



VISION OF COUNCIL

"A thriving and friendly community that recognises our history and embraces cultural diversity and economic opportunity, whilst nurturing our natural and built environment."

AGENDA

FOR THE

SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

9 APRIL 2020

NOTICE OF MEETING

Dear Council Member,

The next Special Meeting of the Shire of Broome will be held on Thursday, 9 April 2020 in the e-Meeting, commencing at 2:00 PM for the purpose of considering:

- COVID-19 SUPPORT PACKAGE

Regards,



S MASTROLEMO
Chief Executive Officer

08/04/2020

OUR MISSION

"To deliver affordable and quality Local Government services."

CORE VALUES OF THE SHIRE

The core values that underpin the achievement of the mission will be based on a strong customer service focus and a positive attitude:

Communication
Respect
Transparency

Integrity
Innovation
Courtesy

DISCLAIMER

The purpose of Council Meetings is to discuss, and where possible, make resolutions about items appearing on the agenda. Whilst Council has the power to resolve such items and may in fact, appear to have done so at the meeting, no person should rely on or act on the basis of such decision or on any advice or information provided by a Member or Officer, or on the content of any discussion occurring, during the course of the meeting.

Persons should be aware that the provisions in section 5.25 of the *Local Government Act 1995* establish procedures for revocation or rescission of a Council decision. No person should rely on the decisions made by Council until formal advice of the Council decision is received by that person. The Shire of Broome expressly disclaims liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person as a result of relying on or acting on the basis of any resolution of Council, or any advice or information provided by a Member or Officer, or the content of any discussion occurring, during the course of the Council meeting.

Should you require this document in an alternative format please contact us.

SHIRE OF BROOME
SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL
THURSDAY 9 APRIL 2020
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1. OFFICIAL OPENING

2. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Attendance:

Leave of Absence:

Apologies:

Officers:

Public Gallery:

3. DECLARATIONS OF FINANCIAL INTEREST / IMPARTIALITY

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

5. MATTERS FOR WHICH THE MEETING MAY BE CLOSED

Under section 5.23 (2)(d) of the *Local Government Act 1995* Council may resolve to move the meeting behind closed doors.

6. REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

6.1 OUE PEOPLE

Attachment 2 of item 6.1.1 COVID – 19 Support Package was amended by Shire officers in the Agenda and circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. The amendment is shown as tracked changes in the attachment.

6.1.1 COVID-19 SUPPORT PACKAGE

LOCATION/ADDRESS:	Nil
APPLICANT:	Nil
FILE:	EMS07
AUTHOR:	Director Corporate Services
CONTRIBUTOR/S:	Nil
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Director Corporate Services
DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST:	Nil

SUMMARY: To seek Council's approval for a range of support and recovery measures to take immediate effect to assist the Shire of Broome's community and local businesses impacted by COVID-19.

BACKGROUND

Previous Considerations

OMC 26 March 2020

Item 12.2

On 17 March 2020 the Premier, the Honourable Mark McGowan wrote to the President of WALGA, Mayor Tracey Roberts requesting the support of local government to join in leading the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Premier requested that WALGA seek member support and action to “unilaterally freeze all Local Government household rates, fees and charges in 2020-21” (Attachment 1).

On 27 March 2020 WALGA called an emergency meeting of its State Council to consider a set of actions that Councils may contemplate to support their communities through COVID-19. A summary of the measures the State Council endorsed for consideration by local governments is included below:

- Consider not increasing rates for the 2020-21 financial year.
- Adoption of the WALGA template financial hardship policy by local governments that do not currently have a policy.
- Consider rate relief options to support small businesses affected by COVID-19.
- Review fees and charges considering whether fees can be reduced, waived or deferred during the 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.
- Redeploy staff affected by facility closures to tasks that support the community.

Councillors discussed these concepts at a Budget Workshop held 31 March 2020 and indicated a desire to establish initiatives that supported residents, ratepayers, community organisations and local businesses during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

COMMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic has escalated world-wide over the last few weeks and has resulted in considerable and serious economic and social impacts. The Federal and State Government health response to COVID-19 has had a marked impact on the lives and livelihoods of Shire of Broome residents, businesses and community organisations and there is deep concern in regard to the long-term socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

Impacts on Shire Services, Facilities and Staff

In the face of COVID-19 the Shire has taken significant steps to remodel its services to avoid face to face contact where possible to protect both staff and the community and prevent the spread of infection. This has included the closure of various public facilities to date including the Broome Library, Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre, Broome Civic Centre and more recently the closure of playgrounds and other public amenities. Shire events have been cancelled for the foreseeable future and community programs have also been cancelled or contained due to social distancing requirements.

In these challenging times Council is committed to retaining staff to lessen the financial impact on staff, the organisation and the wider community. Shire staff working in service areas impacted by COVID-19 and staff from facilities that have been closed have implemented alternate service delivery methods including the use of technology to run programs and engage with the community. Affected staff have also been undertaking various activities to ensure that facility operations and service delivery is optimised when services are resumed in the recovery stages.

Affected staff have also been “repurposed” into alternative roles and have been undertaking activities and providing resources to assist the organisation to deal with the impacts of COVID-19. This has primarily been in the areas of communications, community support and business assistance. Staff working in facilities that have been closed have also been redeployed to other areas of the business to assist in short to medium term project activities.

The Shire of Broome has a small contracted workforce comprising of senior staff including the Chief Executive Officer, Directors and the management team. In Councils' Long Term Financial Plan and budget documents there is an allowance for a moderate increase in contracted staff salaries to reward performance and to ensure that senior staff salaries remain competitive.

A decision has been made to freeze any incremental increases to contracted staff salaries from February 2020 for 12 months to release funds to assist with community support and recovery efforts associated with COVID-19. A moderate saving of around \$36,725 will be achieved over the 12-month period.

Facility closures across the Shire have also resulted in casual staff not being required for operational activities and services. This has resulted in salary savings of \$110,739 to the end of the financial year and \$36,913 per month thereafter. It is envisaged that casual staff

would not be required up to September 2020. These savings will be utilised to offset costs associated with support and recovery efforts.

Impacts on the Community

The Shire recognises the serious impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the community as a whole. The district is already being heavily impacted by response measures to COVID-19. This is evidenced by:

- Restricted travel between WA, the Kimberley and between local government areas in the Kimberley;
- Business contraction and closure (particularly in the tourism industry);
- Increased unemployment;
- Forced closure of pubs, places of worship, gyms, sporting venues, cinemas, salons and others;
- Restricted trading conditions for restaurants and cafes;
- Cancellation of all cruise ship visits;
- Cancellation of events;
- Restrictions of gatherings of more than two people; and
- People working from home and undertaking isolation.

The Shire of Broome understands the deep concern organisations have regarding employee retention, revenue, health and safety matters as well as the ability to plan for the further disruptions to trade and service provision.

In addition to this, the Shire recognises the need to provide additional support to the community, particularly the most vulnerable members, noting that it is expected that there will be a significant increase in the number of people falling into this category, and this may continue for a significant period of time.

There are extensive assistance packages being made available through State and Federal Governments, Financial Institutions, Business Support Agencies, Utility Providers and Industry. The assistance offerings are rapidly changing and a summary of what is available at the time of writing this report is contained in the following link: <https://www.broome.wa.gov.au/files/assets/public/council/covid-19-economic-support-ackages-20200331.pdf>.

There are also a range of support services available to businesses including financial services, staff management resources and assistance, marketing initiatives and mental health advice services. Residents, community organisations and businesses are strongly encouraged to review these offerings.

