



Date:	30 April 2018	Embargo:	None
Pages:	2	Publication:	All local media

DRAFT 2018-19 BUDGET / BUSINESS PLAN CONSULTATION

The Council has recently endorsed its draft 2018/19 Budget / Business Plan for public consultation and feedback.

“The adoption of the annual budget is one of the most important decisions by Council each year”, noted Mayor Karen Redman. “The draft budget has recently been endorsed by Council for consultation following numerous workshops and meetings, and we now welcome the community’s comments and feedback relative to the proposed budget and projects contained therein”.

The draft 2018/19 Budget / Business Plan currently forecasts an operating deficit of \$124,000, which represents 0.4% of total operating revenue. “The Council will be further exploring opportunities to realise a balanced budget, or small surplus, for 2018/19 prior to adopting the budget in late June 2018”, Mayor Redman further noted.

Gawler is a major growth Council within the State, which presents both challenges and opportunities for the Council. “In this regard, the Council has placed particular recent emphasis on ensuring the ongoing management of parks and gardens within new residential land developments is done in a financially sustainable manner, and we have proactively worked with local developers to achieve this”, Mayor Redman said.

The draft budget provides for a capital works program of \$14.5m which includes the following:

- Completion of construction works associated with the restoration and refurbishment of the State Heritage Listed Town Hall and Gawler Institute
- Structural remediation of the Gawler Mill Bridge
- Stage 6 upgrade of Murray Street (between Mitre 10 and Southern Hotel)
- Continuing the rehabilitation of the Gawler Aquatic Centre (Stage 4 of 5)
- Construction of 1.7kms of new footpaths
- Resealing of 3.35kms of sealed roads
- Resheeting of 1.43kms of rural roads
- Installation of solar panels at the Gawler Administration Centre (estimated payback period of 4-5 years)
- Installation of War Memorial at Pioneer Park
- Installation of new playground at Willaston Oval
- Roof replacement and stadium floor upgrade at the Gawler Sport & Community Centre
- Commence redevelopment of Walker Place precinct

“Council has only been able to fund the level of recent / proposed capital works programs via previous major reduction in debt and through the proactive securing of major Government grants”, Mayor Redman said. “Between 2010/11 and 2015/16 Council reduced its debt by over 40%, which enabled major projects such as the recent purchase of the Gawler Administration Centre (for which Council only had to pay less than half of the market valuation) and the Town Hall and Institute redevelopment to happen”, she further said. Mayor Redman also noted that the Council has in recent years secured Federal / State Government grant funding of over \$8m which “has reduced the need for additional external loan borrowings”.



The draft 2018/19 budget is predicated on a 3% increase in General Rate revenue from existing ratepayers. “Council recognises the impact that cost of living increases can have on our community, and to this end we have kept the increase to a relatively low level– noting the increase is consistent with current movements in the Local Government Price Index”, Mayor Redman said.

“The Council is proposing a 3% increase for existing ratepayers, which translates to a \$45 increase for the average residential ratepayer”, Mayor Redman further noted. “This would be the fourth consecutive year where the increase has been maintained at this level”.

Local Government is continually being faced with cost shifting and large cost increases from the State Government, which places ongoing challenges for a Council in being able to maintain a balanced budget whilst at the same time keeping rate increases to a minimum. “The State Government wishes to introduce rate capping for Local Government, yet the majority of our community would not be aware that the State Government has increased the per tonne solid waste levy payable from \$52 (2014/15) to \$100 (2018/19), which represents nearly a 100% increase in the space of just four years”, Mayor Redman said.

The Mayor noted recent media interest regarding China’s decision to ban the importing of recyclables. “Our waste management partner, NAWMA, has been on the front foot in this regard and, due to measures they have implemented and opportunities currently being explored, the proposed increase in the Waste Management Service fee applied has been curbed at a modest 2.2%”, Mayor Redman said.

Public consultation of the draft 2018/19 Budget / Business Plan ends at 5pm Friday 25 May 2018.

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