



Shire of  
Serpentine  
Jarrahdale

# Special Council Meeting Agenda

**5.30pm**

**Monday, 23 March 2020**

**Purpose:** To discuss the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale's preparation, response and recovery to COVID-19

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## Contact Us

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### In Person

Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale  
6 Paterson Street, Mundijong WA 6123  
Open Monday to Friday 8.30am-5pm (closed public holidays)



[www.sjshire.wa.gov.au](http://www.sjshire.wa.gov.au)



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The purpose of this Special Council Meeting is to discuss and, where possible, make resolutions about items appearing on the agenda. Whilst Council has the power to resolve such items and may in fact, appear to have done so at the meeting, no person should rely on or act on the basis of such decision or on any advice or information provided by a Member or Officer, or on the content of any discussion occurring, during the course of the meeting. Persons should be aware that the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* (Section 5.25(1)(e)) and *Council's Standing Orders Local Law 2002 (as amended)* – Part 14, Implementing Decisions. No person should rely on the resolutions made by Council until formal advice of the Council resolution is received by that person.

The Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale expressly disclaims liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person as a result of relying on or acting on the basis of any resolution of Council, or any advice or information provided by a Member or Officer, or the content of any discussion occurring, during the course of the Council meeting.



### Councillor Attendance Register

In accordance with Ordinary Council Meeting, 16 December 2019, Resolution OCM293/12/19, clause 5 – “That Council requests the Chief Executive Officer maintain a Councillor Attendance Register recording Councillor Attendances at Ordinary Council Meetings, Special Council Meetings and Policy Concept Forums”.

#### Council October 2019 –

Date	Type	Cr Rich	Cr Atwell	Cr Byas	Cr Coales	Cr Dagostino	Cr Denholm	Cr McConkey	Cr Strange	Cr Strautins
16/03/20	OCM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24/02/20	PCF	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17/02/20	OCM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
03/02/20	PCF	✓	A	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
03/02/20	SCM	✓	A	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
16/12/19	OCM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18/11/19	OCM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
04/11/19	PCF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
28/10/19	SCM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21/10/19	SCM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

A – Apology

LOA – Leave of Absence

NA – Non Attendance



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Dear Elected Member

A Special Council Meeting of the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale will be held on Monday, 23 March 2020 in the Council Chambers, Civic Centre, 6 Paterson Street, Mundijong – commencing at 5.30pm.

Paul Martin  
**Chief Executive Officer**

20 March 2020

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## Agenda

1. **Attendances and apologies (including leave of absence):**
2. **Public question time:**
  - 2.1 Public questions
3. **Public statement time:**
4. **Petitions and deputations:**
5. **Declaration of Councillors and Officers interest:**
6. **Receipt of reports:**



## 6.1 Reports

<b>6.1.1 – Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale preparation, response and recovery to COVID-19 (SJ3248)</b>	
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Senior Officer:</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Disclosure of Officers Interest:</b>	<p>As this matter contains advice related to terms or conditions of all employees. The following officers involved in the preparation of this report have declared a financial interest in the matter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Executive Officer</li> <li>• Deputy Chief Executive Officer / Director Community Services</li> <li>• Director Development Services</li> <li>• Director Corporate Services</li> <li>• Director Infrastructure Services</li> <li>• Manager Human Resources</li> <li>• Manager Governance</li> </ul> <p>As the matter in the report deals with all aspects of the Shire’s business, it is not appropriate for the employees declaring a financial interest to leave the room as has been customary in the Shire.</p> <p>Per the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries Operational Guidelines, there is no legislative requirement for employees to leave the meeting when a disclosure has been made.</p> <p>Disclosures of interest will be recorded in accordance with the legislative requirements of 5.70 of the Act.</p>

### Authority / Discretion

Executive	The substantial direction setting and oversight role of the Council such as adopting plans and reports, accepting tenders, directing operations and setting and amending budgets.
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### Report Purpose

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider the proposed preparation, response and recovery the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale implements associated with COVID-19.