COVID-19 Support Package

The Shire of Broome acknowledges that it also has an important role to play at a local level. Council is taking swift action to introduce a COVID-19 Support Package

(Attachment 2) comprising a mix of funding and in-kind support designed to mitigate some of the impacts that will be felt across the community in the short to medium term. The package will be rolled out in stages to enable immediate (support) and also longer term (recovery) assistance to provide relief to business, community groups, not-for-profits and individuals experiencing crisis.

The Shire of Broome has assessed a range of initiatives to support the community in terms of impact and value. The packages will be rolled out in stages to enable immediate action in the current phase of the COVID-19 situation (focus is on support) but also further work will occur to roll out longer term initiatives to address the recovery and rebound phase post the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

Stage 1 Initiatives	Value
Rent Relief and Flexible Payment Options for Property Tenants	Max. \$168,328
<p>The Shire of Broome aims to assist in a cost saving for businesses and community groups currently leasing Shire of Broome properties. This will impact 26 organisations across the townsite and include those in the impacted and critical hospitality, tourism and not-for-profit sector. Full details of current non-government tenants is contained in Confidential Attachment 3.</p> <p>The recommendation is to progress with Option 5 which would see the Shire of Broome waive up to a maximum of 50% rent and potentially forgo up to \$168,328 in rental income over the following six months. The rent relief will build on the recently announced moratorium of leases for non-payment of rent for six (6) months for commercial tenancies suffering financial distress in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>While the Shire of Broome forgoes this income for its assets, this initiative supports businesses that are integral to the fabric of Broome and assist's these businesses during a period of hibernation or innovation.</p>	
Freezing Rates in 2020-21	\$400,000
<p>Council's Long-Term Financial Plan has a moderate increase in rates each year. For the 2020-2021 Annual Budget this increase was proposed at similar levels to previous years. In 2020-21 this has been altered and no rate increase will be applied. This will assist all Shire of Broome ratepayers.</p> <p>The Shire of Broome will assist in a cost saving role by freezing rates and ensuring no additional financial burden is placed on ratepayers in the 2020-2021 financial year.</p>	
COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy (Attachment 4)	\$ Unknown
<p>The Shire of Broome recognises the likelihood that COVID19 will increase the occurrence of payment difficulties, financial hardship and vulnerability in our community. The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role by ensuring we offer fair, equitable, consistent and dignified support to rates debtors suffering financial hardship as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while treating all members of the community with respect and understanding at this difficult time.</p> <p>The initiative involves updating the Shire of Broome's Financial Hardship Framework specific to COVID-19 financial hardship considerations. The WA Local Government Association (WALGA) has developed a COVID-19 Hardship Policy recommended for adoption by local governments, with consideration to individual area requirements.</p> <p>The policy provides a definition on financial hardship resulting from the impacts of COVID-19 and sets out specific criteria that will need to be evidenced within an application for</p>	

<p>financial hardship. Examples of criteria include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent unemployment or under-employment • Sickness or recovery from sickness • Low income or loss of income • Unanticipated circumstances such as caring for and supporting extended family. Community services. <p>Debt recovery processes will be suspended for Ratepayers qualifying under the hardship policy while a payment arrangement is negotiated. Qualifying ratepayers will not be charged payment arrangement fees or interest.</p> <p>Deferment of rates may apply for ratepayers who have a Pensioner Card, State Concession Card or Seniors Card and Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card registered on their property</p>	
Increased Debtor Payment Options	Nil
<p>The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role by increasing the payment options available to debtors. This will allow debtors to meet their obligations in a manner that is flexible to their needs reducing financial stress.</p> <p>Additionally, the Shire is waiving payment arrangement fees and reducing payment arrangement interest to further reduce financial strain.</p> <p>Penalty Interest will still be applied to outstanding debts in 2020-2021 where debtors have not entered payment arrangements with the Shire.</p>	
Freezing Fees and Charges	\$150,000
<p>The Shire of Broome will assist in a cost saving role by freezing rates and ensuring no additional financial burden is placed on ratepayers in the 2020-2021 financial year.</p> <p>Council's Long-Term Financial Plan has a moderate increase in fees and charges each year. For the 2020-2021 Annual Budget it is proposed all fees and charges have no increase. This will assist all Shire of Broome ratepayers and residents.</p> <p>For the 2020-2021 Annual budget the fees and charges increase are estimated to generate an additional \$150,000 in revenue towards initiatives in the district. Through a reallocation of resources, and careful fiscal management, a curtailed program could be delivered to offset the decrease in revenue.</p>	
Waive Penalty Interest and Suspension of New Debt Collection	\$120,000
<p>Council has already approved the waiving of penalty interest on remaining outstanding rates for the 2019-2020 financial year and paused all new debt collection activities.</p> <p>The Shire of Broome will assist in a cost saving role by providing respite to ratepayers with remaining outstanding 2019-2020 rates debts. Ratepayers will not be charged penalty interest on any remaining outstanding 2019-2020 rates owing, commencing April 2020.</p> <p>New debt collection processes will also be delayed providing relief for those having trouble in paying outstanding 2019-2020 rates.</p> <p>It is not recommended debt collection processes be paused in the 2020-2021 financial year. Ratepayers experiencing financial hardship will instead be encouraged to submit a hardship application as per the proposed COVID-19 Hardship Policy being considered by Council as part of this item.</p> <p>Waiving penalty interest and postponement of debt recovery on remaining outstanding rates in 2019-2020 will result in these funds staying in the hands of ratepayers at this time of</p>	

need.	
Waive 2020-21 Rates Payment Arrangement Fees and Interest	\$210,000
<p>The Shire of Broome will assist in a cost saving role by reducing the financial impost associated with entering Rates payment arrangements with the Shire. Payment arrangement fees and interest will be waived for the 2020-2021 financial year.</p> <p>By removing rate payment arrangement administration fees and interest for the 2020-21 financial year additional funds are likely to flow into the local economy and community financial stress lessened.</p>	
Refunds on Cancelled Bookings at Shire Owned Facilities	\$25,000
<p>This initiative demonstrates the Shire of Broome’s understanding and support of the unexpected circumstances now impacting events, programs and other bookings.</p> <p>The Shire of Broome Events and Bookings team has prided itself on achieving a high level of customer satisfaction. The provision of quick and responsive customer service in this instance will assist in meeting the needs of event applicants and other customers.</p> <p>Recognising the importance of events to community and economic development, the team is focused on maintaining good communication and relationships with various event managers. This will enable the Shire of Broome to work closely with all stakeholders as part of the recovery phase.</p> <p>To date, the value of refunds and credits totals \$25,000.</p>	
COVID-19 Community Support Grants Program	\$141,987
<p>The Shire of Broome will assist with a direct financial contribution to community organisations. A program total of \$100,000 could effectively impact 20 to 50 local community organisations (e.g. sporting clubs etc.), not-for-profits, charities and community service providers with a one-off grant ranging between \$2,000 and \$5,000.</p> <p>The development of a grants program targeting strong community outcomes and supporting local community organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic will help focus the community and continue to provide opportunities for collaboration and engagement.</p> <p>Many of these organisations have lost their fundraising capabilities with the restrictions applied to social gatherings and their ability to deliver their services to community members in need. Delivering services to mental health, disabled, seniors and socio-economically disadvantaged members of the community has also been severely compromised by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The grants will be directed to eligible organisations to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community services • Events • Innovative program delivery. <p>The Shire of Broome is also investigating the opportunity to partner with corporate organisations for direct impact to disadvantaged families. One concept includes purchasing telephones, laptops and data credit (capped) and have them made available to community members through an expression of interest process. This will target those families that are isolating and have limited means to stay connected via tools that are commonly available to others. The impact of such a program is two-fold – direct local economic expenditure in purchasing the equipment / assets, and direct social outcomes for disadvantaged community members during the COVID-19 crisis.</p> <p>Council should note that this would require the 2019-20 Community Sponsorship Program</p>	

