



Special Meeting of Council Minutes

Date: Thursday, 20 June, 2024
Time: 1:00 pm
Location: WDRC - Corporate Office - Boardroom
30 Marble Street, Dalby Qld 4405

Voting Members:

- Cr. A. N. Smith
- Cr. K. A. Bourne
- Cr. O. G. Moore
- Cr. S. J. Condon
- Cr. P. T. Saxelby
- Cr. K. A. Maguire
- Cr. G. M. Olm
- Cr. M. J. James
- Cr. S. Bougoure

Officers:

- J. Taylor, Chief Executive Officer
- B. Bacon, General Manager (Corporate Services)
- D. Fletcher, General Manager (Community & Liveability)
- G. Cook, General Manager (Infrastructure Services)
- B. Donald, Senior Executive Officer
- A. Lyell, Executive Services Administration Officer

1. DECLARATION OF THE MEETING OPEN

The Chairperson declared the meeting open at 1.16pm.

2. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

3. CORPORATE SERVICES

3.1 Corporate Services Report Adoption 2024-25 Operational Plan

The purpose of this report is to present to Council the *2024-25 Operational Plan*.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED by: Cr. O.G. Moore

Seconded by: Cr. K.A. Bourne

That Council resolves to adopt the *2024-25 Operational Plan*.

CARRIED

3.2 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Budget Policies 2024-25

The *Local Government Act 2009* requires Council to adopt a number of policies related to the annual budget to ensure the effective and efficient financial governance of the organisation. The Debt Policy must be adopted annually; and the Investment Policy, Financial Management and Investment Strategy Policy and Budget Policy should be reviewed annually to ensure they continue to meet Council's strategic and operational objectives. This report will also present Council's 2024-25 Community Service Obligations. To streamline the budget process, all policies have been reviewed with some policies being merged with other policies.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED by: Cr. K.A. Bourne

Seconded by: Cr. K.A. Maguire

That Council resolves to:

1. in accordance with Section 104 of the *Local Government Act 2009* and 191 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* adopt the:
 - a. *Budget Policy* (Attachment One);
 - b. *Financial Management and Investment Strategy Policy* (Attachment Two);
 - c. *Investment Policy* (Attachment three); and
 - d. *Debt Policy* (Attachment Four).
2. apply a Community Service Obligation Payment to the following businesses and receive Dividend Payments from the following businesses during 2024-25:

Community Service Obligations:

- a. Water; and
- b. Waste Management.

Dividend Payments:

- c. Commercial Works;
 - d. Gas;
 - e. Sewerage;
 - f. Quarry;
 - g. Saleyards; and
 - h. Washdown Bays; and
3. rescind the below Council policies which are not legislated and have been incorporated into this report:
 - a. *Code of Competitive Conduct - Council Policy*; and
 - b. *Dividend Payment - Council Policy*.

CARRIED

3.3 Corporate Services Report Adoption of 2024-25 Revenue Statement

Section 169(2)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* requires Council to include a Revenue Statement in its annual Budget. This report recommends the adoption of the Revenue Statement as part of the 2024-25 Budget.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED by: Cr. O.G. Moore

Seconded by: Cr. S. Bougoure

That Council resolves to:

1. adopt the *2024-25 Revenue Statement* (Attachment One), in accordance with Section 104(5) of the *Local Government Act 2009* and sections 169 and 172 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*;
2. levy the Differential General Rates and Minimum General Rates for 2024-25, as set out in the 2024-25 Revenue Statement, as pursuant to section 81 of the *Local Government Act 2009* and section 81 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* and in accordance with the provisions of the *Revenue Policy - Statutory Policy* and the *2024-25 Revenue Statement*;
3. adopt the 2024-25 Utility Charges as set out in the 2024-25 Revenue Statement, in accordance with the provisions of the *Revenue Policy - Statutory Policy* and *2024-25 Revenue Statement*;

4. allow a discount of 5.0 per cent on general rates and charges as stated in the *2024-25 Revenue Statement*, in accordance with the provisions of the *Revenue Policy - Statutory Policy* and *2024-25 Revenue Statement*; and
5. adopt the application of interest, from the day the rates or charges become overdue, at the maximum rate of 12.35 per cent per annum, to be applied from 1 July 2024 on all rates and charges (excluding overdue gas accounts) which remain unpaid thirty (30) days after the due date for payment, in accordance with Sections 132 and 133 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

CARRIED

3.4 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Special Charges for 2024-25

The purpose of this Report is to provide to Council, for its consideration, the special rates and charges to be levied for the 2024-25 financial year.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED by: Cr. K.A. Bourne

Seconded by: Cr. O.G. Moore

That Council resolves to adopt the proposed 2024-25 special charges, pursuant to the provisions of the *Revenue Policy - Statutory Policy* and *2024-25 Revenue Statement*.

