

HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT/NOTES FROM BEECROFTCOMMUNITY FORUM – 22nd October 2019

Introduction

Council was represented at the Community Forum by Mayor Philip Ruddock, Deputy Mayor Michael Hutchence and Councillors Mick Marr, Joseph Nicita, Vince del Gallego and Emma Heyde.

Apologies were received from and Councillors Nathan Tilbury, Warren Waddell, Robert Browne and Janelle McIntosh,

The Forum was independently facilitated by Ms Libby Darlison from the Miller Group.

Approximately 20 community members attended the Forum. Although the attendance numbers were small there was active participation in the Community Forum and a diverse range of questions was asked.

The forum commenced at 6:30pm and concluded at 8:15pm.

In his introduction Mayor Ruddock explained that, as with the previous community forums Council has been holding, this was not a decision-making forum, rather it was an opportunity for community members to express their views on issues of concern for their community.

Issues identified

Garbage collection and waste

Participants asked whether a more comprehensive food waste collection service could be provided by council

- The Mayor advised that due to boundary changes as a result of the Council amalgamations some collection days needed to be changed and advised that the notification process included a number of different ways, the post card was one of the ways used to communicate the changes to the collection days, it was also advertised on social media, Council's website and email notifications.
- Clr Heyde advised that the Waste Strategy is currently out for comment and asked the resident to lodge a submission, submissions close on the 8/11/2019. Council is aiming to increase the % of recycling and possibly removing food waste from the red bin.
- Clr Hutchence advised that Facebook and Council's email database is a significant way Council communicates with the public and suggested that residents join the email listing.
- Clr del Gallego discussed composting at home and asked residents to do the same with the aim of reducing waste in the red bin.

Maintaining the tree canopy

Preserving and increasing the tree canopy was an issue of concern for most community members. One participant stated that the Local Strategic Planning Statement states that there will be no tree canopy left in 37 years time if the current rate of decline continues.

The area of Byles creek was of particular concern to residents with respect to its rezoning and the impact on loss of tree cover.

A request was made to invite the Byles Creek Valley Union to Council meetings/workshops such as the Local Strategic Planning Statement workshops and added to the list of attendees?

Another community member suggested that that the Byles Creek precinct should be a State Significant Site and be protected as it is home to the Powerful Owl which is nearing extinction levels.

- The Mayor advised that Council would like to be part of the discussions with the State Government and has made representation to the State Government to purchase and protect the area but as the area is not classed as a State Significant site it is unlikely to occur.

Loss of trees as a result of the construction of the planned Bike Path from Pennant Hills to Epping was raised by several residents. Residents are upset about trees being removed for this project.

- Cllr Heyde advised that staff are trying to plan the path without removing trees, however this is a very difficult task and there may be some trees lost but staff are trying their hardest to minimise tree loss and will replace any tree that is removed.

Residents congratulated Council's Nursery and staff (Mr Ross Rapmund) on the excellent service it provides to the community and explained to others attending the Community Forum that small trees are being provided to residents each Wednesday for the next two weeks.

Cycle way update

Councillors were asked for an update on the bike path- specifically:

How will the bike path be structured to get from Old Beecroft Road to Epping?

What path will be taken? and,

Whether the rail corridor is available for use?

- The General Manager responded to these queries and explained that Council is trying to gain access to the Rail Corridor for the bike path but are facing difficulties negotiating with State Rail. Council will continue to negotiate with State Rail

Metro rail

Participants explained that since the introduction of the Sydney Metro Rail there is no longer a direct train from the city to Cheltenham or Beecroft. Residents have to change trains and this makes the commute to and from work longer – and that the same applies to trips to the city for other purposes

- The Mayor advised that this is a State Rail issue and it is up to State Rail to determine the time table.
- Cllr Marr advised that similar issues are experienced at Cherrybrook.

DAs and private certification

A community member advised that a DA which has been approved and built is impacting on her privacy. These concerns were raised during the DA process, but there was no communication and was only referred to the private certifier for a response. The resident felt she was ignored and felt that she should not have to construct a privacy barrier on her to regain the privacy she had prior to the DA being approved. She also pointed out that trees were removed without any notification, that the building constructed was not what had been approved and that there was an issue of wood fire heater smoke in neighbouring properties.

In responding Councillors made the following points:

- Cllr Hutchence advised that the State Government has removed Council's from the approval process, DA's are now approved by staff or an independent planning panel.
- Cllr Heyde advised that the issue of private certifiers is now becoming a major issue and the State Government is looking into the process.

- The Mayor stated that whenever a certifier is a contractor to a client the process is not independent and should be reviewed.
- Clr del Gallego advised that if the private certifier has not done the right thing then write to Council and Council staff will check it over.

State Government representation at Council's Community forums

Participants asked why there was no State government representative at the Community Forum and explained their frustration in attempting to contact state members regarding issues such as the Metro and Rail timetable e.g. no response to e-mails or being told that the Member needed a lead time of 6 months to attend a meeting and does not respond to e-mails

- The Mayor explained that Council does advise state members when these community meetings are being held and if they are available they are welcome to attend.