to be dissolved and funds, along with the remaining Community Sponsorship Reserve funds, to be allocated to this initiative.	
Regional Advocacy	Nil
<p>The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role to make representation to decision makes for the needs of the district for strong community and economic outcomes. This requires the Shire of Broome to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be both agile and flexible to react in the support phase of the COVID-19 situation, and be strategic and proactive in the recovery phase • Partner with district and regional stakeholders to provide consistent advice and input for effective and prompt decision making • Have projects ready for funding opportunities • Have statistics and case study information collected to support advocacy claims <p>The Shire of Broome's role in this space has already resulted in swift Government responses and commitments. The Kimberley Zone had one strong and consistent voice to advocate for regional border restrictions and take-away liquor restrictions. These were implemented in the Kimberley ahead of all other regions.</p>	
Provision of Information and News	Nil
<p>The State and Federal Governments are the lead agencies in relation to the COVID-19 response and, as such, handle all communication and messaging to the public.</p> <p>The Shire of Broome recognises the community looks to it for guidance and has been proactive in supplying as much information to residents as possible. This will continue, with information regularly made available to the community, despite much of the content being national / state decisions where the Shire of Broome has no jurisdiction over or say in.</p> <p>The Shire has compiled a Frequently Asked Questions page on the Shire website, which is updated as soon as new information is available. The feedback on this page has been positive from the community, who have started to realise it is a reputable and trustworthy source of up-to-date information. This ever-expanding list of questions and answers will provide the community with the latest information in relation to specific topics and should be the go-to area for local COVID-19 information.</p> <p>On top of this, the marketing and communications coordinator has been providing timely updates for the last month on social media channels (such as Facebook and Twitter), in the Broome Advertiser's 'Shire News' page each fortnight and through e-newsletters.</p> <p>As Secretariat of the Kimberley Zone, the Shire of Broome is able to provide this information for the benefit of all member Councils and ensure there is consistent messaging across the Kimberley from all local governments.</p>	
Database of State and Federal Business Support Packages	Nil
<p>The Shire of Broome assists in a facilitation and service delivery role in circulating up-to-date information and direction to local businesses to access available State and Federal Government support programs.</p> <p>Shire Officers will partner with the Broome Chamber of Commerce and Broome Future Alliance to ensure efficient and consistent distribution of this information amongst business networks.</p>	
Virtual Library Services	Nil

<p>The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role in supporting and connecting the community with programs, initiatives and continued access to resources.</p> <p>The library plays a vital role in the lives of many community members, and the continuity of the service is considered important. The value of this initiative is expected to be demonstrated through a positive impact on the social fabric of the community.</p> <p>In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Broome Library has quickly recalibrated its services to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of live and pre-recorded library programs (e.g. Baby Rhyme Time etc.) through online modes such as Facebook Live • Ongoing promotion and assistance for community members to access the e-resources catalogue. 	
Virtual Recreation Services	Nil
<p>The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role in keeping people active when programs and facilities are not otherwise available.</p> <p>Exercise is an important aspect of a person's health and wellbeing, and this program will allow them to undertake their regular classes and interact with Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre instructors on a virtual level.</p> <p>This initiative will enable Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre members and Broome residents to participate in fitness activities whilst maintaining social distancing.</p> <p>Initially, the regular Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre programs will be available, such as Circuit Classes and Yoga, and as ongoing progress is made, an abbreviated version of aqua fitness will be explored for home pools.</p>	
Social Connection Program	Nil
<p>The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role in maintaining and strengthening community connection during this current period where people are impacted by self-isolation, quarantine and other restrictions due to COVID 19 – which negatively impact the community's ability to interact in a normal manner.</p> <p>The value of this initiative is expected to be demonstrated through a positive impact on the social fabric of the community.</p> <p>An ongoing virtual community development and support program is envisaged featuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short videos and segments to empower community members to look out for one another • Provide suggestions for activities during isolation • Promote Shire of Broome services and role of different team members • Marketing initiatives to increase community connections and encourage neighbours to connect through exchange of details / contact. 	
Freezing Contracted Staff Salaries and Savings from Casual Staff	\$258,203
<p>The Shire of Broome has a small contracted workforce comprising of senior staff including the Chief Executive Officer, Directors and the management team. In Councils Long Term Financial Plan and budget documents there is an allowance for a moderate increase in contracted staff salaries to reward performance and to ensure that senior staff salaries are competitive with other local governments.</p> <p>A decision has been made to freeze any incremental increases to contracted staff salaries from February 2020 for 12 months to release funds to assist with community support</p>	

and recovery efforts associated with COVID-19.

Facility closures across the Shire have resulted in casual staff not being required for operational activities and services. This has resulted in salary savings. These savings will be utilised to offset costs associated with support and recovery efforts.

The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role by freezing contract staff salaries for the 12-month period from February 2020 through to February 2021. Savings resulting from casual staff salaries will be redirected to help fund the various initiatives outlined in the COVID-19 Support and Recovery Strategy.

CONSULTATION

Regional Capitals Alliance WA CEO's
WALGA
Broome Chamber of Commerce
Woodside

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Act 1995

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Policy 2.2.5 Debt Recovery
Policy 3.1.2 Waiving and Refunding of Fees
Policy 3.4.2 Community Sponsorship Program
Policy 3.4.9 Tourism Administration

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Shire of Broome Financial Position

Whilst in a sound financial position, the Shire is no different to others in the community and is expecting to be heavily impacted by the outbreak. While there have been savings identified through the closure of facilities, the cancellation of events and the contraction of services; budgeted revenue from a variety of areas is projected to decline significantly over the short to medium term. The following areas are expected to be impacted:

- Waste revenue due to the expected decline in commercial and industrial activity;
- Rates revenue due to diminished collection and the waiving of penalty interest for the remaining 2019-20 outstanding rates;
- Commercial and community lease fee and charges with tenants indicating closure and others seeking rent relief;
- Fee revenue from facilities with refunds already being processed;
- Events revenue due to cancellation of events;
- Development application revenue through declines in number of applications;
- Debtor payments are also expected to be slower impacting cash flows.

Nett Cost

If supported, the nett cost to the Shire through the implementation of the 16 recommended support initiatives would be approximately \$1,215,315 actual expenditure and foregone revenue. This is offset by \$258,023 in salary savings identified through casual

and contracted staff and the reallocation of \$141,987 from the 2019-20 Community Sponsorship Program (\$80,000) and the Community Sponsorship Reserve (\$61,987).

It is envisaged that the foregone revenue identified will be offset by savings in operational costs associated with facility closures and service realignment. The financial impacts will be communicated to Council through the Quarter 3 Finance and Costing Review which will be tabled at the April 2020 Ordinary Meeting of Council.

RISK

Risk	Risk Rating	Comments
Financial	Moderate	Proposed support initiatives will require funding which has been offset by savings identified in operational accounts. There will be a financial impost on the organisation with losses anticipated across a variety of business units. Actual impacts are outlined in the financial considerations section. Losses, coupled with the increased spend on initiatives, have the potential to erode cashflow however this will be tracked by officers and reported to Council on a regular basis.
Reputation	Minor	Proposed support initiatives are likely to receive positive feedback if it is demonstrated to be fair, consistent and meaningful to the local community and business sector.
Compliance	Minor	A Covid-19 Financial Hardship Policy would need to be adopted. The Shire is required to follow the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> , relevant regulations and policies.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Our People Goal – Foster a community environment that is accessible, affordable, inclusive, healthy and safe:

Effective communication

Affordable services and initiatives to satisfy community need

Accessible and safe community spaces

Participation in recreational and leisure activity

A healthy and safe environment

Our Place Goal – Help to protect the nature and built environment and cultural heritage of Broome whilst recognising the unique sense of the place:

Retention and expansion of Broome's iconic tourism assets and reputation

Core asset management to optimise the Shire's infrastructure whilst minimising life cycle costs.

