



MINUTES

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 9 April 2020

5.00pm

City of Albany

CITY OF ALBANY COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN (ALBANY 2023)



SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES – 09/04/2020

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1. DECLARATION OF OPENING AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF VISITORS

The Mayor declared the meeting open at **5.02PM**.

2. OPENING PRAYER

“Heavenly Father, we thank you for the peace and beauty of this area. Direct and prosper the deliberations of this Council for the advancement of the City and the welfare of its people. Amen.”

“We would like to acknowledge the Noongar people who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land.

We would also like to pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging”.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND STATEMENT TIME:

Each person asking questions or making comments at the Open Forum will be **LIMITED** to a time period of **4 MINUTES** to allow all those wishing to comment an opportunity to do so.

4. RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE (PREVIOUSLY APPROVED):

Mayor	D Wellington
Councillors:	
Breaksea Ward	R Hammond
Breaksea Ward	P Terry
Frederickstown Ward	G Stocks
Frederickstown Ward	R Stephens
Kalgan Ward	M Benson-Lidholm
Vancouver Ward	J Shanhun
West Ward	A Goode JP Joined meeting at 5.10pm
West Ward	S Smith
Yakamia Ward	R Sutton
Yakamia Ward	C Thomson
Staff:	
Chief Executive Officer	A Sharpe
Executive Director Corporate and Commercial Services	D Olde
Executive Director Infrastructure, Development & Environment	P Camins
Manager Governance and Risk	S Jamieson
Manager People and Culture	L Harding
Personal Assistant to Mayor and Councillors	D Clark
Manager Communications	N Watson
Meeting Secretary	J Williamson
Apologies:	
Kalgan Ward	E Doughty (Apology)
Vancouver Ward	T Sleeman (Apology)
Executive Director Community Services	S Kay

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES – 09/04/2020

RESOLUTION
VOTING REQUIREMENT: SIMPLE MAJORITY
MOVED: COUNCILLOR THOMSON
SECONDED: COUNCILLOR THOMSON
THAT Councillor Doughty be GRANTED Leave of Absence from 10 April 2020 until 10 July 2020.
CARRIED 10-0

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

Name	Report Number	Nature of Interest
Nil		

SCM019: COVID-19 COMMUNITY RECOVERY PROGRAM AND CAMPAIGN

- Proponent / Owner** : City of Albany
- Report Prepared By** : Senior Community Development Officer (T Flett)
Acting Manager Community Development and Engagement (R Param)
Manager Communications (N Watson)
- Responsible Officers:** : Chief Executive Officer (A Sharpe)

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

1. This item relates to the following elements of the City of Albany Strategic Community Plan or Corporate Business Plan informing plans or strategies:
 - **Theme:** Leadership & Community Health and Participation
 - **Objectives:**
 - To provide strong, accountable leadership supported by a skilled and professional workforce.
 - To develop and support a healthy, inclusive and accessible community.
 - **Community Priorities:**
 - Provide positive leadership that delivers community outcomes.
 - Develop a range of activities and facilities that connect people, promote a healthy community and are appropriate for all ages.

In Brief:

- Endorse the proposed COVID-19 Community Recovery Program and supporting campaign to assist community through the current virus pandemic.
- The City's response to COVID-19 will align to the following strategic objectives:
 - Play our role in slowing the spread of COVID-19 by following all required Federal and State government directives;
 - Value and support our Elected Members, Staff and Community through the pandemic;
 - Economic security of the City; and
 - Provide community and regional leadership with clear public communication.
- The Community Recovery Program supports objectives 2 and 4 above.

RECOMMENDATION

SCM019: RESOLUTION

VOTING REQUIREMENT: ABSOLUTE MAJORITY

MOVED: COUNCILLOR STEPHENS

SECONDED: COUNCILLOR THOMSON

THAT:

1. The COVID-19 Community Recovery Program to assist:
 - a. Vulnerable members of the community;
 - b. Broader community;
 - c. Community groups, clubs and organisations; and
 - d. City stakeholders and partnersbe ENDORSED.
2. Consideration of redirecting the annual allocation for Community Funding in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to create an \$80,000 Community Recovery Fund in the 2020-21 budget be APPROVED.
3. The [#albanyinthistgether](#) campaign to support economic, mental and physical health in our community in the current crisis be ENDORSED.

CARRIED 11-0
ABSOLUTE MAJORITY

BACKGROUND

2. Under the WA State Emergency Management Act 2005, the ‘recovery’ of a community after an emergency is the responsibility of the local government and is defined as the coordinated process of supporting communities impacted by an emergency in the reconstruction and restoration of infrastructure, environmental, community, psychological and economic wellbeing.
3. Recovery can be a period of months, or in some cases ongoing and last many years. The recovery process has four key focus areas: Built Environment, Natural Environment, Social and Economic.
4. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the key recovery focus areas for our community are economic and social, and it will require significant time and resources to achieve successfully.
5. Recovery will rely on a community-centred, flexible response guided by constant engagement to ensure the support meets community need.
6. Current social distancing requirements means the initial recovery phase will need to be coordinated, planned and adaptive and require support between agencies and local government.
7. Implemented well it will build capacity and resilience of individuals, community and our organisation.

