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*Minutes
Councillor Briefing Session
Tuesday 22 March 2011
5.00pm Council Chambers*

01 Opening of Meeting

The Mayor welcomed members and declared the meeting open at 5.00pm

02 Record of Attendance

Members Cr Keith Sullivan, Mayor - Chair
 Cr John McMahon, Deputy Mayor (from 5.20pm)
 Cr Ian Doney
 Cr Don Fitzpatrick
 Cr Neil Francis
 Cr Kerry Gibbons
 Cr Clive McCarthy
 Cr Bob O'Bernier

Officers Leanne Mash, General Manager
 Leigh Robins, Director of Engineering
 John Chapman, Director of Corporate Services
 Mark Dicker, Acting Director of Development
 Sharon Swannell, Executive Assistant

Apologies Councillor Zsuzsanna Handelsmann

1. Oberon Heritage and Collectors Club - Highlands Steam and Vintage Fair

Mr Jim Hawkes and Mr David McMurray provided a presentation to Council regarding the Highland Steam and Vintage Fair.

The presentation provided a brief history of the Highland Steam and Vintage Fair.

The aims of the Oberon Heritage and Collectors Club are:

- To present the premier heritage event of its type in NSW.
- To engage other heritage groups and associations in the LGA to participate with displays and demonstrations.
- To engage all local associations to participate promoting their function in any manner they choose.
- To encourage the residents and businesses to engage with visitors in a way that shows the friendliness and simple pleasures of Oberon and highlight the tourism potential of the district by engaging with tourism operators and encouraging return visits.

The 2011 Highland Steam and Vintage Fair was very successful. This year's event experienced a 50% growth from the 2010 event and included more attractions and increased local participation.

The group then outlined their plans for future events. The committee intends implementing position descriptions for all committee members to ensure smooth running of future events. They also value Council as a partnering sponsor and hope to continue with this partnership into the future.

The Mayor asked the group for a clarification of the assistance they were seeking from Council.

Mr Hawkes advised that in the past Council had assisted with the event indirectly via funds contributed to the Oberon and Villages Summer Festival and had also contributed in kind support through the use of Council plant to move steam engines for the event.

Councillor Doney asked where the group see their greatest source of future revenue and what can Oberon and district provide your organisation to assist into the future?

Mr McMurray advised that partnering sponsors provided the largest portion of funding and gate takings also contributed to the running of the event. Growth will come from partnering sponsors into the future. The club do not wish to be dependent on the town for the event but recognise that they will need substantial funding assistance for a period of time until the event becomes more widely known. Promotion of the event is crucial for future growth.

2. Oberon Business Association

Mrs Helen Lowe provided information to Council regarding the activities of the Oberon Business Association. Mrs Lowe was accompanied by Kiera Simmons, Fran Charge and Tim Charge and passed on apologies from Andrew Bird who was unable to attend.

The role of the Oberon Business Association is to promote and support the business of Oberon and Oberon itself.

Mrs Lowe provided an outline of the group's current activities, which include:

- Oberon Local Phone Directory
- Shop Local Vouchers
- Christmas Lights Competition
- Oberon Business Awards

The group has in the past been involved with community action groups such as the "no amalgamation" group and lobbying for the upgrading of the Abercrombie Road. The group has recently been approached by the Oberon Aged Care Committee and OBA are willing to support projects of this nature.

The group are currently forming a committee to present Oberon at the 2011 Country and Regional Living Expo.

Councillor McCarthy commented on local businesses shutting for periods of time throughout the year and not providing later closing times during busy periods such as Christmas holidays. Councillor McCarthy requested this feedback be provided to local businesses. Mrs Lowe advised that the Business Association doesn't tell their members how to run their businesses.

Councillor Doney asked what the Business Association predicts for businesses in Oberon into the future?

OBA see a wider mix of businesses. The Timber industry is terribly important to the Oberon community and tourism is becoming increasingly important. The Festivals are seen as a way of binding together business and tourism.

3. Telstra Child Flight

Robbyn Brown provided a presentation to Council regarding the Telstra Child Flight service. The role of the service is to rapidly bring medical expertise to every child in NSW and the ACT who requires the service and then to safely and speedily transport them to a specialist hospital where the care they require can continue.