Our Prosperity Goal – Create the means to enable local jobs creation and lifestyle affordability for the current and future population:

Affordable and equitable services and infrastructure

Key economic development strategies for the Shire which are aligned to regional outcomes working through recognised planning and development groups/committees

Our Organisation Goal – Continually enhance the Shire’s organisational capacity to service the needs of a growing community:

Sustainable and integrated strategic and operational plans

Responsible resource allocation

Effective community engagement

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Absolute Majority

REPORT RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

1. *Adopt the following initiatives as detailed in the attached COVID-19 Support Package:*
 - (a) *Creation and circulation of a Database of State and Federal Business Support Packages;*
 - (b) *Rental Relief and Flexible Payment Options for Tenants: Delegate to the Chief Executive Officer the ability to individually negotiate with non-government tenants for up to 50% of rental payments to be waived for a period of 6 months on a case by case basis;*
 - (c) *Development of a COVID-19 Community Support Grant Program*
 - (d) *0% increase to Council Rates in the 2020-21 financial year;*
 - (e) *0% increase to Council Fees and Charges in the 2020-21 financial year; and*
 - (f) *Rates Payment Arrangement Fee and Interest Waiver in the 2020-21 financial year;*
2. *Adopt the COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy as shown in the attachment 2 to this report;*
3. *Notes the following initiatives detailed in the attached COVID-19 Support Package:*
 - (a) *Delivery of Virtual Library Services;*
 - (b) *Delivery of Virtual Recreation Services;*
 - (c) *Implementation of a Social Connection Program;*
 - (d) *Increased flexible payment options for Ratepayers and Debtors;*
 - (e) *Council's previous decision to waive penalty interest on any remaining outstanding 2019-20 Rates and suspend any new debt collection activities;*
 - (f) *Refunds of cancelled bookings at Shire-owned facilities;*

- (g) Provision of advocacy for the Shire and the wider Kimberley region; and
- (h) Provision of information and news to residents of the district and the wider Kimberley region.

4. Notes the allocation of \$141,987.85 towards the Shire's COVID-19 Community Support Grant Program comprising \$80,000 from the 2019-20 Community Sponsorship Program and \$61,987.85 from the Community Sponsorship Program;
5. Approves the transfer of \$61,987.85 from Account 100002110 Community Sponsorship Reserve to Account 100221720 Community Sponsorship Program for the purpose of funding the Shire's COVID-19 Community Support Grant Program;
6. Notes the decision to freeze any incremental increase in salaries of contracted staff for the period February 2020 to February 2021 in recognition of the current economic climate; and
7. Notes the casual salary savings resulting from the closure of Shire facilities during the pandemic.

(ABSOLUTE MAJORITY REQUIRED)

Attachments

1. PREMIER'S CORRESPONDENCE REQUESTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT RATE FEE AND CHARGE FREEZE
2. COVID-19 SUPPORT PACKAGE
3. COVID-19 NON-GOVERNMENT LEASED PROPERTY REVIEW (*Confidential to Councillors and Directors Only*)

This attachment is confidential in accordance with section 5.23(2) of the Local Government Act 1995 section 5.23(2)((e)(iii)) as it contains "a matter that if disclosed, would reveal information about the business, professional, commercial or financial affairs of a person, where the information is held by, or is about, a person other than the local government".

4. DRAFT COVID-19 FINANCIAL HARDSHIP POLICY



Premier of Western Australia

Mayor Tracey Roberts JP
President
Western Australian Local Government Association
PO Box 1544
WEST PERTH WA 6872

Dear Mayor *Tracey* Roberts

COVID - 19

Western Australia has joined forces with other States and the Commonwealth as part of a national response to combat the spread of COVID-19 across our community.

Last week I released the updated Western Australian Pandemic Plan (Plan) in direct response to the potential impacts of COVID-19.

A Public Health Emergency and a State of Emergency for Western Australia has now been declared. Also, restrictions have been placed on gatherings of over 500 people, people arriving from overseas are required to self-isolate for 14 days and a ban has been placed on cruise ship arrivals for 30 days.

As the situation develops other measures will have to be taken.

During this period local governments and local government leaders will have an important role to play, not only fulfilling responsibilities under the Plan, but also providing leadership in their communities to help people through this difficult time.

Many of the restrictions being put into place will have economic and financial implications for businesses and families.

To ease the financial pressures on families, the State Government yesterday took the decision to freeze all Household Tariffs, Fees and charges in 2020-21.

Local government can also play a significant role to relieve pressure on families and businesses. Local government rates form a significant part of family and business expenses. Rate relief will further assist with these pressures.

I am requesting that you seek your members support and action to unilaterally freeze all Local Government Household Rates, Fees and Charges in 2020-21.

Combined, these measures will provide relief to families and business from the impacts of the spread of COVID-19.

Yours sincerely

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COVID-19 Support Package
Stage 1

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Foreword

The Shire of Broome acknowledges the significant public health and economic implications associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Economically, this issue represents the greatest challenge to the worldwide economy since the Global Financial Crisis in 2008.

At a local level, the district is already experiencing the impacts of COVID-19. Engagement with our community and business members indicates considerable concern around:

- Restricted travel between WA, the Kimberley Region and between local government areas in the Kimberley Region
- Business closures (particularly in the tourism industry)
- Increased unemployment
- Forced closure of pubs, places of worship, gyms, sporting venues, cinemas, salons and others
- Restricted trading conditions for restaurants and cafes
- Cancellation of all cruise ship visits
- Cancellation of events
- Restrictions of gatherings of more than two people
- People working from home

The Shire of Broome understands the deep concern organisations have regarding employee retention, revenue, health and safety matters, as well as the ability to plan for continued disruptions to trade and service provision.

The Federal Government and State Government have both announced packages to provide relief in response to COVID-19.

The Shire of Broome acknowledges it also has an important role to play at a local level. Council is taking swift action to introduce significant support packages for ratepayers, community groups and small businesses in response to the global coronavirus pandemic.

The initiatives will be rolled out in stages to enable immediate (support) and longer term (recovery) assistance to provide relief to business, community groups, not-for-profits and individuals experiencing crisis.



Package Summary and Approach

The Shire of Broome has assessed a range of initiatives to support the community in terms of impact and value.

The packages will be rolled out in stages to enable immediate action in the current phase of the COVID-19 situation, with our Stage 1 focus being on Support. Further work will occur to roll out longer term initiatives to address the recovery and rebound phase post the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

The Shire of Broome has taken a broad approach to identifying initiatives within our purview, which have both direct and indirect value and impact on individuals, community groups and business. The Stage 1 package includes outward facing initiatives with immediate and mid-term cost saving, grant opportunities, and re-purposed facilitation and service delivery roles. The initiatives touch on rates, payments, influence, leadership, and broad and timely communication. Furthermore, the Shire of Broome hopes to support individuals and our community groups in this difficult time through use of technology, collaboration and outreach to vulnerable community members.

This report outlines each initiative with a summary, how we intend to fund the activity, intended impact, timeframes and the team(s) within the Shire of Broome who will have responsibility to deliver.

