operate under. It is not an active action it is a policy that the City works within.

Question

Cr Hall asked if SC078 Page 60 – Mahomets – is there a response back on this.

Response

P Melling will take this question on notice and is not aware of anything at this stage but that is to do with Mahomets and the Olive Street Reserve, but will give an update on this project via a briefing note to Cr Hall.

Suggestion from the Chair

Mayor I Carpenter suggested to Councillors that in future – that all questions in relation to this report need to be emailed in to Executive office to avoid holding up the meeting. Each item is numbered and to please ask for an update e.g. Item CC089 and to request this through the Councillor Helpdesk for an update on any item.

Question

Cr Clune asked will those replies come to the full Council or just the Councillor making the enquiry?

Response

I Carpenter normally Councillor replies go out to every Councillor . So if part of that report it will go to everyone.

The CEO – if it is an individual item it goes to only the Councillor that makes that request but if a matter of common interest and where it relates to a resolution then Councillor Helpdesk will be copied to all Councillors. It is a more streamline way of doing it. This can be built into the practice of Councillor Helpdesk that we have on this report which is obviously a new one.

3 Councillor Questions Without Notice

Nil.

4 Confidential Business

Nil.

5 Introduction of the New Chief Executive Officer

Mayor I Carpenter introduced the newly appointed City CEO Mr Ken Diehm, who was present at the Agenda Forum meeting. Mr Diehm was welcomed with the Mayor expressing his hopes for a long and fruitful working future together and extended the welcome to Mr Diehm's wife.

Mayor Carpenter noted that it is also the outgoing CEO Tony Brun's last official meeting. The Mayor and Councillors, at the last Council Meeting held in Mullewa, had officially thanked Mr Brun for all the hard work he has done during his time at the City.

The Mayor stated that Mr Brun has done a fantastic job and is a remarkable person to work with and appreciates all the work he has done in this City. Mr Brun is a top person and brought with him a fantastic group of management team. Yesterday in a visit by the CEO of the City of Wodonga, Patience Harrington, who was looking at best practice at the City spoke to all Executives. Ms Harrington is impressed with the quality and the way they have developed over the years. The City has a lot to be thankful for.

Mayor Carpenter extended his best wishes to Mr Brun for the new position at the Perth Airport.

6. Meeting closure

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6:06pm.

APPENDIX 1 – ATTACHMENTS AND REPORTS TO BE RECEIVED

Attachments and Reports to be Received are available on the City of Greater Geraldton website at: <http://www.cgg.wa.gov.au/your-council/meetings>

FOR PUBLIC REVIEW - NOT FINAL COUNCIL AGENDA