



Executive Response to the Participatory Budgeting Range and Level of Services Recommendations and Report

14 May 2014



EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING RANGE AND LEVEL OF SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORT

Background

As part of the implementation of #changesCGG, the City of Greater Geraldton (City) appointed two stratified, random-sample participatory budgeting community panels. The 1st, the 10-Year Capital Works Panel, was tasked with deliberating and recommending to Council a priority list of capital works projects to be funded, as well as a methodology to prioritise future projects. Those recommendations were endorsed at the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 25 February 2014.

The 2nd, the Range and Level of Services Panel (Services Panel), was tasked with recommending to Council the range, level, and priority of services to be delivered within the budget limitations set by the Long Term Financial Plan, as well as a methodology to prioritise future services.

In the resulting Participatory Budgeting Range and Level of Services Recommendations and Report (Services Report), all service recommendations include specific actions to achieve the recommended direction and reasons for that action. Furthermore, the service recommendations have been prioritised in order of importance for implementation.

At the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 15 April 2014, Council received the Services Report and referred it to the Executive for response. This report constitutes that response.

Summary

In this report, the Executive has provided comment against each of the Service Panel's recommendations by directorate. The Executive agrees or partially agrees with all of the Community Panel's 42 recommendations.

I. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

1.1. Service areas where an INCREASE in service level is recommended

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>INCREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Asset Management (100%)	<p>Proactive rating system of assets which more accurately targets maintenance and replacement needs thereby reducing costs.</p> <p>Monitor assets appropriately. Improve information entered into the asset system to save costs right across city operations and be proactive on projects.</p>	Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. To ensure accurate planning and financing, it is essential to understand the current position and gaps. This information is vital for the Long Term Financial Plan and Asset Renewal Program.
Rubbish Collection (58%)	<p>Invest in researching recycling options of organic waste (including the option of a second specific organic waste household bin). Education of community about waste reduction and current recycling options.</p>	Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. However, it is noteworthy that there are other issues associated with waste management. Recycling of organics in the waste stream has the potential to provide significant advantages for cost reductions at Meru when coupled with a Community Resource and Recovery Centre, and contemporary technology.

1.2. Service areas where a DECREASE in service level is recommended

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>DECREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Aquarena (100%)	Reduction of operational service during winter months when attendance is traditionally lower to reduce running costs but still maintain some income. For example: only open two out of four pools.	Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. Closing of sections of the Aquarena will reduce costs, and have the potential to improve the operational financial position of the facility. Actions have been taken to trial a closure of the 25m heated pool in the winter of 2014.

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>DECREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Operations Support (100%)	Review of the number of vehicles required. Endorsement given to the new car pool system.	Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. The operational vehicle fleet is constantly under review by the Fleet and Operations Managers; and action has been taken to optimise the fleet through introduction of contemporary fleet management pooling technology. This will have the effect of optimising utilisation and identifying opportunities for fleet numbers to reduce. Vehicle makes and models are chosen based on fit for purpose and return on investment.
Parks (68%)	<p>Reduce the cost of maintenance and care of parks by amending planting to use more self-sustaining plants which require less maintenance, water, etc...</p> <p>Let the grass grow longer.</p> <p>Remove or change trees under power lines which will reduce the amount of maintenance required in that area and replace with shrubs.</p> <p>Remove big trees that have ongoing maintenance costs and replace with more suitable, smaller and attractive trees.</p> <p>Reduce mowing services by utilising artificial turf in certain areas for example the centre of roundabouts</p>	Partially Agree	<p>This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. However, it is noteworthy that plantings are not the major expenditure in parks. Species are selected for sustainability and costs associated maintenance.</p> <p>There are certain areas, such as the Civic Centre, where mowing can be reduced. The issue with letting the grass grow longer is how long is too long. These areas will be reviewed.</p> <p>This principle is noted and supported for all future plantings.</p> <p>Trees are an important part of the landscape, and provide habitat and shade. Removing large trees is only supported where they are a safety hazard.</p> <p>Using artificial turf on playing fields and areas that require mowing is not economical, and in some sports unacceptable due to injury to participants. It has been reported that combinations of artificial turf and grass have been used in eastern states and this technology has not been accepted at elite playing</p>

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>DECREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
	where mowing would require traffic management.		levels. The cost to introduce to other than elite sports would be prohibitive.
Parks (68%)	Turn less utilised parks into nature reserves. For example: planting native trees.	Partially Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. However, whilst the principle of optimising reserves value is accepted, the City must consider highest value and best use for underutilised land; and there are maintenance costs associated with nature reserves.