Local Strategic Planning statements

One of the participants who had presented a submission on the LSPS asked whether there had been any feedback and how many submissions had been received from Beecroft?

- The General Manager advised that 40 detailed submissions have been received and many informal submissions have been received from community forums and informal meetings. Council staff are currently reviewing all of the submissions along with the consultants so that Council can meet the deadline put in place by the state government.
- The Mayor advised that Seniors Housing SEPP and other SEPP's (affordable housing, seniors living and childcare centres) are affecting the community and is allowing medium density developments without Council's input.
- Clr del Gallego advised that Council has reached is short to medium term housing goals and Council is now trying to create a major Hornsby CBD with high rise and medium density housing so that the suburbs are able to remain as they are and meet its long term housing targets.
- Clr Marr advised that everyone in the community needs somewhere to live, including the young, old, families and singles and this needs to be addressed in the planning process.

Maintaining Heritage Value

Councillors were asked whether they recognised the important heritage value of Beecroft and Cheltenham (with respect to development)?

- The Mayor emphasised that Council did recognise that value and wants to keep the suburbs as they are.
- Clr Heyde advised that a Heritage review is currently underway and asked for residents to submit a submission.

State Government housing targets

A resident asked Councillors whether the Housing targets set by the state government include vacant or empty dwellings, and if not can Council ask the State Government to include vacant or empty dwellings in housing targets and develop a penalty for empty dwellings?

- Clr Heyde advised that the Greens have an idea that if an investment property sits empty for at least 6 months that Councils may be able to charge a levy on their rates, because there are lot if investors that are happy to leave a property empty.

Rural Lands Study

A participant expressed concern that there are a number of farms being sold off in the Galston area and wanted to hear from Councillors about what council was doing to conserve local farms?

- Councillors advised that Council is conducting a Rural Lands Study and that lots of work is going on to protect rural lands and encouraged all to participate in the rural lands strategy and come along to the meeting in Glenorie in a couple of weeks and be involved in the discussions.

'Snap and Send' photo exhibition

There was a feeling that an entry in the recent Snap and Send Photo Competition appeared to be by a developer depicting a waste land vs a newly developed town centre and asking the question What do you Prefer? A participant asked councillors whether the photo was still on the website?

- Cllr Hutchence explained that this issue had been discussed with staff and that as the rules of the competition did not exclude advertisements – which this could be categorised as – the entry in question was considered to be valid and was therefore still posted on the website.

Hornsby City East Rezoning - update.

There was a request from a participant for an update of the Hornsby City East Rezoning.

- The Mayor advised that planning is being conducted over the whole of Hornsby CBD not just the east side and the planning is ensuring that issues such as transport, open space/recreation, appropriate linkages between areas like old man valley, over the railway line and community facilities.
- The Mayor encouraged the Forum participants to look at the Hornsby Town Centre Review on the website and to respond to the requests for comments and input.

Loss of local character and amenity in Beecroft Village

A forum participant identified local concerns about the diminishment of character and amenity in Beecroft citing the with the loss of the local book shop and other shops including the Commonwealth Bank and asked Councillors if there was an opportunity of a local library or community space using some of the empty commercial buildings in Beecroft?

- The Mayor advised that there are some people in Beecroft that are interested in developments in Beecroft and it may be worthwhile asking them if they are prepared to include in their proposals some options of community facilities as Council does not have funds available. He also advised that Council currently has libraries at Hornsby, Pennant Hills, Berowra and Galston.
- Cllr Heyde advised that Councils across NSW have become a lot louder about their libraries and have combined to run a Renew our Libraries Campaign to gain access to increased funding from the state government.

Sale of the Cheltenham Church

A forum participant asked for an update on the proceeds of the sale of the Cheltenham Church; where is the money to be spent and how much is left?

- The Mayor advised that some of the money has been spent on the Beecroft Station Gardens and the balance will be spent in Beecroft. There is approximately \$1.5 million (the amount to be confirmed) remaining.

Footpath on Day Rd

An update on this footpath was requested

- Cllr Heyde advised that a letter updating residents will be sent out shortly advising of the next steps.

- The Mayor advised that there are no funds currently available, for a footpath on Day Road although there may be funds at some time in the future.

Development at Nos. 66 and 66A Castle Howard Road, Beecroft

- In regards to comments about the development at Nos. 66 and 66A Castle Howard Road, Beecroft it is noted that the concerns raised by the neighbour were investigated and responded to by Council officers and through the Mayor's office in 2018. The neighbour raised concerns about the proposed two storey dwelling including the height of the development, privacy impacts, setbacks, impacts on trees and heritage. These issues were considered in the assessment of the application and although the development was not to the neighbours satisfaction, it was determined that the proposal was generally consistent with Council's controls. Accordingly, approval was granted and the dwelling has subsequently been completed. Furthermore, once a determination has been issued, Council does not have the power to review or change the approval. The neighbour has raised further issues about smoke nuisance emanating from the neighbours wood-fire BBQ and this matter is currently being investigated by Council's compliance officers.