DISCUSSION

8. COVID-19 is unique in that it is not just affecting a community, region, state or country, but is having a significant global impact. While Australians are well-versed in dealing with bushfire, flood, storm and cyclone emergencies, responding and recovering from a pandemic of this scale is a new experience for our country.
9. Emergencies typically requiring the City’s response usually have an impact on the built and natural environment which can be ‘seen’ and ‘responded’ to in a very structured approach.
10. COVID-19 is ‘unseen’ and infection control measures require people to isolate themselves and maintain appropriate social distance from others, having a major impact on the psychological wellbeing of communities that will require a new and innovative approach to response and recovery.
11. The psychological recovery will be closely linked to the economic recovery of our community which is significantly affected by a reduction or cessation of a range of businesses and services in many sectors.
12. Efficient and effective use of technology will play an important role in bridging the physical distance gap and aiding social connection and recovery.
13. Officers are currently proposing two recovery initiatives that will complement each other and support community to begin the recovery journey.

Community Recovery Program

14. A Community Recovery Program is proposed to commence the recovery process.
15. The program will be driven by the Community Services directorate and aims to:
 - Support vulnerable community members;
 - Support community groups/clubs to remain sustainable; and
 - Promote community wellbeing.
16. In particular, the program will be led by the Community Development Team with support and involvement of ALAC, Library, VAC, Events and Communications.

17. The overall vision for the recovery is for Albany residents to lead lives they value, and live in a community that supports their social, economic, cultural and physical wellbeing and aspirations.
18. Primary Objectives of the Program are:
 - Identify gaps in existing local service delivery and connect our vulnerable population with appropriate support services;
 - Leverage stakeholder relationships both internally and externally that support strong community recovery outcomes;
 - Support the ongoing sustainability of community groups, clubs and associations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as these groups are the backbone of Albany's social fabric and will play a vital role in community recovery;
 - Encourage, facilitate and support safe social interactions across the community;
 - Promote resources and activities that provide value to life while confined to home.
19. A more detail summary of the proposed Community Recovery Program is provided in Attachment A.
20. The program proposes creation of a Community Recovery Fund to assist community groups and clubs to pursue community recovery activities (refer to Financial Implications within this report).
21. This will necessitate deferring applications for 2020-21 Community Funding (currently open) until after July 2020, and expedite the proposed budget allocation for 2021-22 Community Funding by one year.
22. The *Community Recovery Fund* will reopen for general applications at an appropriate time once the emergency has passed and will be administered in accordance with the Community Funding Policy and Register of Delegations & Authorisations 2020.

#albanyinthistogether Campaign

23. The Communications and Events Team has developed a proposed campaign to support the objectives of the Community Recovery Plan using #albanyinthistogether
24. It aims to use digital platforms to encourage the community to:
 - Remain connected despite social distancing and isolation;
 - Support local business; and
 - Stay physically and mentally healthy.
25. Success of the campaign will rely on collaboration with other teams and stakeholders to generate relevant and appropriate content. Community can also contribute content.
26. The campaign is primarily designed to be effective on social media given many people are turning to these platforms for increased social connection at the current time.
27. A simple, low-cost website is also proposed to provide a central platform for content that will also be helpful for those without social media accounts.
28. The three main content streams will be:
 - Socially connected – share initiatives and videos from City and community to stay connected and mentally healthy at home;
 - Business Unusual – link through to 'What's Open Albany' website and embed business support tips and content from social media;
 - Move your muscles – exercise based tips, tricks and video tuition.

GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC CONSULTATION

29. The development of the Community Recovery Program has necessitated brief discussions with Western Australian Government agencies involved in the COVID-19 emergency response, including Department of Communities, Department of Health, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, and others within the Great Southern Human Services Forum.
30. Initial discussion has also occurred with some non-government agencies such as WA Primary Health Alliance, and some community groups.
31. Should this program be endorsed by Council, more consultation will occur in order to implement the program.
32. The #albanyinthistogether campaign has been developed from desktop research into initiatives in other affected communities and has included consultation internally.

STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

33. Under the WA State Emergency Management Act 2005, the 'recovery' of a community after an emergency is the responsibility of the local government.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

34. Council's Community Funding Policy provides the governance framework for the proposed *Community Recovery Fund*.

RISK IDENTIFICATION & MITIGATION

35. There are significant risks to the community in not activating a recovery program, including the risk to mental health and wellbeing from isolation and disconnection, the risk that many community groups and clubs may fragment or dissolve over the emergency response period, and the risk that even greater effort will be required in any recovery effort if it is delayed.
36. The risk identification and categorisation relies on the City's Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Framework.

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Analysis	Mitigation
Financial: Community recovery activities require more resources than the proposed allocation.	Possible	Minor	Medium	Budget allocation to be closely monitored by Managers and the Executive. External grant funding to be sourced where available.
Operational: Community Recovery Program activities detract from the Community Development Team business.	Likely	Insignificant	Low	Community Recovery Program activities represent core business for Community Development Team, and as such is a consolidation of the team's work which would ordinarily happen over a more lengthy period
Community: Physical and mental health issues arising from social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Almost Certain	Major	High	#albanyinthistogether campaign to connect people and address social isolation and boredom.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 37. The program proposed creation of a *Community Recovery Fund*, redirecting the annual Community Funding allocations of \$40,000 to establish a single funding pool of \$80,000 in 2020-21 to assist community groups and clubs to pursue community recovery activities.
- 38. The #albanyinthistogether campaign will be delivered within existing budget allocations and use existing staff resources.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 39. Nil.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 40. Nil

ALTERNATE OPTIONS

- 41. Council may choose not to support the proposed recovery initiatives and direct resources towards other, as yet unidentified, recovery options.
- 42. This is not recommended as delays to community recovery will make the effort more challenging. The resources are available to implement the proposed initiatives.