This is a living strategy that will be frequently up-dated in line with the COVID-19 situation and as Council's decisions come to hand.

Stage 1 Initiatives

This section highlights the Shire of Broome's Stage 1 initiatives that focus on supporting our rate payers and local organisations during the COVID-19 crisis.

Initiative
Rent Relief and Flexible Payment Options for Property Tenants
Freezing Rates in 2020-2021
Shire of Broome COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy
Increased Debtor Payment Options
Freezing Shire of Broome Fees and Charges
Waive Penalty Interest and Suspension of New Debt Collection
Waive 2020-2021 Rate Payment Arrangement Fees and Interest
Refunds on Cancelled Bookings at Shire-owned Facilities
Regional Advocacy
Provision of Information and News
Database of State and Federal Business Support Packages
COVID-19 Community Support Grants Program
Virtual Library Services
Virtual Recreation Services
Social Connection Program

Rent Relief and Flexible Payment Options for Property Tenants

Summary

The Shire of Broome has several land and property holdings, with many of these leased to Government, commercial, not-for-profit and community tenants. The Shire has received requests for rent relief from many of the tenants affected by the current COVID-19 situation.

The Shire of Broome is investigating options to support tenants in Shire owned properties in a response to the impacts of COVID-19. Several support measures have been assessed consistent with the State Government's approach to their tenants. Support measures considered include:

- Flexible payment options, including rent deferral and freezes
- Waived / Partially waived rental payments

These considerations have been assessed in relation to not-for-profit and community organisations as well as across small, medium and large businesses. Government tenants have not been considered as part of this initiative. Consideration was given to options, commencing from March 2020, which are detailed below -

1. Option 1 – Defer rental payments for all non-government Shire of Broome tenants for six (6) months.
2. Option 2 – Waive rental payments for all non-government Shire of Broome tenants for six (6) months.
3. Option 3 – Waive 50% rental payments for all non-government Shire of Broome tenants for six (6) months.
4. Option 4 – Waive rental payments for all small, medium and not-for-profit tenants for six (6) months and defer rental payments for large business tenants for six (6) months.
5. Option 5 – Delegate to the Chief Executive Officer to individually negotiate with non-government tenants to a capped outcome of 50% waiver of rental payments for a period of six (6) months, on a case-by-case basis.

How we will fund this initiative

By implementing this initiative, the Shire will forego rental revenue. This will negatively impact the end of financial year position and would need to be considered through regular review of the financial position.

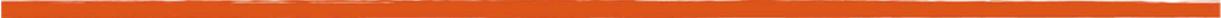
Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT and RECOVERY

The Shire of Broome aims to assist in a cost saving for businesses and community groups currently leasing Shire of Broome properties. This will impact 26 organisations across the townsite and include those in the impacted and critical hospitality, tourism and not-for-profit sector.

The recommendation is to progress with Option 5, which would see the Shire of Broome forego a maximum of approximately \$170,000 in rental income over the following six months.

The rent relief will build on the recently announced moratorium of leases for non-payment of rent for six (6) months for commercial tenancies suffering financial distress in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Shire of Broome foregoes this income for its assets, this initiative supports businesses that are integral to the fabric of Broome and assists these businesses during a period of hibernation or innovation.



Timeline

A Council decision in April 2020 will permit backdating of the initiative to March 2020 and provide instant and ongoing relief for six (6) months for impacted businesses.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Infrastructure – Property and Leasing

Additional information

Currently, options being considered include –

- Deferral
- Freeze
- Lease Holiday
- Period of initiative

Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer to approve appropriate rent relief and flexible payment options to a capped amount for non-government tenants will allow for a quick implementation of this initiative.

Freezing Rates in 2020-2021

Summary

Council's Long-Term Financial Plan has a moderate increase in rates each year. For the 2020-2021 Annual Budget no rate increase will be applied. This will assist all Shire of Broome ratepayers.

How we will fund this initiative

For the 2020-2021 Annual budget the rate increase assumption under the Shire of Broome's Long-Term Financial Plan was estimated to generate approximately an additional \$400,000 in revenue towards initiatives in the district. Through a reallocation of resources, and careful fiscal management, a curtailed program will be delivered to offset the decrease in revenue.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT AND RECOVERY

The Shire of Broome will assist in a cost saving role by freezing rates and ensuring no additional financial burden is placed on ratepayers in the 2020-2021 financial year.

Timeline

A Council decision in April 2020 will come into effect in the 2020-2021 Annual Budget.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Finance

Shire of Broome COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy

Summary

The initiative involves updating the Shire of Broome's Financial Hardship Framework specific to COVID-19 financial hardship considerations. The WA Local Government Association (WALGA) has developed a COVID-19 Hardship Policy recommended for adoption by local governments, with consideration to individual area requirements.

How we will fund this initiative

The updating of the Shire's Financial Hardship Framework has no material expense associated with it. The actual budget impact, through the adoption of the WALGA hardship recommendations is difficult to estimate and will be dependent on the overarching impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT and RECOVERY

The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role by ensuring we offer fair, equitable, consistent and dignified support to rates debtors suffering financial hardship as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while treating all members of the community with respect and understanding at this difficult time.

Timeline

A Council decision in April 2020 will permit commencement in April 2020, with a guaranteed commitment to deliver this initiative through to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Governance
- Finance

Increased Debtor Payment Options

Summary

The provision of additional flexible and adaptable payment arrangement options to assist debtors to meet their financial obligations will ease the mental burden of those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

How we will fund this initiative

There is no intention to simply write-off debts as an outcome of this initiative. Instead, active pursuit of outstanding debts will ease, and arrangements considered and implemented.

Shire cashflow may become a consideration with the implementation of this initiative, and this will be carefully monitored.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT and RECOVERY

The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role by increasing the payment options available to debtors. This will allow debtors to meet their obligations in a manner flexible to their needs thus reducing financial stress.

Additionally, the Shire is waiving payment arrangement fees and reducing payment arrangement interest to further reduce financial strain.

Penalty interest will still be applied to outstanding debts in 2020-2021 where debtors have not entered payment arrangements with the Shire.

Timeline

A Council decision in April 2020 will permit commencement in April 2020, with a guaranteed commitment to deliver this initiative through to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Finance

Freezing Shire of Broome Fees and Charges

Summary

Council's Long-Term Financial Plan has a moderate increase in fees and charges each year. For the 2020-2021 Annual Budget there will be no increase in fees and charges. This will assist all Shire of Broome ratepayers and residents.

How we will fund this initiative

For the 2020-2021 Annual budget the fees and charges increase are estimated to generate an additional \$150,000 in revenue towards initiatives in the district. Through a reallocation of resources, and careful fiscal management, a curtailed program could be delivered to offset the decrease in revenue.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT AND RECOVERY

The Shire of Broome will assist in a cost saving role by freezing fees and charges and ensuring no additional financial burden is placed on ratepayers and residents in the 2020-2021 financial year.

Timeline

A Council decision in April 2020 will come into effect in the 2020-2021 Annual Budget year.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Finance

Waive Penalty Interest and Suspension of New Debt Collection

Summary

Council has already approved the waiving of penalty interest on remaining outstanding rates for the 2019-2020 financial year and paused all new debt collection activities. This will continue into the 2020-2021 financial year.

How we will fund this initiative

For the 2020-2021 financial year the waiving of penalty interest, instalment interest and administration charges will result in a revenue decrease of approximately \$107,000.

There remains approximately \$1.5 million of outstanding unpaid rates comprised of \$1.3 million relating to the 2019-2020 year and \$220,000 relating to previous years. The suspension of debt collection will result in some of these outstanding rates not being collected, which will impact the interest that would have been generated on those revenues. It is forecast there will be an approximate \$13,000 in lost interest earnings through to the end of the financial year.

