
This record is provided as a summary of the questions asked by members of the public during Public Question Time at a meeting of the Yarra City Council. This summary includes the original question, the response provided at the meeting and, where applicable, the response provided after the meeting to any question taken on notice (which is included in red text).

7.1 Mr Miles Lewis - Gas and Fuel Site - Porter Shed

Question:

I would like to ask the future of the GH porter building on the Council Depot in Queens Parade because I understand that Council is to vacate that land and a proposal to move the building. It would be much better to leave the building on the site and leave the State Government in charge of looking after it. It will be seriously damaged if it is going to be moved, it's the only example in the world of a building by GH Porter surviving.

Response:

The Director City Works and Assets advised that it is recognised that the porter shed has heritage status and will be protected. Council is committee of management for that land but ultimately is Crown land and if development proceeds we will need to vacate the entire site, so development may occur on that site. We are looking at appropriate sites in public open spaces in Yarra for that shed to be relocated, should that situation eventuate and will be doing that in consultation with the community and Heritage Victoria.

The Director Planning and Place Making advised that there is a process that's been underway with Places Victoria, well Places Victoria's process, they are considering a master plan and relocation of that shed is a consideration, whether that stays on site is a moot point and there has been no decision at this point in time. Until a master plan is fully prepared and accepted by this Council, ultimately Places Victoria and the Minister, it is a moot point.

7.2 Mr Simon Ryan - Building Notices

Question:

Would it be possible to add a planning application when a poster is put on a building, to have a visual representation of the proposed building as well? I think it would help a lot of people. I found it very difficult looking up the Council website assessing plans and having the time to go to Council.

Response:

The Director Planning and Place Making advised it has been a matter that has been considered before, a couple of aspects; planning applications range from e.g. front fence to a heritage area to a major building. A significant building has many plans and trying to provide representation of that in a simplistic way is difficult, certainly Council will have all planning applications online where people can access. Council's website is also being improved to ease with navigation. I can understand

some benefits but there are some logistics and disadvantages of it as well, but happy to consider it with the officers.

7.3 Ms Louise Elliott - Council Resolution on 19 September 2016 re 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy

Question:

My question relates to the resolution on 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy that was tabled at the meeting on Monday 19 September 2017.

What happens next now that this work has been completed partly based on the information I was able to give them, plus copies of archival material such as early photos and other documents? Heritage Victoria welcomed it and informed it was likely they would receive another nomination commissioned by Council, saying it was useful to receive others written from different perspectives.

Will Council now authorise that this report be provided to Heritage Victoria as Yarra's submission?

Response:

The Mayor thanked and congratulated Ms Elliott for the work she provided for both her own nomination and for also providing a vast amount of valuable material to Council for Council's own nomination that was endorsed earlier this evening.

The Director Planning and Place Making advised that the papers that Ms Elliott provided to Council will be provided to Heritage Victoria and in terms of Council's position, the administration will use every endeavour to support Council's request for nomination and in relation to representation, similarly we will provide the appropriate representation as necessary to seek to secure that nomination on Council's behalf.

The Mayor also thanked Ms Oman who put together Council's submission for heritage registration.

7.4 Ms Margaret O'Brien - My Questions re 7 March Council Meeting

Question:

I note the minutes of the meeting on 7 March are on Council's website. Will Council please advise the date by which I will have the written reply to my questions asked at that meeting and when the managements reply will be in the Council minutes?

Only a partial response is on the website. I would like know when Mr Phillips will provide further details to the questions I raised?

Response:

The Group Manager Chief Executive's Office advised that a response should be on Council's website. If the minutes are on the website so should the response.

The Mayor advised Ms O'Brien that a response will be provided within two weeks.

7.5 Mr Brad Marsh - Hansen Report re Queens Parade Built Form Report

Question:

I refer to the reply that we all received from the director of planning addressing concerns about omissions in the Hansen report I raised at last Council meeting.

I would like to ask Council to consider moving a motion similar to this:

"That Council requests Hansen to review their Queens Road built form report and ensure that it:

- (a) includes a Yarra LPP Clause 22.02 calculation of heights and setbacks for all cross sections and particularly Coleman Street;
- (b) makes specific reference to LPP21.05-03 concerning maintaining the dominance of avenue trees including, and indicates how "dominance" is calculated;
- (c) removes references to planning applications that have not been approved;
- (d) includes references to the applications that have been approved in recent years in precinct 2B;
- (e) includes references to applications that have been rejected at VCAT such as; and
- (f) based on the above, reviews their recommended controls and makes any appropriate changes."

