



MEDIA RELEASE

1 June 2021

Budget 2021/22 Public Consultation

The Northern Areas Council has released its 2021/22 Annual Business Plan and Budget for Public Consultation. Council has produced a budget in line with its Long Term Financial Plan, with community members able to provide submissions, with a public meeting to be held on Wednesday the 23rd of June at the Sir Hubert Wilkins Building in Jamestown from 7pm.

The 2021/22 Annual Business Plan and Budget has been carefully formulated in accordance with Council's key planning documents being the Long Term Financial Plan, its various asset management plans and its strategic plan, with rates now set in accordance to land use code, following Council's rating review.

In discussing the budget, Mayor Ben Browne said "this is the first budget that Council has put forward since we completed our recent rating review. After conducting public consultation and listening to the views of the rate payers, Council settled on adjusting the fixed charge on a rates notice from \$390 to \$150.

This will reflect a fairer and more equitable rating system for our rate payers, particularly those in lower valued properties within townships. We did appreciate the response to the public consultation and considered the views of the community in making this adjustment."

In line with Council's Long Term Financial Plan, rates will rise by 2% in the 2021/22 budget as council continues its program to look to renew its assets in accordance with its long term asset management plans.

The 2021/22 Annual Business Plan and Budget shows an expenditure of \$18.7 million, with \$6.3 million spent on Capital projects. The Capital expenditure is split with \$5.6 million on renewal and upgrade of existing assets and \$0.7 million on the creation of new assets.

As identified in multiple community surveys, Council has continued to provide additional footpath and kerb funding, with \$108,000 allocated for footpaths and \$59,000 for kerbing, further accelerating the overall footpath improvement program, which has been aided recently by grant funding via the Commonwealth, in addition to Council committing funding via its Infrastructure Renewal budget line.

Across recent years Council has sought to significantly reduce the burden of its energy costs, through the installation of multiple solar energy installations. Mayor Browne commented that "the solar installations have delivered annual ongoing savings heading

toward \$90,000 each year. The compounding factor of these savings is enormous, which are the types of efficiencies which we have been looking for as a Council to deliver ongoing savings to the rate payers". An amount of \$80,000 has been included in this year's budget for additional solar and energy efficiency projects including LED lighting installations at community buildings including town halls, to enable further savings over the long term.

Other Key Projects included in this year's budget are:

- \$1.783 million on road resheeting
- \$522,000 on road resealing
- \$180,000 on new road sealing as part of the 5 year Council wide strategy
- \$158,000 for bridge upgrades
- \$131,000 toward infrastructure upgrades at the Jamestown and Spalding Swimming Pools
- \$108,000 for footpaths, with and additional \$59,000 for kerbing
- \$65,000 for building re-roofing projects
- \$50,000 for playground upgrades
- \$40,000 toward street lighting

Mayor Browne added "in setting the budget as the foundation for our Council operations for the new financial year, Council now has a renewed focus of complying with the budget and adhering to the policies which direct how Council spends the rate payer's money. The 2021/22 budget is an opportunity for Council to get these matters back on track."

Mayor Browne also reflected that "back in 2010/11 Council's Long Term Financial Plan saw us staring at a forecast debt ratio in 2020 which was almost 125% of the amount of our revenue. This of course excludes CWMS amounts which are a self servicing mechanism for properties connected in some of our townships.

But it was clear at the time that this level of ongoing debt was unsustainable and placed Council in a precarious position in trying to ensure that all of the assets, mainly roads and buildings, were maintained to a suitable standard.

After presenting these concerns to the community we were then able to reset the long term financial plan, to ensure financial sustainability and an ability to ensure that our road network, community buildings and other assets were able to be properly maintained to a standard acceptable to the community. This did mean a level of hardship and a lot of hard work over the next two to three years to establish the new plan and lay the platform for sustainability.

This is reflected in the current year's budget, which not only ensures that Council is able to maintain its assets, but the forecast debt ratio is down to 67% of the amount of our revenue for the 2021/22 financial year (excluding CWMS). This clearly demonstrates both the importance and the impact of the decisions that were made over ten years ago."

Members of the public are able to provide feedback via written submissions until Friday the 25th of June and can be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, PO Box 120, Jamestown SA 5491 or emailed to admin@nacouncil.sa.gov.au. Further information is available via the Council website www.nacouncil.sa.gov.au

Community members are also able to attend a public meeting to be held at the Sir Hubert Wilkins Building in Jamestown at 7pm that evening.

In discussing the public consultation, Mayor Browne said “as Councillors we are the representatives of the community, so we strongly encourage members of the community to have their say on the budget, just like they were able to with the rating review. We set the budget and the policies for staff to comply with, which is a strongly renewed focus for Council following a review in the latter part of 2020.

We strongly encourage people to come along to our public meeting and provide us with feedback, or if they are unable to there is an opportunity to provide a written submission. At the end of the day we are custodians of other people’s money and people need to be provided with the opportunity to have their say as to how their money is spent”.

For further information please go to www.nacouncil.sa.gov.au or visit any office of the Northern Areas Council.

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