The combined loss of revenue and interest totals \$120,000.

At this time, it is expected operational savings associated with the closing of facilities and scaling back of operations will cover this reduction in revenue.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT AND RECOVERY

The Shire of Broome will assist in a cost saving role by providing respite to ratepayers with remaining outstanding 2019-2020 rate debts. Ratepayers will not be charged penalty interest on any remaining outstanding 2019-2020 rate debt owing, commencing April 2020.

New debt collection processes will also be delayed providing relief for those having difficulty in paying outstanding 2019-2020 rate debts. This may be reassessed prior to the end of the 2019-2020 financial year.

It is not recommended debt collection processes be paused in the 2020-2021 financial year. Ratepayers experiencing financial hardship will instead be encouraged to submit a hardship application as per the proposed COVID-19 Hardship Policy being considered by Council as part of this item.

Waiving penalty interest and postponement of debt recovery on remaining outstanding rate debts in 2019-2020 will result in these funds staying in the hands of ratepayers at this time of need.

Timeline

This initiative is already activated.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Finance

Waive 2020-2021 Rate Payment Arrangement Fees and Interest

Summary

By removing rate payment arrangement administration fees and interest for the 2020-2021 financial year additional funds are likely to flow into the local economy and community financial stress lessened.

How we will fund this initiative

For the 2020-2021 financial year this initiative will generate an estimated reduction in revenue of approximately \$210,000, comprised of \$150,000 revenue reduction associated with a waiver of interest and \$60,000 revenue reduction due to waiving payment arrangement fees.

At this time, it is expected operational savings associated with the closing of facilities and scaling back of operations will cover this reduction in revenue.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT and RECOVERY

The Shire of Broome will assist in a cost saving role by reducing the financial impost associated with entering Rates payment arrangements with the Shire. Payment arrangement fees and interest will be waived for the 2020-2021 financial year.

Timeline

A Council decision in April 2020 will come into effect in the 2020-2021 Annual Budget.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Finance

Refunds on Cancelled Bookings at Shire-owned Facilities

Summary

Where the Shire of Broome has received pre-payment for an event or service that has been cancelled, refunds will be processed administratively to comply with the Shire of Broome's common law obligations. The Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre is offering several options for customers including refunds, credits and "holding periods" for memberships and programs. This provides flexibility and will also reduce the administrative impact for the organisation.

How we will fund this initiative

Refunds will be funded from payments already received by the Shire of Broome. Where possible, the Shire is also working with applicants to reschedule and credit event fees if this is a suitable option.

There are times throughout the year the Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre bookings are made, programs are cancelled, or memberships need to cease. In these instances, the refunds are generated from a specific account and paid to the customer. The cost of the refunds / reimbursements is counteracted by the income that has been paid by the customer and reflected in the appropriate income account.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT and RECOVERY

This initiative demonstrates the Shire of Broome's understanding and support of the unexpected circumstances now impacting events, programs and other bookings.

The Shire of Broome Events and Bookings area has prided itself on achieving a high level of customer satisfaction. The provision of quick and responsive customer service in this instance will assist in meeting the needs of event applicants and other customers.

Recognising the importance of events to community and economic development, the Shire is focused on maintaining good communication and relationships with various event managers. This will enable the Shire of Broome to work closely with all stakeholders as part of the recovery phase.

To date, the value of refunds and credits totals \$25,000.

Timeline

Following State and Federal Government decrees on non-essential gatherings, officers have been able to reschedule events or provide credits in line with the evolving situation. Officers have commenced refunds and continue to process those still outstanding.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre
- Broome Civic Centre
- Community and Economic Development

Regional Advocacy

Summary

During the COVID-19 pandemic, decisions are being made by State and Federal Government regarding the Kimberley region. The proactive provision of two-way information to community and decision makers for policy, regulation, program development, and project investment has proven both timely and effective for the prioritisation of meaningful actions in the region.

How we will fund this initiative

There is no additional expense associated with this initiative.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT and RECOVERY

The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role to make representation to decision makers for the needs of the district for strong community and economic outcomes. This requires the Shire of Broome to –

- Be both agile and flexible to react in the support phase of the COVID-19 situation, and be strategic and proactive in the recovery phase
- Partner with district and regional stakeholders to provide consistent advice and input for effective and prompt decision making
- Have projects ready for funding opportunities
- Have statistics and case study information collected to support advocacy claims

The Shire of Broome's role in this space has already resulted in swift Government responses and commitments. The Kimberley Zone had one strong and consistent voice to advocate for regional border restrictions and take-away liquor restrictions. These were implemented in the Kimberley ahead of all other regions.

Timeline

This initiative is already activated.

Responsibility area(s)

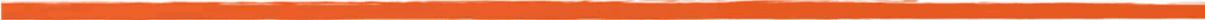
The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Office of the Chief Executive Officer

Additional information

The Shire of Broome is partnering with these regional organisations –

- Kimberley Zone (four Kimberley Local Government Authorities)
- Kimberley Development Commission
- Regional Development Australia Kimberley
- Nyamba-Buru-Yawuru
- AusIndustry / Office of Northern Australia
- Broome Future Alliance

- 
- ◆ Broome Chamber of Commerce
 - ◆ Local Members of Parliament
 - ◆ State Government Cabinet Ministers

The Shire of Broome is partnering with district and regional stakeholders for strong community and economic outcomes.

Provision of Information and News

Summary

The State and Federal Governments are the lead agencies in relation to the COVID-19 response and, as such, handle all communication and messaging to the public.

The Shire of Broome recognises the community looks to it for guidance and has been proactive in supplying as much information to residents as possible. This will continue, with information regularly made available to the community, despite much of the content being national / state decisions where the Shire of Broome has no jurisdiction over or say in.

The Shire has compiled a Frequently Asked Questions page on the Shire website, which is updated as soon as new information is available. The feedback on this page has been positive from the community, who have started to realise it is a reputable and trustworthy source of up-to-date information. This ever-expanding list of questions and answers will provide the community with the latest information in relation to specific topics and should be the go-to area for local COVID-19 information.

On top of this, the marketing and communications coordinator has been providing timely updates for the last month on social media channels (such as Facebook and Twitter), in the Broome Advertiser's 'Shire News' page each fortnight and through e-newsletters.

As Secretariat of the Kimberley Zone, the Shire of Broome provides this information for the benefit of all member Councils and ensures there is consistent messaging across the Kimberley from all local governments.

How we will fund this initiative

There is no additional expense associated with this initiative.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT

The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role to ensure the Broome community is kept abreast of the latest information, in a timely fashion.

There is a lot of misinformation on platforms, such as Facebook, and as such the Shire of Broome wants to ensure there is a dependable source open and available to residents.

While other sources, such as the State and Federal Government websites, news outlets and the WA Premier's Facebook page, are good avenues for people to be informed, the Shire feels a local information source will help ease tension and anxiety in the community.

The Shire also takes the view repeating accurate information in as many official channels as possible will play a role in drowning out misinformation or speculation on social media.

Timeline

This initiative is already activated.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Communications and Marketing

Database of State and Federal Business Support Packages

Summary

The creation of information circulation channels, during these uncertain and constantly changing times, through the Shire of Broome website, Frequently Asked Questions and the Shire of Broome Facebook site are considered a vital service for all.

How we will fund this initiative

Council Officers within the organisation will be, and have already been, repurposed towards ensuring the continued delivery of this initiative.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT

The Shire of Broome assists in a facilitation and service delivery role in circulating up-to-date information and direction to local businesses to access available State and Federal Government support programs.