CARRIED

3.5 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Rates and Charges and Special Charges Concessions 2024-25

This report considers the proposed Rates and Charges and Special Charges Concessions to apply for the 2024-25 financial year and the *Rates and Utility Charges Concession – Statutory Policy* for the Western Downs Regional Council's 2024-25 budget.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED by: Cr. P.T. Saxelby

Seconded by: Cr. M.J. James

That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Revenue Policy – Statutory Policy* and the *2024-25 Revenue Statement*, Council resolves to adopt the granting of:

1. Council Pensioner Rate Concession

- a. A Council Pensioner Rate Concession of twenty (20) per cent (up to a maximum of \$200 per annum) of gross rates and charges (except for Special Rates and Charges, Separate Rates and Charges, Emergency Management Levy Charges, Water Consumption Charges, Charges on the Land, and Miscellaneous Fees and Charges) be provided to eligible pensioners in accordance with the State Government Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme in 2024-25. This Concession is provided pursuant to sections 120(1)(a), 121(a), and 122(1)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*; and

- b. A Council Pensioner Rate Concession of twenty (20) per cent (up to a maximum of \$200 per annum) be provided to occupants of independent living units at aged care facilities and retirement villages and who are also pensioners under section 123(1) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*. The concession will be provided to eligible pensioners where:
 - i. part of the rates or charges that the Council considers is attributable to the part of the land where pensioners have a right to exclusive occupancy (section 123(2) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*), and
 - ii. the landowner agrees to pass the benefit of the rebate on to the pensioners.

2. Concealed Leaks

Pursuant to sections 120(1)(c), 121(a), and 122(1)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, Council resolves to grant a concession to a ratepayer who is a member of a stated class of ratepayers, as follows:

Stated class of ratepayers

The concession is available to all categories/classes of ratepayers connected to Council's water supply schemes.

Type of concession

Council will allow relief by way of a concession of twenty-five (25) per cent of the water consumption charge in accordance with *Water Meters - Statutory Policy*.

Conditions

The concession is granted subject to a ratepayer:

- a. incurring water consumption charges by reason of a 'concealed leak' (as defined in *Water Meters - Statutory Policy*); and
- b. satisfying the criteria set down in *Water Meters - Statutory Policy*.

Criteria for granting concession

Council grants this concession on the basis that to require the ratepayer to pay full charges for consumption in circumstances where a concealed leak has occurred (through no fault of the ratepayer) would result in hardship.

3. Rates and Utilities Charges Concession for Community Organisations

Pursuant to sections 120(1)(c), 121(a), and 122(1)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, Council resolves to grant a concession to a ratepayer who is a member of a stated class of ratepayers, as follows:

Stated class of ratepayers

The concession is granted to not-for-profit (or non-profit) community organisations responsible for payment of rates and utility charges as the owner or lessee of the land as defined in *Rates and Utilities Charges Concession - Statutory Policy*.

Type of concession

Council will grant to each eligible organisation the nominated concessions (expressed as percentages against each concession category) for general rates, waste utility charges, sewerage charges, water access charges, and water consumption charges.

Conditions

The conditions for granting the concession are outlined in the *Rates and Utilities Charges Concession - Statutory Policy*.

Criteria for granting concession

Community organisations will be granted this concession upon receiving approval of the concession as outlined in *Rates and Utilities Charges Concession - Statutory Policy*.

4. Haemodialysis Water Allowance

Stated class of ratepayers

Council resolves to grant the allowance to a haemodialysis patient who receives haemodialysis treatment at home under the *Rates and Utility Charges Concession - Statutory Policy*.

Type of concession

Types of conditions are outlined in the *Rates and Utility Charges Concession - Statutory Policy*.

Conditions

Conditions for granting the concession are outlined in the *Rates and Utility Charges Concession - Statutory Policy*.

5. Rescind Policies

Council resolves to rescind the *Rates and Utility Charges Concessions for Community Organisations - Council Policy* and *Haemodialysis Water Allowance Policy*.

CARRIED

3.6 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Register of Cost Recovery Fees and Commercial Charges for 2024-25

The purpose of this report is to adopt the Register of Cost Recovery Fees and Commercial Charges for 2024-25. The Fees and Charges listed in the register will take effect from 1 July 2024.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED by: Cr. S.J. Condon

Seconded by: Cr. G.M. Olm

That Council resolves to adopt the 2024-25 Register of Cost Recovery Fees and Commercial Charges, as contained in Attachment One, to be effective from 1 July 2024.

