

## **REPORT ON PENNANT HILLS COMMUNITY FORUM**

### **23 August 2018 at Pennant Hills Bowling Club**

#### **CONTEXT**

The Community Forum was held from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at Pennant Hills Bowling Club. Approximately 100 community members attended.

The Pennant Hills Forum is one in a series of Community Forums that Council is holding across the Shire to hear the views of community members and provide an opportunity for the community to hear from all Councillors.

The following Councillors attended the Forum:

- Mayor Philip Ruddock
- Deputy Mayor Vincent del Gallego

Councillors:

- Warren Waddell
- Emma Heyde
- Joseph Nicita
- Janelle McIntosh
- Robert Browne

An apology was received from Councillor Nathan Tilbury and Councillor Hutchence

The Community Forum was facilitated by Ms Libby Darlison of The Miller Group. Ms Darlison outlined her role as forum moderator and requested that when asking questions, participants state their name and limit their questions to two minutes so as many people as possible have the opportunity to speak.

The Mayor opened the Forum by welcoming participants and encouraging them to take this opportunity to raise issues of concern.

#### **ISSUE RAISED BY FORUM PARTICIPANTS**

The major issue was a Council vision and plan for Pennant Hills – this issue was raised by a number of participants, and resulted in some lively discussion by both participants and Councillors.

Specific discussion points from Forum participants on this topic included:

- Concerns about the lack of a vision for Pennant Hills Town Centre and the lack of a document that sets out the Council's plans for implementing the vision – a vision that the community can review and provide feedback on.
- Several concerns raised about potential high rise in the Town Centre, which the local community do not want although it was strongly indicated that not having any plan left the Community and Council more exposed to piecemeal development and indiscriminate planning proposals on individual sites
- Community consultation: When will Council undertake community consultation to hear the views of local residents?
- Pennant Hills Community Centre: The building is in a state of disrepair. It is an

important meeting place for community connection and inclusion. What is Council going to do about the Pennant Hills Community Centre? Is there any Council Plan to address this issue – including surrounding parking, road crossings etc.?

Responses from Councillors included:

- The State Government has given Council over \$2m to use for planning and development and this should be used in part at least to develop a Master Plan for Pennant Hills
- Agreement that without a Vision and a Plan Council is vulnerable to developer's interventions – Council needs to develop a Master Plan for Pennant Hills

Issues are:

- Council's financial resources have been greatly depleted by the boundary changes (i.e. the loss of Epping which was an important economic zone and provided significant financial contribution to Council). It is estimated that there is a loss of approximately \$10m per year
- In Pennant Hills Council is now more reliant on Section 94 contributions from developers. The Mayor explained that this poses a dilemma as Council needs to get funds via Section 94 to build the infrastructure that local community want for Pennant Hills, but if developers are able to build higher buildings the Council can secure more developer funds.
- The Mayor agreed that he too does not want to see high-rise building in Pennant Hills - or similar areas in the Shire. He stressed that major high rise infrastructure – if it is to occur anywhere it should be in the Hornsby CBD but other areas such as Pennant Hills may have to wait until Council has the financial resources.
- Some Councillors felt that most of the Section 94 funds were going into the development of large regional facilities
- Councillors agreed that the political environment – i.e. boundary changes over which Council has had little if any control - has led to a significant loss of Council income. This means that it is going to be an ongoing struggle for Council to find the funds to meet the infrastructure needs of Pennant Hills and other areas with similar requirements.

### Other specific issues Included:

1. Traffic Advisory Committee
  - RTA 2007 Guide to Delegation for Councils for regulation of traffic
  - Council, Police, RMS & MP make up a Technical Review Committee
  - What is the format of these meetings? Where are the minutes? (Esp. Hornsby). Provision for a public gallery?

The General Manager indicated that, although if this had not yet occurred, it was Council's intention to publish the minutes of the Technical Review Committee on Council's website.

2. Library services
  - After losing Epping Library Hornsby Shire needs much more in the way of

library resources – including building.