Shire Officers will partner with the Broome Chamber of Commerce and Broome Future Alliance to ensure efficient and consistent distribution of this information amongst business networks.

As Secretariat of the Kimberley Zone, the Shire of Broome is also able to provide this information for the benefit of all member Councils and ensure there is consistent messaging across the Kimberley from all local governments.

Timeline

This initiative has already commenced. The database updated weekly and is being uploaded on the Shire of Broome website.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Community and Economic Development
- Communications and Marketing

COVID-19 Community Support Grants Program

Summary

The development of a grants program targeting strong community outcomes and supporting local community organisations (e.g. sporting clubs etc.), not-for-profits, charities and community service providers during the COVID-19 pandemic will help focus the community and continue to provide opportunities for collaboration and engagement.

Many of these organisations have lost their fundraising capabilities with the restrictions applied to social gatherings and their ability to deliver their services to community members in need. Delivering services to mental health, disabled, seniors and socio-economically disadvantaged members of the community has also been severely compromised by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The grants will be directed to eligible organisations to deliver –

- Community services
- Events
- Innovative program delivery

How we will fund this initiative

The funding sources that have been identified for potential reallocation includes the Community Sponsorship 2019-2020 allocation:

- Municipal budget \$80,000
- Community Sponsorship Reserve \$60,000

The direct dollar value of this initiative is approximately \$140,000.

The Community Ad Hoc Sponsorship and Community Annual Matched Funding programs are currently live. Council will need to review these considering the current situation.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT and RECOVERY

The Shire of Broome will assist with a direct financial contribution to community organisations. A program total of \$100,000 could effectively impact 20 – 50 local community organisations (e.g. sporting clubs etc.), not-for-profits, charities and community service providers with a one-off grant ranging between \$2,000 and \$5,000.

The Shire of Broome is also investigating the opportunity to partner with corporate organisations for direct impact to disadvantaged families. One concept includes purchasing telephones, laptops and data credit (capped) and have them made available to community members through an expression of interest process. This will target those families that are isolating and have limited means to stay connected via tools that are commonly available to others. The impact of such a program is two-fold – direct local economic expenditure in purchasing the equipment / assets, and direct social outcomes for disadvantaged community members during the COVID-19 crisis.

Timeline

A Council decision in April 2020 will permit implementation in May 2020 and operate until funds are exhausted.



Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Community and Economic Development

Additional information

Guidelines will be required to be established, with a 'Plain Speak' application form. An assessment process, with delegation to the Chief Executive Officer to approve funding will allow for a quick distribution of funds.

Virtual Library Services

Summary

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Broome Library has quickly recalibrated its services to include –

- Delivery of live and pre-recorded library programs (e.g. Baby Rhyme Time etc.) through online modes such as Facebook Live
- Ongoing promotion and assistance for community members to access the e-resources catalogue.

How we will fund this initiative

Council Officers within the organisation will be repurposed towards ensuring the continued delivery of this initiative. Additional expense not already included in the 2019-2020 Annual Budget, of approximately \$10,000 is required to deliver this initiative in full, with these funds readily able to be sourced from savings generated from the physical closure of the Broome Library.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT

The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role in supporting and connecting the community with programs, initiatives and continued access to resources.

The library plays a vital role in the lives of many community members, and the continuity of the service is considered important. The value of this initiative is expected to be demonstrated through a positive impact on the social fabric of the community.

Timeline

This initiative has already commenced and has been well attended (virtually).

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Community and Economic Development

Additional information

Additional programs are being investigated for future engagement.

Virtual Recreation Services

Summary

This initiative will enable Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre members and Broome residents to participate in fitness activities whilst maintaining social distancing.

Initially, the regular Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre programs will be available, such as Circuit Classes and Yoga, and as ongoing progress is made, an abbreviated version of aqua fitness will be explored for home pools.

How we will fund this initiative

Council Officers within the organisation will be repurposed towards ensuring the continued delivery of this initiative. No additional expense to the 2019-2020 Annual Budget is expected.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT

The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role in keeping people active when programs and facilities are not otherwise available.

Exercise is an important aspect of a person's health and wellbeing, and this program will allow them to undertake their regular classes and interact with Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre instructors on a virtual level.

Timeline

This initiative has already commenced.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Broome Recreation and Aquatic Centre

Social Connection Program

Summary

Many people are struggling to remain connected while observing the imposed social distancing requirements. An ongoing virtual community development and support program is envisaged featuring –

- Short videos and segments to empower community members to look out for one another
- Provide suggestions for activities during isolation
- Promote Shire of Broome services and role of different team members
- Marketing initiatives to increase community connections and encourage neighbours to connect through exchange of details / contact

How we will fund this initiative

Council Officers within the organisation will be repurposed towards ensuring the continued delivery of this initiative. No additional expense to the 2019-2020 Annual Budget is expected.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT

The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role in maintaining and strengthening community connection during this current period where people are impacted by self-isolation, quarantine and other restrictions due to COVID 19 – which negatively impact the community's ability to interact in a normal manner.

The value of this initiative is expected to be demonstrated through a positive impact on the social fabric of the community.

Timeline

This initiative has already commenced.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Community and Economic Development

Additional information

Additional programs are being investigated for future engagement.

Additional Activity

Freezing Contracted Staff Salaries and Savings from Casual Staff

Summary

The Shire of Broome has a small contracted workforce comprising of senior staff including the Chief Executive Officer, Directors and the management team. In Council's Long-Term Financial Plan and budget documents there is an allowance for a moderate increase in contracted staff salaries to reward performance and to ensure senior staff salaries are competitive with other local governments.

A decision has been made to freeze any incremental increases to contracted staff salaries from February 2020 for 12 months to release funds to assist with community support efforts associated with COVID-19.

Facility closures across the Shire have resulted in casual staff not being required for operational activities and services. This has resulted in salary savings. These savings will be utilised to offset costs associated with support and recovery efforts.

How we will fund this initiative

For the remainder of the 2019-2020 financial year this freeze on salary increases will result in a saving of \$15,000. Across a full calendar year savings of \$37,000 are expected.

Savings attributed to casual salary savings are projected to be \$110,000 for the remainder of the 2019-2020 financial year. Savings in 2020-2021 will be in the vicinity of \$37,000 per month. Although it is unknown when these services will be reinstated it is estimated these savings will be expected for at least 3 (three) months through to the end of September 2020, resulting in a further \$111,000 in salary savings in the 2020-2021 financial year.

Value and impact assessment

- COVID-19 Phase: SUPPORT

The Shire of Broome will assist in a facilitation and service delivery role by reducing contract staff salaries for the 12 month period from February 2020 through to February 2021. Savings resulting from casual staff salaries will be redirected to help fund the various initiatives outlined in the COVID-19 Support Package.

Timeline

Freezes of contracted staff salaries will be backdated to February 2020 and will be in place for a 12 month period. Casual salary savings will be allocated through regular reviews of the financial position process however will be available to offset initiatives following a decision of Council in April.

Responsibility area(s)

The area(s) of the Shire of Broome responsible for the delivery of this initiative include –

- Finance
- People and Culture

Planning, Building and Environmental Health Considerations

Public health measures have impacted and restricted normal business operations. Many businesses are looking for alternative operating models and ensuring the planning system can consider these will require flexibility and agility.

The Department of Planning Lands and Heritage prepared amendments to the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 which were gazetted on the 3 April 2020. The new provisions give the ability for the Minister for Planning to issue 'a notice of exemption' from planning requirements during a State of Emergency declaration, which includes the current declaration in relation to COVID-19. The notice of exemptions will apply to Local Planning Schemes through the Deemed Provisions. The exemption notice can only be issued by the Minister considers it necessary to do so for the purposes of facilitating a response to, or recovery from, the emergency the subject of the declaration.