Overall, Officers have attempted to achieve a balance between continuing to operate and provide good governance to the district, whilst protecting the welfare of Councillors, Staff, Volunteers and the Community.



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## Relevant Previous Decisions of Council

Nil.

## Background

The State Government has declared a State of Health Emergency in regards to COVID-19. As a result of this, the Shire is required to consider how it will implement directions from both the Federal and State Governments in regards to managing the impacts of this virus, whilst protecting its workforce and community as much as possible.

Since the announcement of the virus, Officers have undertaken the following:

- Established an internal working group to plan the Shire's preparation, response and recovery related to this virus. This group is meeting regularly with the Executive Management Group.
- Communicated regularly with Staff and Councillors on the situation and preparation work being undertaken.
- Communicated and advised users of facilities.
- Held a Local Emergency Management Committee Meeting on 19 March 2020.
- Communicated and implemented a plan with its six bushfire brigades to protect operational response capacity.
- Briefed the community, and emphasised the importance of observing information only from those official, verified and trusted sources, primarily the WA Health website.

As expected, the Shire is already seeing a dramatic impact upon usage of Shire services and facilities. This is expected to escalate over the coming weeks.

## Community / Stakeholder Consultation

- Internal
- WALGA
- Health Department WA
- Other Local Governments
- Local Emergency Management Committee Members

## Statutory Environment

Per the Western Australian Government's Pandemic Plan key legislation supporting emergency management of a human epidemic occurring in Western Australia includes the *Public Health Act 2016 (WA)*, the *Emergency Management Act 2005 (WA)*, the *National Health Security Act 2007* and the *Quarantine Act 1908*.

The *Public Health Act 2016 (WA)* and *Emergency Management Act 2005 (WA)* provide powers that may be used to manage an emergency as a result of a human epidemic which requires a significant and coordinated response.



Federal legislation such as the *Commonwealth Biosecurity Act 2015* provides a mechanism for the Commonwealth to direct States and state agencies.

The *Local Government Act 1995* continues to provide the legislative framework in which Council operates as a quasi-judicial body during a declared emergency, albeit within the constraints provided by other legislation.

### **Comment**

Whilst most of the direction regarding what the community should and must do over the coming weeks and months will come from the State and Federal Government, Officers believe Council direction and endorsement is required for the following three matters:

- How the Shire will prepare, respond and recover.
- How the Shire will communicate its response and actions with the community.
- Any changes to Shire staff leave entitlements as a result of the virus.

Each of these matters will be discussed in further detail below.

### ***How the Shire will prepare, respond and recover***

Officers have updated the Shire's Business Continuity Plan to create a specific COVID-19 Pandemic Response.

A copy of the plan is attached for Council's consideration at **attachment 1**.

The Shire identified the following goals in preparation and response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Slowdown the rate of spread of the virus in Councillors, Officers, Volunteers and the Community.
- Follow the State Government's WA pandemic plan.
- Minimise exposure of Councillors, Officers and Volunteers to the virus particularly those who are vulnerable as defined by the Health Department of WA.
- Maintain wellbeing (physical and mental) of Councillors, Officers, Volunteers and the Community.
- Ensure continuity of as many functions of the Shire as possible whilst providing flexibility to respond to changing situations.
- Ensuring current, accurate and regular communication is occurring with Councillors, Officers and Volunteers.
- Preparing for the recovery of the Shire after the pandemic.

As can be seen below the overall approach is to attempt to keep business continuity as much as possible whilst maintaining a safe working environment for Councillors, Staff and Volunteers.

Significant upgrades have occurred to the technology in the organisation to enable a number of staff to work from home/remotely. This has included some small additional capital



expenditure in line with Council's Disaster Recovery Capital project adopted in the 2019/20 Budget process and the fast-tracked rollout to the organisation of Microsoft Teams software.

With the changing environment, it is likely that at some point the Shire Administration building may be completely shut down. Whilst Officers are preparing for this, a complete shutdown is not proposed at this stage. This report deals with efforts being made to keep as many Shire services and facilities running as long as possible. Should a complete shutdown of the Shire Administration Building be required, Officers are also planning as to how essential services could be maintained.