Response:

The Mayor advised that it is difficult to answer on the spot but would take it on board and will discuss as a collective.

7.6 Mr Herschel Landes - Employee Costs and Long Term Financial Plan

Question:

In relation to the Council Meeting on 21 February and the potential introductory of a separate waste service charge and environmental service charge as part of the annual rates income or as Councillor phrased, 'hitting the locals with a bin tax'. I note the 2010 Council saw this as aggressive and not in keeping with the equitable distribution of rate burden. I also refer to the Financial Statements tabled at that meeting for the 6 months ending 31 December 2016 and by comparison Council financial statements for 6 months ending 31 December 2015. These statements show that the Council employee costs have increased from \$37.3mil to \$40.6mil over the same respective 6 monthly period and a comparative 9% increase and given CPI is only grown 1.5% in twelve months and the seasonally adjusted waste price index 1.9%.

How does Council explain such a large comparative increase?

Could Council also advise rate payers how the long term financial strategies are progressing in its implementation in order to achieve the desired sustainable business model and perhaps deliver core services to rate payers and allow equitable distribution of the rate burden?

Response:

The Director Corporate Business and Finance advised that in relation to employee costs, the employees costs go up based on the Enterprise Agreement. The current Enterprise Agreement is running at 4% and in terms of increased costs, there are additional costs from an employee perspective in terms of banding increases etc. so that explains some of the discrepancies year on year and running at more than 1.9% so that would explain employee costs going up greater than CPI. In terms of a long term financial strategy, there have been a number of initiatives in that long term financial strategy that Council have endorsed and implemented, one of them as you

highlighted which was the waste charge, this is something that has been proposed to Council in this particular budget as well as a number of other initiatives i.e. fleet reduction costs.

7.7 Ms Carole Wilkinson, YCAN - Fossil Fuel Divestment Update

Question:

YCAN asked well over a year ago about divestment from fossil fuels and I would like to know how the divestment issue is going? I don't think there has been a report since the time it was last brought up.

On a follow-up question from September last year we asked if it was possible for Council to facilitate a lunch time information session for Council staff to ensure that their superannuation funds do not have exposure to fossil fuel investments and an undertaking that that meeting would be held. It is my understanding that it has not happened yet and wondering if there is a plan to make that happen?

Response:

The Director Corporate Business and Finance advised:

- (a) some external expertise has been sought in terms of providing us with some additional knowledge and support in terms of our development in this area and undertook to do some auditing on our existing contracts;*
- (b) most of our investments are related to short term investments with banks and we are working with our internal auditors to do that piece of audit;*
- (c) the other commitment we had was to build ethical investment and procurement into our procurement policies, so embedded into how we go about procuring because that is the major spend from Councils perspective;*
- (d) it will happen towards the end of the financial year, we have to renew that procurement policy annually so it will be built into that and part of that will be a report on how we are progressing with the ethical procurement and investment audit;*
- (e) we certainly acknowledge from a banking perspective that we have limited opportunities to move outside of the AAA and B rated banks, but nonetheless we are about to finalise the process in relation to the current loan borrowings and part of that process will be an analysis around the various banks ethical investment to help Council in terms of their decision making around it;*
- (f) the information session on superannuation with staff hasn't occurred, there is a session with Councils default superannuation scheme, Vision Super, so that is coming up; and*
- (g) there was an external forum that occurred six months ago that was promoted to staff internally to encourage them to consider attending that forum by Market Forces and have since had further contact with Market Forces, but to my knowledge have not hear back from them, so will follow that up.*

7.8 Mr Greg Spark - Edinburgh Gardens - Heritage Post Stumps

Question:

Around the rotunda there were two or three iron post stumps and about 2 years ago Council removed these posts hopefully to save storage back at its depot.

Where are these heritage iron post stumps?

When will we see them back in the garden in their original position?

Response:

The Director Planning and Place Making took the questions on notice.

The Manager Recreation and Open Space advises that as part of the Edinburgh Gardens lighting upgrade that occurred in 2014/15, officers reviewed the existing stock of lights in the park and, as part of this work, it was intended to remove the replica light poles near the Rotunda.