The notice of exemption is in the process of being drafted and may include the following:

- Exemptions to obtain development approval where proposal relates to medical or health related activities with a response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Exemptions for certain types of land uses within specified zones from the need to obtain development approval, expiring 90 days after the date the State of Emergency declaration ceases.
- Exemptions from any conditions of development approval restricting loading or unloading times for delivery of goods or fuel for premises which sell goods or petrol, expiring 90 days after the date the State of Emergency declaration ceases.
- Non-conforming uses that may have to cease during the State of Emergency, will preserve the non-conforming use rights if the use is unable to operate because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In relation to an approved development, exemptions from the requirement to substantially commence development, a new deadline for substantial commencement is substituted, being the original deadline plus a further period of 2 years.

This will be communicated in more detail as the State Government approves the regulatory amendments.

The Department of Mines, Industry and Regulation (which includes the Building Commission) are in the process of introducing a 'COVID-19 economic and health relief package' and the regulatory changes are in the process of being drafted. Changes are likely to include:

- Fees will be waived for 12 months for all new applications and renewals of building industry registrations, including contractors and practitioners in the Builders, Building Surveyors, Painters and Owner Builders categories (note this is not anticipated to include regulated building permit application fees or the Building Services Levies).
- It will be for all operatives (not just small and medium businesses).
- The term of all current building industry registrations will be extended for 12 months (effectively a 12-month extension of the anniversary date for all current registrations).

The Shire of Broome is also investigating how we can assist mobile food vendors. As part of the review of the trading requirements for these vendors, the Shire of Broome will work with vendors to discuss options of establishing temporary trading locations and times for alternative operations while one-off events and routine market trading opportunities, such as the Broome Markets, are not occurring.



COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy

X.X.X

Policy Objective

To give effect to our commitment to support the whole community to meet the unprecedented challenges arising from the COVID19 pandemic, the Shire of Broome recognises that these challenges will result in financial hardship for our ratepayers.

This Policy is intended to ensure that we offer fair, equitable, consistent and dignified support to ratepayers suffering hardship, while treating all members of the community with respect and understanding at this difficult time.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to:

1. Outstanding rates and service charges as at the date of adoption of this policy; and
2. Rates and service charges levied for the 2020/21 financial year.

It is a reasonable community expectation, as we deal with the effects of the pandemic that those with the capacity to pay rates will continue to do so. For this reason, the Policy is not intended to provide rate relief to ratepayers who are not able to evidence financial hardship resulting from the impact of COVID-19. The statutory provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* and *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996* will apply.

Policy Statement

1. Payment difficulties, hardship and vulnerability¹

Payment difficulties, or short-term financial hardship, occur where a change in a person's circumstances result in an inability to pay a rates or service charge debt.

Financial hardship occurs where a person is unable to pay rates and service charges without affecting their ability to meet their basic living needs, or the basic living needs of their dependants. The Shire of Broome recognises the likelihood that

¹ Adapted from the Ombudsman Western Australia publication, **Local government collection of overdue rates for people in situations of vulnerability: Good Practice Guidance:** <http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/>

COVID19 will increase the occurrence of payment difficulties, financial hardship and vulnerability in our community. This policy is intended to apply to all ratepayers experiencing financial hardship regardless of their status, be they a property owner, tenant, business owner etc.

2. Anticipated Financial Hardship due to COVID19

We recognise that many ratepayers are already experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19. We respect and anticipate the probability that additional financial difficulties will arise when their rates are received.

We will write to ratepayers at the time their account falls into arrears, to advise them of the terms of this policy and encourage eligible ratepayers to apply for hardship consideration. Where possible and appropriate, we will also provide contact information for a recognised financial counsellor and/or other relevant support services.

3. Financial Hardship Criteria

While evidence of hardship will be required (as per the Shire's current requirements set out in Business Operating Procedure 2.1.8 Financial Hardship), we recognise that not all circumstances are alike. We will take a flexible approach to a range of individual circumstances including, but not limited to, the following situations resulting from the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Recent unemployment or under-employment;
- Sickness or recovery from sickness;
- Low income or loss of income;
- Unanticipated circumstances such as caring for and supporting extended family.

Ratepayers are encouraged to provide any information about their individual circumstances that may be relevant for assessment. This may include demonstrating a capacity to make some payment and where possible, entering into a payment arrangement. We will consider all circumstances, applying the principles of fairness, integrity and confidentiality whilst complying our statutory responsibilities.

4. Payment Arrangements

Payment arrangements facilitated in accordance with section 6.49 of the *Local Government Act 1995* are of an agreed frequency and amount. These arrangements will consider the following:

- That a ratepayer has made genuine effort to meet rate and service charge obligations in the past;
- The payment arrangement will establish a known end date that is realistic and achievable, and will ideally allow the ratepayer to finalise payment within the 2020-21 financial year;
- The ratepayer will be responsible for informing the Shire of Broome of any change in circumstance that jeopardises the agreed payment schedule.

In the case of severe financial hardship, we reserve the right to consider waiving additional charges or interest (excluding the late payment interest applicable to the Emergency Services Levy).

5. Interest Charges

A ratepayer that meets the Financial Hardship Criteria and enters into a payment arrangement will not be charged a payment arrangement fee and payment arrangement interest will also be waived. Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis.

6. Deferment of Rates

Deferment of rates may apply for ratepayers who have a Pensioner Card, State Concession Card or Seniors Card and Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card registered on their property. The deferred rates balance:

- remains as a debt on the property until paid;
- becomes payable in full upon the passing of the pensioner or if the property is sold or if the pensioner ceases to reside in the property;
- may be paid at any time, BUT the concession will not apply when the rates debt is subsequently paid (deferral forfeits the right to any concession entitlement); and
- does not incur penalty interest charges.

7. Debt recovery

We will suspend our debt recovery processes whilst negotiating a suitable payment arrangement with a debtor. Where a debtor is unable to make payments in accordance with the agreed payment plan and the debtor advises us and makes an alternative plan, then we will continue to suspend debt recovery processes.

Rates and service charge debts that remain outstanding at the end of the 2021/22 financial year will be subject to the rates debt recovery procedures prescribed in the *Local Government Act 1995*.

8. Review

We will establish a mechanism for the review of decisions made under this policy and advise the applicant of their right to seek review, and the procedure to be followed.

9. Communication and Confidentiality

We will maintain confidential communications at all times and we undertake to communicate with a nominated support person or other third party at your request.

We will advise ratepayers of this policy and its application, when communicating in any format (i.e. verbal or written) with a ratepayer that has an outstanding rates or service charge debt.

We recognise that applicants for hardship consideration may be experiencing additional stress and may have complex needs. We will provide additional time to respond to communication and will communicate in alternative formats where appropriate. We will ensure all communication with applicants is clear and respectful.

Compliance Requirements

LEGISLATION

- **Local Government Act 1995**
- **Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996**

Document Control					
Document Responsibilities:					
Owner:	Director Services	Corporate	Owner Unit:	Business	Finance
Reviewer:	Manager Finance		Decision Maker:	Council	
Document Management:					
Adoption Details			Review Frequency:	Annual	Next Due: 2021
Review Version	Decision Reference:		Synopsis:		
Date Printed					

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6.2 OUR PLACE

There are no reports in this section.

6.3 OUR PROSPERITY

There are no reports in this section.

6.4 OUR ORGANISATION

There are no reports in this section.

7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

There are no reports in this section.

8. MATTERS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

9. MEETING CLOSURE