There are only 10 hospitals in NSW that deal with neo-natal and none of these are in rural NSW. Nepean Hospital is the closest facility to Oberon.

Telstra Child Flight operates 3 helicopters, 2 of which are in service and one as a back-up at any one time. The service operates 24 hours per day 7 days per week and provides world class intensive care treatment to infants from the minute they land.

The cost of providing the service is \$90 per minute which equates to between \$8,000 and \$16,000 per retrieval. The funding for the service is 58% Government fund and they need to raise between \$1.5 and \$2 million per annum to remain operational.

Lincoln Briffa is setting up a fundraising group in Oberon and would like to ask Council to assist the volunteer group with their set up costs. Telstra Child Flight asked to be included on charity fundraising days and events in the local community.

The General Manager advised that Council advertised for expressions of interest for groups who wished to be included for funding considerations during the 2011-12 budget period and undertook to forward this information to Robbyn.

4. Oberon Golf Club

Mr Ray Ross provided a presentation to Council regarding the Oberon Golf Clubs plans for the future. Mr Ross was accompanied by Dick O'Donnell, Helen Toohill, Margaret Ross and Ian McKenzie.

The Oberon Golf Club wish to seek Council's assistance to apply for a grant to enable them to bridge the gap between the existing club house and the scout hall and to refurbish the existing halls. This will create a workable clubhouse and a business with a greater viability and a pleasant function area for various groups in the area by providing a meeting place seating around 100 people.

The club has developed plans for this project and has also received numerous letters of support.

The Club is also seeking in kind support for items such as re-connection to the sewer and upgrading of the car parking area.

Councillor Doney asked is there a costing on what needs to be done?

Yes, but only on the preliminary plans drawn up by the Golf Club. The Board has now adopted a new plan but this is not costed yet. The cost to get the plans developed is \$2,500. They have received offers for donations of materials and volunteer labour to assist with the project.

Councillor Doney also asked what timeframe the project will take?

The committee advised eight to ten months if they receive grant funding but may take two to three years if suitable funding is not obtained.

The committee are seeking Council's assistance in identifying potential funding sources.

The General Manager undertook for staff to meet with the Board to see if Council could be of any assistance. A report will then be provided to Council with more detail regarding the proposal.

5. Oberon Arts Council

Chairperson, Fran Charge provided a presentation to Councillors outlining the importance of arts projects to the Oberon community. Mrs Charge was accompanied by Ray Ross, Ian and Elizabeth McKenzie, Margaret Grady, Brian and Sandra Harman, Helen and Austin Knight and Tim Charge.

The primary role of the Oberon Arts Council is to provide opportunities for the social inclusion of Oberon residents of all ages and those of the wider area, to participate in, engage with and practice arts, social and cultural activities.

The Oberon Arts Council supports the Oberon community through projects such as The Story of Oberon told through community art works now in place at the Oberon Common. These include the Terrazzo Tapestry Panels, the Diprotodont Mural Mosaic and the Heritage Memory Walls and Family Paver Project.

In the future the Arts Council plans to include additional pavers in the Oberon Common, complete the wall sculptures and an indigenous welcome rock structure. They have also been requested to complete a mural on the toilet block at the Oberon Common and have commenced the next stage of the Living Treasures project.

Council advised that it has previously resolved to develop an overall plan for the development of the Common area as there are several groups that have indicated a desire to carry out works in the area.

6. Bathurst Information and Neighbourhood Centre

Jean Fell from the Bathurst Information and Neighbourhood Centre (BINC) provided information to Councillors regarding the Community Builders funding that BINC has received to provide a Neighbourhood Centre for the Oberon community.

Ms Fell outlined the structure of the service that can be provided and the types of activities that can be undertaken. BINC aims to provide space that groups can access such as outreach services. They provide an information and referral service to enable members of the community to access available services such as migrant support services, services for frail aged and young people with disabilities.

Councillor O’Bernier what period of time the funding covers?

There has been \$45,000 allocated for the first year and \$27,000 is renewable which will provide a core ongoing service.

Councillor Doney asked how much part time work could be provided on an annual basis with the funding?

The funding should provide for 15 hours per week.