On further inspection the original poles were found to be rotten internally and posed a hazard and, as a consequence, in February 2014 the poles were removed at the same time.

7.9 Ms Maree Hayhoe - Illegally Fenced Gate at rear of Queens Parade

Question 1:

I would like to follow up on a comment Sarah Thomas made at the IDAC meeting last week. When I attended the meeting and made my submission I also mentioned the blue stone laneway at the rear of our property had been illegally fenced and gated and taking in part of the public ROW. Sarah mentioned at the IDAC meeting that she would be sending a team out to have a look at the padlocked gate.

I would like to know if anyone has been out to have a look at this and if not could the Council officers please follow-up on this issue?

Response 1:

The Director Corporate Business and Finance took the question on notice.

The Manager Compliance and Parking Services advises that an investigation of the occupation of the lane way has been commenced and notices have been issued to resolve the matter.

Question 2:

Back in 2010, the owners of the clothing warehouse at 26 to 56 Queens Parade began painting the exterior of the building bright pink. I made a phone call to Council and explained that part of the façade being art deco was heritage listed and the Planning Enforcement Officer had the painting stopped. I was told a few days later. 'Oh well they've started now so they may as well finish. The art deco is only a small section which is subject to heritage overlay!' I was absolutely astounded by the response.

Can officers please also investigate this issue?

Response 2:

The Director Planning and Place Making took the question on notice.

The Manager Compliance and Parking Services advises that the exterior painting of the façade is a matter which has previously been investigated by Council and it was determined that there is no planning or heritage control regarding the external paint colour. As a result, Council is not in a position to take any action.

Councillor Jolly requested that Councillors be kept up to date on the matter.

7.10 Mr Enrico Cementon - Notice of Comply re King William Street

Question:

In relation to a Notice to Comply that was issued relating to the removal of a gate across an easement on King William Street, Fitzroy and the removal of which all three property owners oppose on the basis that the gate provides significant security. The easement which the gate closes from King William Street is on my title, property I purchased in 2009 and the easement leads to a blind alley behind the two properties next door. The easement is to the benefit of those two households next door to our property and we all have keys to that gate to gain free access to that easement. If the gate is removed it would cause a major security problem and a threat to the three homes and families that live within the three properties.

Is Council aware of the dispute that has arisen between us three home owners and the Council officers?

Can we have a meeting on site with ward Councillors and officers to resolve the issue?

Response:

The Director City Works and Assets advised that it is a public road that is on Council's Road Register, not an easement as Mr Cementon has described. Council's Local Laws officers have served an enforcement notice because it is illegal to block off access to a public road and the gate will need to be re-opened.

Councillor Jolly – If the laneway is a dead end and it is not used for any other purpose, how can it still be a road? When would it have been used as a road?

The Director City Works and Assets advised that as long as it is a road on Council's Road Register, by legal definition, it is a road. If there is an argument that it should no longer be a road and could be discontinued, that is certainly something that can be looked at, but my understanding is that it is a public road. If the property owners want to make a submission that the road should be discontinued and they wish to purchase the land that is something that can be considered.

The Mayor advised that a meeting with Ward Councillors can be arranged.

7.11 Ms Elizabeth Long - Website

Question:

In relation to Council's priorities of transport, you have a hierarchy, at the top you have walking, then bikes, public transport, shared car schemes and at the bottom private car ownership, however on the Council website, clearly reverses this priority because it is far easier to gain access to information on how to get a parking permit, then it is to gain access to information about active transport i.e. bike share schemes or car share schemes.

When Council redo the website can you please make it reflect the values and the hierarchy of transport that Yarra supposedly supports?

When trying to locate information about the car share schemes, I couldn't find it until I finally found it under bike share schemes, it was very difficult to find.

Response:

The Director Advocacy and Engagement advised that Council's website is being updated and officers will be looking at the priority of all the information that is available on the website. One of the most used functions that people go to when accessing the website is information about parking, that doesn't mean that we can't

provide that or have other links on information on sustainable transport etc. so we will try to do that as well.

Cr Bosler – Will there be any community consultation regarding the new website and is the process already in motion or will there be a test run website?

The Director Advocacy and Engagement advised that there has already been consultation with community focus groups on the new website and user testing will also be done.