- The State Govt. is reducing funding for council libraries, is there a Council policy in place to address this issue?
- The Mayor said he felt that library funding had been 'politicised', but that library funding was to be addressed by Council at the end of the week. Current funding arrangements would be continued and would not be subject to any reductions.
- Councillor Heyde agreed that State Government funding to libraries is very low and that at the last Council Meeting all Councillors agreed that there needed to be a stronger focus on libraries by the Council
- Councillor McIntosh emphasised the importance of libraries and other 'cultural' centres that bring communities together and felt that some of the \$2.5 million provided by the government for strategic planning should be directed towards planning for to libraries and cultural centres.

### 3. Shared zones

- Why is Council persisting with shared zones in areas, such in the Hornsby CBD where it is clearly dangerous? Have RMS regulations been followed? This is a dangerous situation – what is Council going to do about it?
- The Mayor explained that Hornsby Mall shop keepers need access via the Mall – therefore there needs to be access for both vehicles and pedestrians, but that there needs to be clear marking to separate vehicular and pedestrian areas

### 4. Inappropriate development in Dural

- The aged care facility planned for Dural is a development that exceeds (density) planning regulations – what is Council doing about this?
- The Mayor responded and said that Council will continue to fight the changes to State Environmental Planning Policy 5

### 5. Loss of open space - small playground facilities

- While the population of Hornsby Shire is growing and density is growing with increasing high rise, open space – especially open space with facilities for small playgrounds is decreasing.
- The Mayor explained that the Council is aware of this situation and is looking at zoning for high rise developments to get more open space
- Councillor McIntosh said that Council had received a grant of \$600,000 for a new park in Waitara and that the NSW Department of Planning is currently exhibiting new guidelines for inclusive play, however Council needed a strategic plan for playgrounds which Council has recently resolved to do.

### 6. Trees and tree canopy

- Council was congratulated for its Plan to plant 25,000 more trees but was asked how they will they know if the strategy is successful? Does Council have a plan to address this situation

- The Mayor confirmed his commitment to increase the number of trees and the tree canopy across the Shire and said that Council was very engaged in ensuring they got the right plants and that they were watered and maintained correctly
- Councillor Waddell acknowledged that the budget for increasing trees across the Shire did incorporate expenditure that would be required for the long term maintenance of the trees (e.g. watering, pruning etc.)
- Councillor Nicita gave the example of Beecroft Park trees that are watered by community members. Council staff and volunteers working together have already planted 800 trees
- Councillor Heyde reminded Forum participants to register with council to receive free trees.

#### 7. Council's long term environmental plans and priorities

- What is Council doing about the following:
- Renewable energy for schools in the Shire
- Active, upgraded public transport
- Green walls on buildings
- Cycling lanes
- The Mayor explained that education is a State Government issue and the local member should be contacted about education issues. The Mayor also explained that Council was building more cycle paths – especially but not only alongside the M2.

#### 8. Engaging young people

- What can Council do to engage young people?
- Councillor Nicita agreed that this is a difficult situation. He suggested that when Council surveys were sent to households that young people in the household should be encouraged to respond to the survey with parents/grandparents/carers.
- Councillor Nicita also agreed that a Youth Forum would be a good idea and that Council could consider this.

#### 9. New Dog Park

- Noting that Council has limited resources there is a Council park on Hull Road. If Council could put a fence along that Park area it could create a new dog park. Council should also maintain its mountain bike facilities
- The Mayor said that he would be keen to hear any proposals for dog parks and the speaker should follow up with him

#### 10. Future traffic needs

- A second Hornsby crossing will be required by 2021 and Pennant Hills Rd needs to be 8 lanes, and why did Council sack the community committee looking after Fraser Gardens?

- The Mayor explained that the maintenance of the gardens would be assured and that a new committee would be formed

11. Medium density housing code

- Why did Council seek an exemption when it seems as this has already been dealt with within the LEP?
- The Mayor explained that exclusions have already been confirmed.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm