

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, June 19, 2020

Community recovery key as Council prepares to debate 2020/21 Annual Plan and Budget

The Waratah-Wynyard Council will debate the Annual Plan and Budget Estimates for 2020/21 at its Council Meeting Monday evening.

Mayor Robby Walsh said “This is a COVID-19 Recovery Budget, designed to support our community, our economy, protect ratepayers and rebuild our vibrant municipal area. The budget also continues to deliver innovative, sustainable services to our community through strong leadership, clear direction and collaborative relationships.”

“Council is acutely aware of the financial pressures the community is currently facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,” he stated.

The draft budget contains several measures to support the community over the next 12 months without increasing rates and charges nor reducing service levels. Measures include:

- 0% rates and charges increase
- 0% increase for all user fees and charges
- Community recovery grants of \$0.100m
- Continuation of Financial Hardship Policy
- An extension of early payment discount period of 60 days (to 31 October)
- Continuation of free entry to the waste transfer station for non-commercial residents
- Waiving food licence fees for 2020/21

“Council’s operating income and expenses will be more volatile than usual as it supports stimulus measures whilst also endeavouring to retain as many employees as possible during a very challenging period,” General Manager Shane Crawford said.

“Council is expected to show an underlying deficit of \$0.801m in 2020/21. Council’s return to surplus is expected to be manageable, with much of the deficit being attributable to one-off impacts of COVID-19 and stimulus measures.

“Council maintains a strong balance sheet which provides flexibility in times like this and the ability to deal with potential issues that we can’t necessarily predict and supports the needs of the community at this time,” Mr Crawford said.

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“Council’s ongoing financial sustainability is demonstrated through its Financial Management Strategy which is reviewed annually and will be reassessed over the coming months.”

Council has adopted a range of master plans and strategies in consultation with the community outlining aspirations which require a capital investment of approximately \$58m over the next 10 years.

Economic development opportunities will be boosted as Council presses forward with the ambitious program. The 2020/21 capital program of \$16.230m includes \$9.644m in new construction projects and brings forward several projects to support the use of local employment and resources.

Council’s Integrated Council Environmental Plan (iCEP), developed in consultation with the community, is Council’s roadmap for managing the natural environment and climate change. Council will commence the implementation of the plan in 2020/21. Council will undertake several coastal erosion assessments which will inform future actions and spending requirements to protect the region’s natural assets and Council assets.

The budget includes a \$2.4m investment in stormwater development projects which will not only provide increased flood protection to our community but will also make way for new property development.

The 2020/21 financial year will see several key projects from Council’s Open Space, Sport and Recreation Plan (OSSR) 2017/27 come to life. The Yacht Club multi-use facility is scheduled for completion in 2020/21 and the long-awaited commencement of the coastal pathway is expected to be well underway.

The ANZAC Park All Abilities Playground development will also commence in partnership with The Fairy Godmothers. The new playground will provide the community with a destination play-space that will be fun, inclusive and accessible for everyone of all ages and abilities.

The community continues to use its voice to shape its future alongside a strong Council willing to listen. Council will continue its commitment to community engagement throughout 2020/21.

Authorised for general media distribution by Shane Crawford, General Manager, Waratah-Wynyard Council on Friday, June 19, 2020.