1.3. Service areas where there was a DIVIDED VOTE on the service level provision

(That is, approximately 50% of the Panel voted in favour of the action, and 50% voted against.)

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Mullewa Town and Community	<p>Increase (42% in favour): Parks and gardens officer based in Mullewa.</p> <p>Decrease (42% in favour): Parks and gardens officer commuting to and from Geraldton 2-3 times a week by sourcing a local employee and ensure that appropriate housing is provided.</p>	Agree with 48% of Panel that voted against this action.	This was not supported by 48% of the Services Panel, and is not supported by the Executive. Current arrangements are working well with flying gang and supervisor attending on a rostered basis to meet requirements. This arrangement provides the most effective use of plant and resources. Costs would not decrease.

1.4. Service areas where there where the recommendation is for the service level to REMAIN THE SAME with a DIFFERENT FOCUS

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Planning and Design	Increase: Invest in internal staff and reduce consultants if a full time equivalent (FTE) is possible. More project planners that are local and	Partially Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. The City has taken action to increase in-house capability and capacity of planning and design. However, it is important to provide a balance between in-house and outsourced

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
	<p>understand local issues to reduce outsourcing. More qualified people to get the planning and design components right so overall project costs are reduced and long term asset management (maintenance and renewal) costs are reduced as well.</p> <p>Decrease: If FTE is available the cost to employ one full time staff member is less than one full time consultant.</p>		resources. The capacity and capability of in-house resources should be aligned with average base load needs to avoid over resourcing when there is a downturn in workload, at the same time as having capacity and capability to effectively manage external resourcing to achieve required outcomes.

1.5. Service areas where the recommendation is for the service level to REMAIN THE SAME

SERVICE AREA TO <u>REMAIN THE SAME</u>	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Major Projects and Project Support (100%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. The City must retain the capacity and capability to respond to capital works projects in the most efficient and effective manner.
Works (100%)	Agree	This is supported. The City must retain the capacity and capability to respond to asset maintenance and renewal needs, as well as operational needs, to meet community expectations.
Meru Landfill (84%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. Waste service in Meru will be maintained at the current level. However, to ensure compliance with license conditions and regulations, the Meru Landfill must be upgraded to use contemporary technology for treatment and disposal.
Mullewa Landfill (81%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. Waste service in Mullewa will be maintained the current level. However, to ensure compliance with license conditions and regulations, the Mullwa Landfill facility and operations must be reviewed.

II. CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL SERVICES

2.1. Service areas where an INCREASE in service level is recommended

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>INCREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Nil			

2.2. Service areas where a DECREASE in service level is recommended

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>DECREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Nil			

2.3. Service areas where there was a DIVIDED VOTE on the service level provision (That is, approximately 50% of the Panel voted in favour of the action, and 50% voted against.)

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Nil			

2.4. Service areas where there where the recommendation is for the service to REMAIN THE SAME with a DIFFERENT FOCUS

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Nil			

2.5. Service areas where the recommendation is for the service level to REMAIN THE SAME

SERVICE AREA TO <u>REMAIN THE SAME</u>	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Community Grants (100%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, the level of Community Grants fluctuates and is discretionary. The Executive believes that the level of funding for Community Grants should therefore be reviewed on a period basis to reflect the Council's financial capacity to fund.
Customer Services (100%)	Agree	This is supported. Shopfront customer services are essential for timely service of information, advice and transaction services for electors and ratepayers
Strategic Planning (100%)	Agree	This is supported. Strategic Planning is mandatory per the Integrated Planning

		Framework prescribed by Government.
Airport Service (97%)	Agree	This is supported. The Airport operates from its own revenue base, without any subsidy from ratepayers. Current year works will remedy problems with inadequate size of the departures lounge, providing for growth in passenger numbers.

III. CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

3.1. Service areas where an INCREASE in service level is recommended

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>INCREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Nil			

3.2. Service areas where a DECREASE in service level is recommended

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>DECREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Nil			

3.3. Service areas where there was a DIVIDED VOTE on the service level provision

(That is, approximately 50% of the Panel voted in favour of the action, and 50% voted against.)

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Community Engagement	<p>Increase (52% in favour): Free advertising avenues.</p> <p>Decrease (52% in favour): Paid advertising</p>	Agree with 52% of Panel that voted in favour of this action.	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. The City endeavours to utilise as much free advertising as possible.
Community Engagement	<p>Increase (52% in favour): The amount of on-line surveys and mobile app integration.</p> <p>Decrease (52% in favour): Reduce the phone surveys.</p>	Partially Agree with 52% of Panel that voted in favour of this action.	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. However, whilst the use of top-of-mind methods (i.e. online/phone surveys) has value, the City must review the use of digital communication tools to increase opportunities for deeper community participation and consultation.
Community Engagement	<p>Increase (52% in favour): neighbourhood planning.</p> <p>Decrease (52% in favour): phone surveys.</p>	Partially Agree with 52% of Panel that voted in favour of this action.	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. However, for a relatively low cost the City works alongside local progress associations focussing on localised community engagement. The development of a Precinct Plan, as undertaken in Sunset Beach and Rangeway, is very costly; and if the City were to increase precinct

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
			planning, there would be increase in engagement cost. Nonetheless, if opportunities arise to undertake more community neighbourhood planning and it is appropriate in all the circumstances, the City will do so.
Library	Decrease (48% in favour): Close the Library on Sundays.	Agree with 48% of Panel that voted against this action.	This was not supported by 48% of the Services Panel , and is generally not supported by the Executive. Sunday is one of the highest-traffic days at the Library. Other options to achieve savings are being investigated. The Library is planning to trial two staff working on a Sunday rather than three. From June, only one shelver (rather than 2) will work for two hours on a Saturday and Sunday.

3.4. Service areas where there where the recommendation is for the service to REMAIN THE SAME with a DIFFERENT FOCUS

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
QPT (84%)	Increase: Spend more on marketing/advertising for QPT events. Decrease: Remove the box office attendance during the day at the QPT and move the ticket sales to the City front desk/library. Open box office an hour prior to shows.	Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. The City will further investigate avenues to optimise marketing and advertising with the objective of increasing attendance.
Community Development (71%)	Increase: Midnight Basketball. Decrease: Indigenous cultural development.	Partially Agree	The increase of Midnight Basketball is generally supported, and will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. The decrease of Indigenous cultural development is not supported, as such a reduction would be inconsistent with the City's Reconciliation Action Plan.

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Community Development (71%)	<p>Increase: Funding for Midnight Basketball.</p> <p>Decrease: Funding for sport and recreation program.</p>	Partially Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. The City could deliver a series of smaller-scale basketball engagement events. However, the funding allocated for Sporting Club Development and the Kidsport program is tied to grants. The Club development officer position is 2/3 externally funded through grant contingent upon the City proving 1/3 funding. The \$80,000 for Kidsport program is fully grant funded. There is approximately \$4,000 discretionary spend that could be reallocated to Midnight Basketball.

3.5. Service areas where the recommendation is for the service level to REMAIN THE SAME

SERVICE AREA TO <u>REMAIN THE SAME</u>	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Arts and Culture (100%)	Agree	This is supported. The City needs to retain the capacity and capability to implement the Creative Community Plan and undertake associated arts and cultural initiatives, in accordance with expressed community aspiration and expectation.
QEII (100%)	Agree	This is supported. QEII is essential for the provision of services to seniors and community groups.
Heritage (77%)	Agree	This is supported. The restructure of responsibilities for Heritage along with the implementation of actions in the Heritage Strategy has resulted in a more cohesive, structured approach to Heritage matters.
Community Development (71%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, there is proportionately higher than national average youth population; and the need for a youth service centre is well documented. The City is therefore investigating opportunities to partner in the development and operation of a youth hub.
Childcare Services and Administration (68%)	Agree	This is supported. Childcare constitutes an essential service for many Greater Geraldton families, and attracts significant external funding and generates revenue therefore requiring very little subsidy from the City.