### **Office of the CEO**

Officers within the Office of the CEO are being assessed on a case by case basis to allow working from home. Meetings or attendance at the Office may be required by Officers, and will be managed accordingly.

An additional casual cleaner has been appointed and will commence Monday 23 March 2020 to ensure high standards of hygiene and cleanliness is maintained in the building for both staff and customers. This role will essentially be cleaning the administration building including high traffic areas, meetings rooms, toilets, lunchrooms, customer service, library and operations depot continually during the day. This role will be engaged for as long as required. The costs of this role will be charged to salaries budget. Budget adjustments may be required at the Third Quarter Finance and Costing Review.

### **Community Services**

#### **Youth Development Services**

Currently the Shire is still offering a service at the Youth Space in Byford. The youth drop in at Jarrahdale has now ceased as the Jarrahdale Community Collective made the decision this week to suspend this program.

Other local governments are taking varying approaches to continued service provision with some continuing to run drop-in type activities with increased hygiene but considering closure in the near future. Others have already cancelled youth programs and drop-in type activities.

The nature of young people means that there is less likelihood of them practicing social distancing. In addition, the Youth Development team is experiencing difficulty accessing hygiene supplies, such as hand sanitiser, to make available to young people using the drop in space. Given these two factors and the fact that other local governments are now beginning to close their youth spaces, it is recommended that the Youth Space close and Youth Officers provide outdoor based activities at the Byford skatepark to engage with young people.

The delivery of outdoor based programs will be dependent on weather, government requirements and the ability to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Officers.

The National Youth Week Event, Youth Fest 2020 is scheduled to be delivered on Friday 17 April 2020. Many of the providers who were engaged to be at the event have now cancelled and given the changing nature of social isolation measures and the cancellations from providers, it is recommended to Council that the event be cancelled for 2020.



### Serpentine Jarrahdale Community Recreation Centre

The Serpentine Jarrahdale Community Recreation Centre is continuing to operate with adjustments to meet social distancing requirements. Following the Australian Government announcement on 18 March 2020, a meeting was held with the YMCA. The Australian Government advised that gyms could remain open provided that they meet the requirements for social distancing and hand hygiene. To ensure compliance with these requirements the YMCA has made the following changes to its operations:

- The YMCA has experienced significant numbers of teams cancelling social sport activities. Due to the inability to achieve social distancing and the cancellations received, these sports have been cancelled.
- Dance Inspire Dance Studio classes have ceased indefinitely including the younger age group classes being: Twirling Tutus, Acro-Tots, Tiny Tumblers, Grooving Kids, all Acro beginners' classes. These are the classes where achieving the recommended social distancing is difficult due to the young age of the children and the physical nature of the activities.
- Whilst the gym remains open and is being monitored by staff. It may be necessary to make changes to available equipment to ensure the social distancing requirements are met.
- Group Fitness class numbers have been reduced to allow for the social distancing requirements with a taped example of this space on the floor as the participants enter the room. Any non-equipment based classes are being shifted to a larger room where the number of participants exceeds the capacity of the group fitness room. In the spin room, every second bike has been rendered unusable to comply with social distancing requirements.

The YMCA is maintaining an active and visible regime of cleaning of the Centre, including the provision of cleaning product in the gym and monitoring to ensure participants are cleaning the equipment they use. There is also hand sanitiser provided at reception for patrons use. Front reception staff are reminding all patrons as they enter the Centre of the Government requirements regarding social distancing. Signage has been placed throughout the Centre reminding patrons of hygiene and social distancing requirements.

To date Floorball, Byford BasketBall and Byford Keepfit (Seniors Class) have cancelled their bookings. Kumon, Tae Kwon Do, Karate and Ready Set Go are choosing to continue with their bookings until the school holidays and are making alterations to the way in which they undertake their activity in line with Government direction and advice.