CONCLUSION

- 43. Local governments are mandated to implement the *Western Australian Emergency management Act 2005*, which directs activity in response to, and recovery from, emergencies and disasters.
- 44. The recovery process from an emergency is a critical aspect of the response effort, to maintain wellbeing and restoration of community life to as normal as possible.
- 45. Local government has a key role to play in supporting the recovery effort, and the proposed Community Recovery Program and #albanyinthistogether campaign harnesses existing resources and skills within the City.
- 46. Endorsing this proposal will allow the City to commence implementing the program immediately by the establishment of a Community Recovery Fund, implementing a broad-ranging media campaign and leveraging support from key stakeholders.

Consulted References	:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Albany Community Strategic Plan - Albany 2030 • State Emergency Management: A Strategic Framework for Emergency Management in Western Australia • Community Development Strategy 2019-2022
File Number (Name of Ward)	:	All Wards
Previous Reference	:	Not applicable.

SCM020: COVID-19 – CITY OF ALBANY RESPONSE

- Business Entity Name** : City of Albany
- Attachments** :
 - Letter dated 31 March 2020 from Hon David Templeman MLA regarding Local Government Response to COVID-19
 - WALGA Draft Template COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy (Hardship Policy)
 - City of Albany – Infectious Disease Pandemic - Business Continuity & Recovery Plan
- Report Prepared By** : Manager Governance & Risk (S Jamieson)
- Responsible Officers:** : Chief Executive Officer (Andrew Sharpe)

This report was considered as confidential in accordance with 5.23 (2) (a) a matter affecting an employee or employees.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

1. This item relates to the following elements of the City of Albany Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan:
 - a. **Theme:** Leadership.
 - b. **Objectives:** To establish and maintain sound business and governance structures.
 - c. **Community Priorities:** Provide informed and transparent decision making that is consistent with our strategic direction, meets our legal obligations, reflect the level of associated risk and are adequately explained to community.

In brief:

- For Council to consider implementing a range of business support initiatives immediately and as part of setting the 2020/21 Annual Budget, that will assist the Albany Community, Ratepayers, Residents and local businesses due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.
- The City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic will align to the following strategic objectives:
 - Play our role in slowing the spread of COVID-19 by following all required Federal and State Government Directives;
 - Value and support our Councillors, Staff and Community through the pandemic;
 - Economic Security of the City;
 - Provide community and regional leadership with clear public communication
- A separate report on the City's proposed Community Recovery Program is listed on this Special Council Meeting agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

**SCM020: RESOLUTION (AMENDMENT BY COUNCILLOR STOCKS)
VOTING REQUIREMENT: ABSOLUTE MAJORITY**

**MOVED: COUNCILLOR STOCKS
SECONDED: COUNCILLOR SUTTON**

THAT Council:

1. **AUTHORISE** the CEO to prepare a Policy regarding Pandemic Leave for consideration by Council at the Ordinary Council Meeting to be held on 28 April 2020.
2. **ENDORSE** The Business Continuity & Recovery Response Measures in the following areas as outlined in this report for the remaining 2019/2020 period and in the 2020/21 period, until there is a reduction in the immediate effects of the COVID-19 Crisis:
 - a. Pandemic Leave;
 - b. Rates & Rating Initiatives;

- c. **Community leases and Building Assistance with the City;**
 - d. **Commercial Leases with the City;**
 - e. **Express Procurement & Payment for local businesses;**
 - f. **Planning Applications;**
 - g. **Library initiatives;**
 - h. **Community Services (support initiatives);**
 - i. **Economic Development;**
 - j. **National Anzac Centre (NAC);**
 - k. **Albany Visitors Centre (AVC); and**
 - l. **Albany Leisure & Aquatic Centre (ALAC).**
3. **Endorse the following principles to guide the Chief Executive Officer and City Officers when preparing the 2020/21 Annual Budget:**
- a. **Not increasing rates for the 2020/21 financial year;**
 - b. **Continuation of weekly, fortnightly and monthly payment options for rates payments;**
 - c. **Review employee resourcing in the current financial year and in the 2020/21 Annual Budget;**
 - d. **Review of capital works program;**
 - e. **Reducing interest and payment charges to rates billing and collection;**
 - f. **Relaxing terms and conditions on payment arrangements on a case by case basis;**
 - g. **Assuming a significant reduction in revenue from fees and charges;**
 - h. **Assuming an increase in the non-payment of rates impacting cash flow;**
 - i. **Consideration of service level requirements and its impact on operational expenditure;**
 - j. **Consideration of new borrowings to assist with capital works and liquidity;**
 - k. **Consideration of revised 2020/2021 Community Grants Funding;**
 - l. **Consideration of the utilisation of the City’s existing cash reserves for business continuity; and**
 - m. **Seek to apply for Federal and State Government grants that may provide opportunities for capital/operating works funding.**
4. **NOTE the Western Australian Local Government Association Draft COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy as attached and request the CEO to develop a COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy;**
5. **NOTE that on 24 March 2020, Council delegated the following powers:**
“THAT the Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Director Corporate & Commercial Services are delegated until 31 December 2020 the authority to DEFER, DISCOUNT, and/or SUSPEND fees, charges, including licensing and leasing fees in accordance with the Local Government Act 1995 and City of Albany administrative guidelines.
- Note: City guideline for each application:**
- ***Will be assessed on a case by case basis, for each application.***
 - ***This does not extend to writing off debt owed.***
 - ***Council is to be provided with a list of all delegations enacted.***
 - ***Interest on unpaid debt be waived.***
 - ***This position is to be reviewed at the end of the calendar year (31 December 2020)”.***