CARRIED

3.7 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Revenue Policy, Debt Recovery Collection Policy and Procedures for Levying Rates and Charges 2024-25

This Report presents to Council the *Revenue Policy - Statutory Policy* and *Debt Recovery Collection - Statutory Policy* for the Westerns Downs Regional Council's 2024-25 budget. The report also considers the procedures for the levying of rates and charges for 2024-25 for Council's 2024-25 Budget.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED by: Cr. K.A. Bourne

Seconded by: Cr. P.T. Saxelby

That Council resolves to:

1. adopt the *Debt Recovery Collection - Statutory Policy* (Attachment One) and *Revenue Policy - Statutory Policy* (Attachment Two), in accordance with section 169(2) and section 193 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*;
2. rescind the *Rates and Charges Collection - Council Policy*, the *Gas Charges and Fees Collection - Council Policy* and *Accounts Receivable Debt Collection - Council Policy*; and
3. adopt the following procedures for the Levying of Rates and Charges for 2024-25, in accordance with Chapter 4 Part 1 of the *Local Government Act 2009* and the provisions of the *Revenue Policy - Statutory Policy* and *2024-25 Revenue Statement*.

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Description of Rates/Charges	Frequency	Basis
Differential General Rates	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Special Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Separate Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Waste & Recycling Collection Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Environmental Waste Levy Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Water and Recycled Water Access Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Water and Recycled Water Volumetric Charges	Half Yearly	Based on Consumption
Water and Recycled Water Volumetric Charges (High Water Consumers as determined by Council)	No more than Bi-Monthly and no less than Half Yearly	Based on Consumption
Sewerage Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Gas - non-domestic connections	Monthly	Based on Gas Consumption and periodic access charges
Gas - domestic connections	Quarterly	Based on Gas Consumption and periodic access charges

CARRIED

3.8 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Estimated Position 30 June 2024 and Financial Analysis

The purpose of this report is to submit for adoption the Statement of Estimated Financial Position as part of the 2024-25 budget and provide an analysis of variations between the 2024-25 Budget and the 2023-24 Estimated Position.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED by: Cr. M.J. James

Seconded by: Cr. K.A. Maguire

That Council resolves to receive the Statement of Estimated Financial Position, which includes the Financial Operations (Attachment One) and Financial Position (Attachment two) of Council for the 2023-24 financial year.

CARRIED

3.9 Corporate Services Report Adoption of 2024-25 Budget including the Long-Term Financial Plan

This Report presents the 2024-25 Budget and the 2024-25 Long-Term Financial Plan for adoption.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED by: Cr. K.A. Bourne

Seconded by: Cr. O.G. Moore

That Council resolves to:

1. adopt the 2024-25 Budget, prepared in accordance with the requirements of section 169 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*; and
2. adopt the 2024-25 Long-Term Financial Plan, prepared in accordance with the requirements of sections 169 and 171 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

CARRIED

3. MAYORAL BUDGET STATEMENT

Thank you everyone, it is my pleasure to officially present the 2024-25 Western Downs Regional Council Budget - my first as Mayor.

I'm proud to stand with my fellow Councillors to deliver a clear vision for the year ahead - a plan that allows us to continue to deliver great liveability, quality infrastructure and improved services for our region.

Thanks to years of responsible financial management by previous Councils, we continue to be one of the few debt-free Local Governments in Queensland.

The hard work we have done over recent years to build a strong financial position means we can deliver essential new infrastructure, significant capital projects and exciting community funding programs to improve life and liveability on the Western Downs.

Council has the vital role in supporting our growing communities while carefully aligning its budget with high-quality service delivery, good management of assets and balancing the cost of national supply shortages and rising costs.

We are also working hard to build back better after consecutive natural disasters whilst ensuring that the costs of living in the Western Downs remains affordable for our residents.

Our region is growing, thanks to our strong, diverse economy, and Council is planning for future growth through investment in quality essential services and the delivery of modern infrastructure.

We have carefully budgeted to deliver a budget surplus of \$2.6 million this year with total operating expenditure of \$177.8 million and a total capital investment of \$73 million.

We have an annual average general rates increase of 3.9% and 3.5% for utility charges in this budget.

Most residential households, however, will only see a 3.5% increase, which is lower than the current inflation rate thanks to Council's strong financial management in previous years.