Childcare programs remain in place, however there has been a decrease in the number of children attending and bookings for vacation care are low. This service is relied upon by many parents and will continue as per Government direction.

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19, the YMCA has indicated they anticipate the SJ Community Recreation Centre will now run at a loss for the 19/20 financial year. The YMCA will provide an initial report estimating potential loss and a report will be brought to Council at a later date to consider support for the operations of the Centre in line with the contract.



There is a mixed response amongst local governments in regards to the operations of recreation type centres, due to a range of factors such as size and programs and facilities on offer.

Officers have discussed with the YMCA management the possible triggers for closure of the Centre. Given the environment, it is difficult to determine finite triggers however the following are suggested triggers:

- When closing of Recreation Centres becomes the norm across the local government sector.
- Advice from WA Health that a person with a confirmed Case of Covid-19 has been in contact with any SJ Community Recreation Centre staff or has visited the Centre.
- Government advice and / or direction is given to close.
- Social distancing requirements make it impossible to operate.

Given the unpredictable nature of the current situation, it is recommended that Council provide the Chief Executive Officer with the authority to determine with the YMCA if and when the SJ Community Recreation Centre might close.

#### Event/ program cancellations and delivery

RSLWA have advised the cancellation of ANZAC Day Commemorations across Western Australia. The President of the Serpentine Jarrahdale RSL sub-branch has advised that the Dawn Service to be held in Byford will not be taking place. The SJ RSL are considering possible measures for those who may still wish to come to the memorial to pay their respects.

Officers recommend that Council approve the cancellation of the ANZAC Processional March and Commemorative Service that is scheduled to be held in Serpentine. This is consistent with the actions of the RSL. Officers recommend that the Shire President, along with any Councillors in attendance, lay a wreath at the Serpentine Memorial. This could be filmed and this footage could then be placed on the Shire's Facebook page. The flags could also be flown at the Serpentine memorial on ANZAC Day.

The Shire has a number of community activities and programs that have been scheduled to be delivered between March and the end of 2020. A number of these have already been cancelled due to service providers no longer wishing to participate, however some remain scheduled though involve high risk groups such as seniors and children.

Council is requested to provide the Chief Executive Officer with the authority to determine the cancellation of any events, programs and activities until the end 2020.

The Community Services Department is working to develop a calendar of programs and activities to be conducted outdoors whilst weather and government requirements for public gatherings permit. There may also be opportunities to deliver some activities via video through the Shire's YouTube Channel.

It is acknowledged that the restrictions on events are changing regularly.



### Facility hire cancellations

Since Monday 16 March, the Shire has received 17 cancellations for facility hire, it is anticipated that more will be received as the time goes on. For a number of these cancellations, a cancellation fee applies under Council Policy 5.1.4 Facility Hire.

Council Policy 5.1.4 Facility Hire- Cancellation Fees, specifies that “If a hirer cancels a booking four weeks prior, a full refund of hire fees is to be made. If a hirer cancels the booking less than four weeks prior, 75% of the hire fee is to be refunded with 25% of the hire fee retained by the Shire”.

This applies across recurring bookings such as Girl Guides and a range of casual hire bookings for example; the British Short Hair Cat Club have cancelled their booking for Clem Kentish Hall for their Cat Show and SJ Seniors have cancelled their booking for the Community Bus .

Council is requested to approve that Officers do not apply Council Policy 5.1.4 Facility Hire-Cancellation Fees to the cancellation of any existing bookings where the cancellation is made in the period 16 March 2020 and 30 June 2020, and that a full refund be offered.

### Mundijong Public Library

The Library is currently operating as per normal offering loans and returns, access to computer and photocopier facilities, study areas and in house activities such as Rhyme Time and Storytime. External delivery of resources through the Books On Wheels Service continues.

Numbers of library attendees for events and visits for borrowing have declined in the week beginning 16 March 2020. Two special events offered had no attendees.