**CARRIED 11-0
ABSOLUTE MAJORITY**

**SCM020: AMENDMENT BY COUNCILLOR STOCKS
VOTING REQUIREMENT: ABSOLUTE MAJORITY**

**MOVED: COUNCILLOR STOCKS
SECONDED: COUNCILLOR SUTTON**

THAT Point 1 of the Responsible Officer Recommendation be AMENDED to read:

- 1. AUTHORISE the CEO to prepare a Policy regarding Pandemic Leave for consideration by Council at the Ordinary Council Meeting to be held on 28 April 2020.**

**CARRIED 11-0
ABSOLUTE MAJORITY**

**RESOLUTION
VOTING REQUIREMENT: SIMPLE MAJORITY**

**MOVED: COUNCILLOR THOMSON
SECONDED: COUNCILLOR SUTTON**

THAT Standing Orders Local Law 2014 (Amended) Clause 6.20 Order of Call in Debate be RESUMED.

CARRIED 11-0

**RESOLUTION
VOTING REQUIREMENT: SIMPLE MAJORITY**

**MOVED: COUNCILLOR STOCKS
SECONDED: COUNCILLOR SUTTON**

THAT Standing Orders Local Law 2014 (Amended) Clause 6.20 Order of Call in Debate be SUSPENDED to allow discussion.

CARRIED 11-0

BACKGROUND

- As well as posing significant health risks, COVID-19 has and will continue to have a major impact on businesses and the local economy. The City of Albany understands the deep concern businesses have regarding employee retention, revenue, health and safety matters as well as the ability to plan for further disruptions to trade.
- There are extensive assistance packages being made available through State and Federal Governments, Financial Institutions, Business Support Agencies, Utility Providers and Industry.
- It should be noted that assistance offerings are rapidly changing, demonstrated below:
- The Federal Government announced its first Economic Stimulus package on 12 March 2020 of \$17.6B which focused on:
 - Cash payments to welfare recipients (\$750);
 - Payments for businesses to retain apprentices in work through wage subsidies (up to \$21k);
 - Up to \$25K available for small businesses to assist with cash flow;
 - Asset write off threshold increased to \$150K to encourage investment; and
 - Businesses to be able to access a new \$1B fund.

6. In response to the Federal Government's package on the 16 March 2020, the Premier of Western Australia, the Hon Mark McGowan announced a complimentary \$607M package specifically for Western Australians. These included:
 - a. \$402 million to freeze household fees and charges until at least July 1, 2021;
 - b. Freeze will apply to entire 'household basket', including electricity, water, motor vehicle charges, emergency services levy and public transport fares;
 - c. Energy Assistance Payment (EAP) doubled to \$600 to support vulnerable Western Australians, including pensioners;
 - d. \$114 million in additional measures to support small businesses;
 - e. Small businesses that pay payroll tax will receive a one-off grant of \$17,500;
 - f. \$1 million payroll tax threshold brought forward by six months to July 1, 2020; and
 - g. Businesses impacted by COVID-19 can defer payroll tax payments until July 21, 2020.
7. Additional stimulus packages were announced by the Prime Minister; Scott Morrison as follows:
 - a. 22 March 2020:
 - \$66B Package focusing on:
 - Eligible not-for-profits and small businesses will receive a tax-free, cash payment of between \$20,000 and \$100,000; and
 - Guarantee unsecured loans of up to \$250,000.
 - b. 29 March 2020:
 - \$1.1B Package focusing on:
 - Expanded Medicare and health services around telehealth and GP incentives - \$669M;
 - Domestic violence support - \$150M;
 - Mental health support - \$74M; and
 - Emergency relief support for vulnerable Australians - \$200M.
 - c. 30 March 2020:
 - \$130B Job Keeper Payment Scheme (Not eligible for local government)
 - Eligible businesses for a period of up to 6 months; and
 - Employers will be paid up to \$1,500 per eligible employee per fortnight.
 - d. 31 March 2020:
 - The following day the State Government once again announced an additional stimulus package valued at over \$1B which consisted of:
 - Additional relief for households for utilities assistance, and removing disconnection processes for struggling households;
 - \$502M for small business to reduce electricity bills, license fees and payroll tax relief (additional); and
 - \$500M additional allocation to frontline health service delivery and additional industry support.
 - e. 2 April 2020:
 - The Prime Minister announced an Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package which consisted of:
 - Free child care for families who remain working during the pandemic;
 - Paying 50 per cent of the sector's fee revenue up to the existing hourly rate cap. The funding will apply from April 6 based on the number of children who were in care during the fortnight leading up to March 2, whether or not they are attending services.