Council will continue to offer a 5% discount on rates paid by their due date.

We will also continue to match the State Government's Rates Subsidy Scheme, offering pensioners a 20% rebate on rates and charges excluding water consumption - up to a maximum of \$200 per year.

To provide clarity and consistency for property owners across the region, Council has undertaken a review of its rating categories.

Some categories have been refined to ensure a more fair and equitable system.

As part of the process, Council has consolidated its large residential and small rural rate categories for owners of properties of less than 50 hectares.

Our priority is keeping our roads safe; Council is on target to complete the delivery of a our massive \$164 million Road Flood Damage Repair Program in early 2025.

Consecutive flooding events continue to impact the condition of our regional roads, and we are delivering major improvements in the flood resilience of our floodways to better withstand future heavy rainfall events.

We understand the huge impact of flooding events have on our communities, and Council has allocated \$50.6 million for maintenance and capital improvements to improve local roads, bridges and stormwater infrastructure.

This includes \$23.1 million in road maintenance and repairs work and \$27.5 million in capital upgrades.

Included in the capital expenditure is \$5.98 million in QRA Betterment Funding for construction of new floodways to increase the flood resilience of our roads and residential streets.

Council is also actively lobbying the State and Federal Governments for increased funding for urgent repairs and asset renewals for State-controlled roads in our region and for the national Warrego Highway.

Water continues to be our single most important resource on the Western Downs, which is why we've invested more than \$16.8 million in capital funding for our water treatment and supply infrastructure this year.

This includes a commitment over three years for development of a bore, water treatment and pipeline for Dalby to ensure the long-term viability of the town's water supply, and the commencement of a multi-year water security project for Chinchilla.

Council will also undertake a feasibility study to investigate year-round water supply at Lake Broadwater and we will start a multi-year project to raise the Condamine Weir.

Our popular water tank rebate scheme will also continue this financial year, to increase the water security of individual properties and homes in our region.

Long-term water security and supply are critical for the growth of our region and economy, and Council will continue to aggressively advocate for the construction of Nathan Dam.

Activating our communities and creating exciting new places to gather, play, learn and celebrate is another important priority for Council in 2024-25.

Planning for a new cultural facility for Dalby continues this year, as we work towards finalising the location and inclusions for this exciting landmark project.

We are also in the early stages of community consultation and planning for a new Chinchilla Aquatic Precinct.

Many of our regional pools and infrastructure are nearing end of life and we are setting our sights on strategies for replacing these much-loved community assets in our region.

Council recognises the importance of our community parks and greenspaces to residents and visitors alike, and are proud to be investing \$1.38 million in capital upgrades to improve our parklands and open spaces.

This includes a new playground for Thomas Jack Park at Dalby and creating a masterplan through community consultation to guide future upgrades to Lions Park in Tara.

The Western Downs is brimming with great experiences and attractions.

Our region is home to some of Queensland's most exciting and unique destination events like the Tara Festival of Culture and Camel Races, Big Skies 2024, Chinchilla Melon Fest 2025, and our annual Words Out West Readers and Writers Festival.

Events like these showcase our culture and give our communities the opportunity to shine, bringing visitors and tourists to the region in droves and boosting our tourism revenue.

That's why Council has allocated \$408,000 in events funding and community grants to empower local community groups to deliver new and exciting initiatives in our region.

We want to encourage our community members and visitors to explore our backyard and enjoy our facilities, so Council has allocated \$5.47 million in capital improvements to existing regional showgrounds, civic centres, community halls, and sport and recreation grounds.

As part of this, we'll be developing masterplans for new and improved facilities at the Tara and Dalby Showgrounds and remodelling the Miles Leichhardt Centre foyer and hall walkway.

Council has also invested \$620,000 to strengthen economic diversity through the delivery of Round 2 of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work Program in Tara, our locally led Economic Recovery Program, which includes development of the Buy Western Downs and #ExperienceWesternDowns platforms, and the Building Disaster Resilience Program.

It's been my privilege today, to share with you some insight into the exciting new infrastructure, services and liveability projects we will be delivering for the region in the year ahead.

I'd like to acknowledge the wonderful work of both my fellow Councillors and Council staff in preparing this budget for the Western Downs community.

We've delivered a responsible financial plan that has been carefully prepared with community needs front and centre.

This budget ensures Council can continue to deliver improved services and infrastructure that allow for future regional growth while investing in wonderful new capital projects to drive economic growth and enhance the attraction and liveability of the Western Downs for generations to come.

5. MEETING CLOSURE

The Meeting concluded at 1.46pm.