The service would like to utilise the facilities at the Oberon Community Centre as an inkind contribution by Council. These facilities are close to the main centre of Oberon and are accessible for the whole community. Discussion was held regarding the meeting space at the

CTC/VIC building, however the proximity to town is considered to be a drawback for this project.

The General Manager advised that a report will be provided to Council regarding the project and the use of Council facilities.

The Mayor asked if there was an opportunity for the service to be provided to the village areas such as Black Springs and Burruga?

This is recognised as an area of need and will be investigated, however travel has significant impacts on costs. It may be possible to combine with the Library Manager's visits to the villages to reduce the transport costs.

The Mayor advised that Council is forming a Seniors Welfare Committee and is currently lacking an understanding of the social security aspects that affect the seniors in the community. The Mayor asked Ms Fell if she knew anyone with this type of expertise could she please advise the General Manager.

The General Manager undertook to email information to Ms Fell regarding the structure of the Seniors Welfare Committee and what the committee is hoping to achieve.

7. Oberon Plateau Tourism Association (OPTA)

Chairman of OPTA Mr Brian Harman provided a presentation to Councillors regarding the activities of the organisation. Mr Harman was accompanied by Wayne Cooper, Tim Charge and Sandra Harman.

Mr Harman outlined the vision of OPTA. The organisation aims to increase visitation, support visitor experiences, promote 'living in Oberon', support the regional tourism organisation (Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Tourism), position OPTA as community focused, educate the community, work with Oberon Council and the Oberon Business Association and provide value to its members.

Mr Harman provided statistics regarding its membership and visitation to Oberon, including the economic value of tourism to the Oberon community. He also outlined the financial support OPTA has provided to Oberon and the wider community through sponsorship, advertising and promotion and other support.

OPTA provides considerable volunteer hours to support promotional activities such as the Farmers Markets, maintenance of the Website, Country and Regional Living Expo, Canberra Spring Home Show, Highlands Steam and Vintage Fair and Oberon Show.

Councillor Fitzpatrick asked how the statistics regarding the economic value of tourism to Oberon had been established. The statistics state that there are 60,000+ overnight visitors to Oberon per annum which equates to \$17 Million in tourism dollars for the area. Mr Harman strenuously defended the figures stating that they had been provided by the NSW Department of Tourism and that they had been sourced from a variety of areas including surveys, Tourism NSW statistics and separate independent research.

The General Manager will circulate the full report that these statistics have been extracted from.

Page 6 of the Minutes of the Councillor Briefing Session held at the Council Chambers, Oberon on Tuesday, 22 March 2011, commencing at 5.00pm.

Councillor Doney asked what OPTA believe visitors are coming to Oberon for? Are visitors giving an indication of what activities they want to see?

The Visitor Information Centre collect statistics regarding visitor enquiries and the largest request is for mushrooming.

Councillor Doney asked what additional services visitors are looking for?

Mountain bike tracks could be great for tourism. Also increased camping facilities and other services. The Noodling Patch is another great initiative for Oberon.

Councillor McCarthy left the meeting at 7.06pm.

8. Hightop FM

Mr Russell Merriman provided a presentation to Councillors regarding Hightop FM. Hightop FM has been active for the last 18 months mostly running “static broadcasts” at events such as the Oberon Farmers Markets, the Oberon Show and Highland Steam and Vintage Fair.

The group has been successful in obtaining two government grants which have allowed them to purchase the studio equipment used for the static broadcasts and to obtain the transmitter and other equipment needed to commence live broadcasts. They have also obtained a licenced frequency of 97.1 in the FM band.

It is the intention of Hightop FM 97.1 to be a local station with broadcast time being made available to emergency services and Council to fully inform local residents during events such as fire, storms, snow events and road closures.

The group would like to request Council's assistance with a room that can be used as a studio. They have identified a room underneath the Visitor Information Centre which is presently used as an unofficial storeroom. The use of this room would allow Hightop FM to commence transmissions at an early date.

The General Manager undertook to provide a report to Council which addresses aspects of the request, including the of having this space permanently utilised as well as security of the equipment, access to the building, conflict of use and the locality of the aerial.

This concluded the business and the meeting rose at 7.20pm.

Confirmed this _____ day of _____ 2011.

General Manager

Mayor