- In return for receiving a payment, services are required to:
 - stay open unless closed on public health advice or for other health and safety reasons;
 - ensure families are not charged a fee, including an out of pocket fee;
 - prioritise access to care to essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and previously enrolled children;
 - continue to record attendance of children; and
 - comply with all other provider obligations including National Quality Framework and other relevant conditions of approval under Family Assistance Law.
- 8. It was also announced that the State Budget would be deferred until 8 October 2020 so that the State Government can focus on its COVID-19 response.
- 9. On the 30 March 2020, the Office of the Auditor General wrote to local government CEO's to advise that they will be freezing their audit costs for the 2020/21 financial year.
- 10. In addition to the Federal and State packages, the local government industry has also been investigating ways of assisting their residents and ratepayers to deal with the economic and community fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 11. The City of Albany Councillors and Executive have also generally discussed how the City can assist to provide local economic stimulus and assistance to our community during this time.
- 12. Any local stimulus or assistance package would need to be complementary to the State and Federal packages.
- 13. As such, WALGA held a special meeting on the 27th March and moved the following resolution:

That WALGA:

- (1) *Notes the significant contribution of Local Governments in supporting their communities through the COVID-19 pandemic from a financial, economic, community and social perspective.*
- (2) *Requests each Local Government give consideration to the following suite of actions, for Local Governments with the capacity to do so, to provide a coordinated and consistent response to the COVID-19 pandemic:*
 - *Consider not increasing rates for the 2020-21 financial year;*
 - *Adoption of the WALGA template rates hardship policy by Local Governments that do not currently have a policy;*
 - *Consider rate relief options to support small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;*
 - *Review fees and charges considering whether fees can be reduced, waived or deferred during the COVID-19 pandemic;*
 - *Bring forward capital works and infrastructure spending with aggressive application of reserves and borrowing;*
 - *Prioritise Local Government spending with businesses and contractors located within the Local Government;*
 - *Implement business friendly payment terms to support business cash flow;*
 - *Consider supporting Community sporting and cultural groups by either establishing grant programs or waiving fees and charges; and*
 - *Redeploy staff affected by facility closures to tasks that support the community.*
- (3) *Notes the State Government is urgently drafting legislative and regulatory amendments to support the actions outlined in point 2 above.*
- (4) *Notes the advocacy for the following:*

- *An increase in Local Government borrowing capacity beyond current Western Australian Treasury Corporation borrowing limits;*
- *Suspension of the Western Australian Treasury Corporation's borrowing guarantee charge of 0.7 percent on top of the loan interest rate for the 2020-2021 financial year;*
- *No increase to street lighting and utility tariffs in 2020-2021;*
- *Deferral of revaluations for the 2020-2021 financial year;*
- *Request the Office of the Auditor General to cease performance audits for the 2020-2021 financial year; and*
- *Freezing of the waste levy for the 2020-2021 financial year.*

14. On the 31 March 2020, the Minister for Local Government the Hon David Templeman wrote to the Mayor and all WA Local Governments stating, amongst other things, the following:
"I strongly encourage local governments to look at their capacity, be innovative and consider what measures and workplace arrangements can be put in place to provide security to your staff as the State Government has done."
15. The public gathering restrictions and social distancing directives have closed many of the City's facilities and affected many of our services.
16. There is no financial safety net for Local Government, so the City's financial security is in jeopardy unless we consider all options to ensure we remain viable for the future, in particular the recovery.
17. The executives focus and commitment is where the City can continue to keep people gainfully employed, it will.
18. However, the executive may have to consider reducing staff hours, and/or standing down employees, whose primary function are directly associated with closed services and where the individuals' skill set does not allow gainful re-deployment.
19. In response to the Minister, City staff have already been preparing a number of proposed measures to assist the community.
20. It is clear that the COVID-19 impact will have a significant adverse effect on both the 2019/20 financial performance as well as the assumptions and increment factors normally used to prepare the City's annual budget.
21. To address these matters, City staff are also proposing to formalise the general principles and guidance previously discussed during Council workshops to assist with the budget preparation.
22. While Council is not being asked to adopt a budget or make firm commitments at this time, strategic guidance to assist with its development is being sought.

DISCUSSION

23. To address the hardship and community concern around the pandemic it is clear that all levels of government need to work together for the best outcome for the community. This has been highlighted particularly by the State Government by encouraging the local government industry to "help where they can" and to ease the burden on households.
24. It is also extremely important that the City assist in the community and social wellbeing of our residents and ratepayers. Accordingly, a separate report on the City's proposed Community Recovery Program is listed on this Special Council Meeting agenda.
25. The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) have developed a draft policy to guide local governments to assist them in dealing with hardship cases as a result of COVID-19. The City's current hardship guidelines will be reviewed in line with the WALGA policy developed to guide local governments with a further report to be presented to Council.

26. For the City, our local economy is extremely reliant on outside visitors for the tourism and hospitality industry.
27. A large number of the community's workforce are casual due to the nature of these dominant industries. Therefore, individual's cash flow and the ability to pay debts such as City rates and charges have and will continue to be affected.
28. Federal and State Government packages are being announced on a very regular basis.
29. The landscape in this space is changing rapidly.
30. What is not clear at this point in time, is whether some of the initiatives proposed by the City would end up duplicating the State and Federal Government initiatives.
31. At this time no direct financial assistance is available to the Local Government sector.
32. Therefore, if Council were to consider a local assistance package, it needs to be adaptable and on a case by case basis and be consistent.

WALGA Template COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy (Hardship Policy)

33. The WALGA Financial Hardship Policy (attached) is currently in place as administrative directive (guideline), enhanced by the delegated power provided to the CEO and Executive Director Corporate & Commercial Services, on 24 March 2020:

THAT the Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Director Corporate & Commercial Services are delegated until 31 December 2020 the authority to DEFER, DISCOUNT, and/or SUSPEND fees, charges, including licensing and leasing fees in accordance with the Local Government Act 1995 and City of Albany administrative guidelines.

Note: City guideline for each application:

- *Will be assessed on a case by case basis, for each application.*
- *This does not extend to writing off debt owed.*
- *Council is to be provided with a list of all delegations enacted.*
- *Interest on unpaid debt be waived.*
- *This position is to be reviewed at the end of the calendar year (31 December 2020)*

Economic and Community Support Package

34. Before considering the measures, it is considered important that any activity, measure or package attempt to, as far as possible:
 - complement Federal, State and other local government emergency responses (without unnecessarily duplicating or replicating a service already offered by, or the responsibility of another agency or organisation);
 - be proportionate to the degree of the economic shock and the impact on the local economy;
 - can be adjusted if and when required;
 - demonstrate tangible community benefit/s or address an identified community need/s;
 - be simple and straight forward to understand and implement;
 - use existing delivery mechanisms, wherever possible;
 - be temporary and accompanied by a fiscal exit strategy; and
 - be mindful of the City's existing financial and physical capacity.
35. Many measures may in fact be a cost to the City, and others may be a relaxing of internal controls and procedures to reduce compliance burdens and to get projects on the ground where possible.

36. The following is proposed to be considered as a City response for the remainder of the financial year:

Area of Assistance	Detail
Pandemic Leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated Impact. This is not additional cost over and above current budget, but is a payment to staff who will not be attending work when taking this leave type. It is not anticipated that the entire workforce will be utilising pandemic leave. Authority to provide up to two weeks' pandemic leave to be considered by Council.
Rates and Rating Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt a COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy. Halting any debt recovery action on outstanding rates on a case by case basis if affected by COVID-19. Deferment of rates for those who have a pensioner card, state concession card, seniors' card and Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card registered to their property.
Commercial Leases with the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please refer to SCM021 for further information regarding this matter.
Community Leases and Building Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discount lease fees for community organisations required to close/cease operating on a case by case basis.
Express Procurement & Payment for local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined procurement processes to improve timeliness of orders issued to complete priority works. Priority payment within 14 days from certification. Increased focus and consideration of priority being placed on local procurement where possible to stimulate the local economy. Early release of contractor's bonds and deposits on a case by case basis.

Area of Assistance	Detail
Planning Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where risks to safety, the environment or amenity are not considered significant, applying greater discretion on basic applications to speed up approvals process and relaxing requirements to provide supporting information, where it is difficult to provide that information.
Library Services & Vancouver Arts Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased provision of online services for e-books and click and collect book service. Increased telephone and online support to assist members to access online resources. Increased online information for local history studies with progressive digitisation of physical materials and promotion of how to access.
Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of a continuity plan template to all critical service providers with offers of assistance to complete. <p><i>Note: This has been provided on the City's website CONVID-19 page since 1 April 2020:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.business.gov.au/risk-management/emergency-management/coronavirus-information-and-support-for-business/continuing-your-business Contact with all community groups and sporting clubs to assess impact, needs and continuity planning assistance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact with members of CoA facilities to stay connected and identify any support required. • Consider providing staff to replace volunteer reductions if they occur for community support organisations such as Food Kitchens, and increase service provision and reach if needed. • Donating existing obsolete food stocks to assist Food Bank. • Distribution of "How can I help" cards through newspaper cut out, social media and web to encourage community to support isolated residents. • #albanyinthistogether campaign to encourage economic, mental and physical health in our community through web and social media initiatives. • Redirect the City's 2020/21 and 2021/22 community grant funding program to focus on recovery initiatives with a social and economic stimulus in the 20/21 financial year.
<p>Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular contact with businesses and industries representatives with information and resources. • Ongoing dialogue with businesses and industries to assess the impact and current challenge their business/industry is facing. • Ongoing promotion of 'buy local' 'shop local' campaigns. • Assessment of the City's marketing and events sponsorship program to encompass broader economic development and recovery initiatives including the above small grants programs, events, regional marketing. • Continue to support and develop a working partnership with the Albany Chamber of Commerce (ACCI) that may see the City provide staff resourcing and in-kind support to assist our small business community.

Area of Assistance	Detail
National Anzac Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxation of booking refund policy. • Cancellation of non-essential bookings.
Albany Visitors Centre (AVC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedited processing of cancellations. • Cancellation of non-essential bookings.
Albany Leisure & Aquatic Centre (ALAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension of all memberships. • Balance credit to 'Learn to Swim' participants. • Development of online fitness programs.

37. The impact of these proposals suggested above will be apparent in the 2019/20 financial year.
38. It is likely that these measures, along with some ratepayers' inability to pay any other debts outstanding, depending on their circumstance, will have an impact on the City's end of year position.

Leadership and Community Messaging

39. The Mayor Councillors and City staff continue to be responsive and proactive in relation to the COVID-19 Crisis on a local and regional level.
40. To date:
 - a. The City has followed Government directives as issued to close public facilities such as recreation centres and libraries etc. A list of measures and communications already provided to date is provided in regular customer service briefs to Elected Members and the City's customer service teams.
 - b. In most cases the City had recognised the risks and already acted ahead of the stated closure deadlines.
 - c. The Mayor and City staff continue to provide community updates through social media and media interviews, providing positive and reassuring messages that the City is doing what we can to keep the Local Community safe and informed.
 - d. The City has acted quickly in response to displaced or stranded persons and visitors to see they are rehoused or directed to appropriate accommodation (mainly Caravan Parks and free camping grounds) throughout the district in consultation with Albany Police.
 - e. The City, via all its teams, are liaising across the spectrum of Community groups and organisations to ensure support and offering of assistance.
For example, the City has offered the Albany Regional Hospital, public facilities for use if required.
 - f. The Mayor, CEO and Management remains well informed and interact with regional organisations on current trends in high level meetings via zoom conferencing, at a State and Interstate Level including WALGA, District Emergency Management Committee, Professional Networks, Local Police and Emergency organisations. Further, our leadership and involvement in Regional Capitals Australia WA Inc. (RCAWA) is proving to be very helpful in the sharing of information, documentation and the advocacy for regional Local Government in the current crisis.
 - g. The Executive, through briefings with Council and delegated authority from Council are ensuring that decision making is well informed, considered and a measured approach in the current uncertain times, and "no irrational or knee jerk" decisions are being made.
 - h. This allows us to be flexible in our decisions to address the community's needs.
 - i. City Management is now focused on our business, providing essential services or responding to emergency and community safety events (i.e. *Bush Fire Response*, etc.).
 - j. Minor matters that are not critical are being placed on hold for now.