SERVICE AREA TO <u>REMAIN THE SAME</u>	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Community Events (58%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, the Community Events budget should be reviewed to ensure that the optimum impact is realised from the Council's expenditure in this area.

IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

4.1. Service areas where an INCREASE in service level is recommended

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>INCREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Land Development (71%)	Increase selling and buying of lots.	Partially Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. However, the City must ensure that its risk exposure is mitigated when involved in land developments. To reduce risk exposure, consideration is being given to potential partnerships and opportunities to progress approvals for land subdivision/ development, and then sell the land for further subdivision/ development by others.
Land and Leasing (61%)	Increase maintenance services to currently leased City buildings. For example: the Original Railway Station, etc...	Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. There needs to be a coordinated approach across all City owned and leased buildings with a clear responsibility defined as to who maintains what buildings.
Land and Leasing (61%)	Increase income/asset base by opening up more crown land for leasing with 21 year leasing Agreement.	Partially Agree	This will be considered as part of the 14/15 budget process. However, leasing of land is only one component of the land development process. There must be a commercial need for the land in question, as the private sector must be confident that the land identified will generate a financial return. This can impact on lease fee return; and the lease may need to be for longer than 21 years.

4.2. Service areas where a DECREASE in service level is recommended

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION TO <u>DECREASE</u> SERVICE	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Nil			

4.3. Service areas where there was a DIVIDED VOTE on the service level provision

(That is, approximately 50% of the Panel voted in favour of the action, and 50% voted against.)

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Nil			

4.4. Service areas where there where the recommendation is for the service to REMAIN THE SAME with a DIFFERENT FOCUS

SERVICE AREA	RECOMMENDED ACTION	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Nil			

4.5. Service areas where the recommendation is for the service level to REMAIN THE SAME

SERVICE AREA TO <u>REMAIN THE SAME</u>	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
Building Assessment (100%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, there is need for continuous monitoring of the service the City offers in this area. Applicants have the ability to seek a private certifier for their project. However, there does need to be a private sector alternative available; otherwise, the assessment may be done outside Greater Geraldton at significant cost to the proponent, which in turn increases costs to the broader community and potentially reduces service levels.
Emergency Management and Fire (100%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, this is an area that has been a key focus area for the City, and is strengthened via the unfortunate fires experienced elsewhere in the State that have led to loss of life/ property. There is a review underway at a State level on the delivery of Emergency Services in a new Act, which will require the City's input and consideration.
Environmental Health (100%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, this is another area that requires a constant focus given ongoing legislative changes. The City, via its Food Safety initiatives, should continue its proactive work in this area to ensure that the community's needs are met.
Media & Marketing (100%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, it is a focus area at this time to ensure that the changing needs of a growing regional City are met, and that the City actively promotes both the community and the organisation.
Development Compliance (94%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, changes to legislation and the need to review processes

SERVICE AREA TO REMAIN THE SAME	AGREE OR DISAGREE	COMMENT
		means that this area is reviewed regularly. Case law plays an important part in investigations and responses.
Development Assessment (74%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, legislation and response times must be reviewed regularly to ensure that the process meets community needs and expectations. It is also noted that as part of the Town Planning Scheme Review policies and processes will be reviewed.
Ranger Services (71%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, changes to legislation have added further responsibilities and expectations from the community in this area (e.g. new Cat Act); and this requires amendment to service levels and resources to offset the new legislative requirements. Legal processes are also more complex; and new initiatives are being introduced to address these changes.
Economic and Foreign Affairs (68%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, there needs to be clear defining of roles within the economic portfolio to ensure cross-sector collaboration with key stakeholders such as the MWCCI & MWDC to work toward a common objective that promotes this City/Region, and give potential investors/businesses a clear picture of the opportunities and support available.
Tourism (65%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, tourism plays an important role in our regional economy. Tourism activities and expenditure need to be reviewed to ensure greater focus and a higher return, and greater participation from the private sector.
Sustainability (55%)	Partially Agree	This is generally supported. However, the City is committed to improving sustainable practices, and the level and intent of participation. The City will continue to work with the community, industry and agencies to support economic, environmental, governance, social, and cultural sustainability.