Local Government Staffing

41. The City's staff are a high priority during this crisis:
 - a. City Management have been in regular meetings to address staffing matters and introduce work place safety measures, such as video conferencing wherever possible.
 - b. The City has established working from home protocols and is now in a position to have a large number of our administrative staff working from home.
 - c. In times ahead staff may be called upon by other Community Support agencies to be redeployed (*to areas such as health services, community safety and social services etc.*); however, this will be considered on a case by case basis.
42. At the time of writing this report, Local Government is not eligible for the Federal Government's Job Keeper Subsidy scheme.

43. Apart from Casual staff, all permanent and some temporary contract staff are still employed and working.
44. Elected Members received an update on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on business continuity, together with City Staffing and operational matters at a strategic briefing session held on Tuesday, 7 April 2020.

Governance

45. Council leadership and maintaining good governance is essential during times of crisis.
46. Even though Council has expanded the CEO's delegated decision-making powers to enable the City to be operationally responsive, Council continue to provide "Critical Oversight".
47. The Mayor's Executive Powers, under Section 6.8 of the Local Government Act, authorising expenditure can be enacted if necessary.

Annual Budget 2020/21

48. City staff have already significantly progressed the preparation of the Draft 2020/21 Annual Budget (20/21 Budget).
49. A final draft was due to be presented to Council in April, however since the development of COVID-19 this has meant that the draft plan needs to be revisited at a point in time where there is more certainty about the current and future economic environment.
50. This may or may not include a complete review of the allocation of the forward funding however, this will be a matter for Council to determine at a later time.
51. Based on the fact that the Minister for Local Government has requested local governments to review their existing annual budgets, the local government industry has moved as a collective to encourage all local governments to consider certain measures in their 2020/2021 Annual Budgets.
52. Some of the matters currently under consideration in order for the City to balance a budget include:
 - a. Not increasing rates for the 2020/21 financial year;
 - b. Continuation of weekly, fortnightly and monthly payment options for rates payments;
 - c. Review employee resourcing in the current financial year and in the 2020/21 Annual Budget;
 - d. Reviewing of capital works program;
 - e. Reducing interest and payment charges to rates billing and collection;
 - f. Relaxing terms and conditions on payment arrangements on a case by case basis;
 - g. Assuming a significant reduction in revenue from fees and charges;
 - h. Assuming an increase in the non-payment of rates impacting cash flow;
 - i. Consideration of service level requirements and its impact on operational expenditure;
 - j. Consideration of new borrowings to assist with capital works and liquidity;
 - k. Consideration of revised 2020/2021 Community Grants Funding;
 - l. Consideration of the utilisation of the City's existing cash reserves for business continuity; and
 - m. Seeking to apply for Federal and State Government grants that may provide opportunities for capital/operating works.
53. Should Council be comfortable with these initiatives for the 2020/2021 Annual Budget, City staff will model the budget around these parameters.
54. Nothing prevents the Council, should the COVID-19 crisis diminish or worsen, from being able to review its 2020/2021 budget at any point in time and make further adjustments either positive or negative.

55. When compiling the 2020/2021 Annual Budget, City Officers consider there is a need for advocacy on an industry level through the appropriate channels.
56. It is also suggested that the Mayor and the CEO advocate to both WALGA and the State Government for the following key initiatives to assist local government to enable them to be able to pass on any savings such as:
- a. Reduction in the Loan Guarantee Fee (GF) currently paid by local governments to the WA Treasury Corporation (WATC) on current borrowings;
 - b. Freeze on loan repayments for 3 – 6 months;
 - c. Freezing street lighting and utilities for local governments; and
 - d. Postponing all UV and GRV valuations from Land Valuation Services.
57. These items have now all been raised with the Minister by WALGA and a decision and further consideration of these measures is currently pending.

GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC CONSULTATION

58. Consultation regarding small business stimulus options has taken place with numerous individuals and organisations:
- Mayor and Councillors
 - City Officers
 - Great Southern Development Commission
 - RCAWA CEO's
 - WALGA
 - ACCI
 - Federal & State Government
 - Key industry groups

Community consultation.

59. No broad scale community consultation has been undertaken on this matter. Given the urgency of this issue, it is recommended that actions be undertaken without detailed community engagement/consultation.

STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

60. The drafter of this report interprets rate relief and/or waiving of charges as authorised expenditure in advance noting the current emergency situation.
61. Section 6.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) relates to expenditure not included in an annual budget. Expenditure can be approved by the Mayor in emergency situations.
62. Section 5.42 of the Act allows Council to delegate some of its powers to the CEO provided they are not duties that are limited within the Act that are deemed “not delegable”.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

63. The proposals listed will set the Council's Policy Position, supported by the current COVID-19 Delegations.

RISK IDENTIFICATION & MITIGATION

64. The risk identification and categorisation relies on the City’s Enterprise Risk and Opportunity Management Framework.

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk Analysis	Mitigation
Community Financial Hardship to members of our community who have lost employment or had hours significantly cut).	Almost Certain	Major	Extreme	Approve proposed recommendations to be enacted on a case by case basis.
Financial (Operational Impact on City Service Delivery and employment)	Almost Certain	Major	Extreme	Seek State & Federal Funding Assistance. Minimise workforce hours to essential community services.
People Management (Financial, Operational, Reputation): There is no financial safety net for Local Government, so the City’s financial security is in jeopardy unless we consider all options to ensure we remain viable for the future in particular recovery.	Almost Certain	Major	Extreme	Ensure all City activities that are provided: (a) provide community value; and (b) are conducted in an efficient and cost effective manner.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

65. Refer to risk identification and mitigation section of the report.
66. On 7th April 2020, an Elected Member Workshop was conducted with Council. At this workshop identified areas of assistance and the projected financial impact was presented for discussion and critique.
67. The financial implications in relation to the City’s 2020/2021 budget will be further explored in future budget briefings and information sessions for Council as the budget is developed.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

68. Nil.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

69. Not applicable to this report. However, it should be noted that the use of “single use items” will increase landfill volumes.

ALTERNATE OPTIONS

70. A number of alternate options can be explored, the purpose of this report is to seek strategic guidance for the Executive to formulate short term to medium term response to mitigate financial risk to the City and help our community respond to the COVID-19 crisis.
71. As an alternative to the proposed recommendation the Council could:
- Choose to amend the measures proposed by adding or removing initiatives to assist the community throughout the COVID-19 crisis.
72. City Officers can assist with the drafting of a suitable alternative motion if required.

CONCLUSION

73. This report provides Council with an overview of the measures proposed for the remainder of the 2019/20 financial year to assist with the COVID-19 crisis in our community. However, these proposals will be closely monitored and the City need to be quick and flexible with any modifications required.
74. The report also outlines some parameters and seeks Councils direction on the development of the 2020/21 budget process in light of the COVID-19 Crisis.
75. Council is also able to consider further measures at a later date.

Consulted References	:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> • <i>Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996</i> • <i>Delegations Register 2020</i> • Department Circulars
File Number (Name of Ward)	:	(All Wards)
Previous References	:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCM 24 March 2020 – Resolution CCS237 • Elected Member Workshop 7 April 2020

SCM021: COVID-19 PANDEMIC TENANT RENT RELIEF

Report Prepared By : Team Leader Property and Leasing (T Catherall)
Responsible Officers: : Executive Director Corporate and Commercial Services
(D Olde)

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

This report was considered as confidential in accordance with section 5.23(2) (c) and (e, iii) of the Local Government Act 1995, being: (e) a matter that if disclosed, would reveal – (iii) information about the business, professional, commercial or financial affairs of a person.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

1. This item relates to the following elements of the City of Albany Strategic Community Plan or Corporate Business Plan informing plans or strategies:
 - **Theme:** Leadership.
 - **Objective:** To establish and maintain sound business and governance structures.
 - **Community Priority:** Provide informed and transparent decision making that is consistent with our strategic direction, meets our legal obligations, reflect the level of associated risk and are adequately explained to community.

In Brief:

- Council is requested to consider temporary rent concessions, in the view of the substantial impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the activities and operations of its tenants and their ability to pay rent.
- It is recommended that Council approve a concession of up to 100% be applied to rental payments for Commercial Tenancies for a period of up to six months, commencing 1 April 2020.
- It is recommended that Council approve a concession of up to 100% be applied to rental payments and outgoings for Community, Sporting or Other Not for Profit Tenancies for a period of up to six months, commencing 1 April 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

SCM021: RESOLUTION
VOTING REQUIREMENT: ABSOLUTE MAJORITY

MOVED: COUNCILLOR STEPHENS
SECONDED: COUNCILLOR HAMMOND

THAT:

1. **The Chief Executive Officer be AUTHORISED to grant temporary rent concessions for the City's leased premises on the following basis:**
 - a) **The tenant must make application to the City and provide adequate justification that they are experiencing hardship as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic and will have difficulty in meeting their rent payments;**
 - b) **Any decision to grant a concession takes account of any other stimulus or incentive received by the tenant specifically for meeting their rent payments;**
 - c) **A concession of up to 100% may be applied to rental payments for Commercial Tenancies for a period of up to six months, commencing 1 April 2020;**
 - d) **A concession of up to 100% may be applied to rental payments and outgoings for Community, Sporting or Other Not for Profit Tenancies for a period of up to six months, commencing 1 April 2020;**
 - e) **No discount will be applied to outgoings for Commercial Tenancies, however the City may consider deferral of payments where necessary. This is to be at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer;**
 - f) **Any rental concession or change to outgoings will be done as a temporary variation to the lease agreement; and**

- 2. A further report be presented to Council in the June round of meetings to consider the ongoing implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the City's tenancies and reporting the variations that have been agreed.**

**CARRIED 11-0
ABSOLUTE MAJORITY**

6.0 CLOSURE OF MEETING

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 5.43pm.

(Unconfirmed Minutes)

Dennis W Wellington
MAYOR