Returned library stock is being placed on a special returns trolley then removed from circulation physically and electronically until further notice. Officers are unable to clean all stock at this stage due to lack of cleaning product. Staff are using gloves to handle items and wiping down benches and computers after people have used the area or computer. Government requirements regarding social distancing has been marked in regards to the front desk. The self-check machine with touch screen is available for customers and hand sanitiser is offered for after use of the touch screen.

Volunteers have stopped attending the library due to their vulnerability. Officers have their details to remain in contact to address possible social isolation. SJ Library Friends have suspended their activities including second-hand book sales.

It is recommended that Council provide the Chief Executive Officer with the authority to cancel School holiday programs as it will not be possible to ensure the social distancing requirements are adhered to due to the age of the participants.

Staff are preparing for producing online options for things such as Rhyme Time, Story Time, Reading Reward programs for children, SJ Creators for adult learning and SJ Writers. Officers are also promoting access to E-resources.

Whilst the changing nature of the environment makes it difficult to determine absolute triggers for closure, the triggers for library closure identified to date include:

- Report of confirmed case of COVID-19 having visited the library.



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- Unable to maintain cleanliness with hand sanitiser, soap and disinfectant.
  - Industry standard of other public libraries closing.
  - Neighbouring libraries close. Members from neighbouring libraries may inundate our library if theirs is not accessible, and operations may be unable to meet the Government social distancing requirements or the maximum number of people in one place.
  - Schools and Childcare closures. This could increase the number of children and families visiting the Library making it difficult to adhere to the Government requirements for social distancing and Government direction. There is also concern that parents and caregivers would use the library for supervision of their children in the absence of school /childcare provision.
  - Government direction.

If the library closes, for other than the direct infection of the library, some duties could be conducted including over the phone enquiries, inclusive of e-resources instructions, collection of pre-arranged loans at library front door, home deliveries and maintaining phone contact for socially isolated people.

### Community Grants

The final General Grants round for the 19/20 financial year is scheduled to open May 2020 as per Council Policy- Community Grants. Officers request that Council agree that the May grant round not be run. A review of the community grants will be brought to Council in the coming months, after consideration of recovery requirements and how the Shire's Community Grants program can best support the community and community groups through recovery.

### Customer Service

The intention is to maintain a level of customer service provision through the front counter at the Administration Building and via the Shire's main phone number.

To ensure the safety of staff and customers, the Government requirements for social distancing have been put in place for interaction between staff and customers including a range of hygiene and cleaning measures.

Dependant on staff availability there may be a future requirement to limit the opening hours for the customer service front counter area. It is recommended that the Chief Executive Officer be given authority to determine the opening hours of the Shire Administration building.

Should it become not possible to provide staff to answer the Shire's main phone number, the contracted call centre provider Oracle, will take calls as per the normal procedures in place for calls after hours and weekends.



## Staff Arrangements

An assessment of the capacity of Officers to work from home has been undertaken. It is expected that Officers who are able to, will work from home in line with the decision taken for the organisation, however some Officers will be required to remain at work to ensure continued service provision or may have a mixed approach dependant on their service delivery.

## Infrastructure Services

A review of services provided by the Infrastructure Directorate in light of the COVID-19 potential impacts are as follows:

- Cemetery services are seen as a critical function given the tight time frames and sensitivities, with a number of staff able to continue to process the administration required and physical works required on site.
- Capital works are continuing to be constructed with no changes envisaged unless contractors cease to work as a result of impacts of COVID-19. The works are still required to be done within specified timeframes to comply with the grant requirements.
- Building and parks and reserves works are still envisaged to continue as normal with changes to the start times as well as working in smaller teams to assist any issue. The reduced team size will mean work is spread further among fewer. There has been planning that looks at the minimum essential services that are required albeit at the cost of levels of service.
- Waste services will continue as normal, with assurance being provided by our current contractor that they have a contingency plans in place to continue waste collection services.
- Drainage and road maintenance will continue at this time, with measures put in place for a level of service even in the event of a COVID-19 spread within the outdoor workforce.
- Development and subdivision approval processes will be continuing in conjunction with the Development Directorate, with the ability to complete assessments remotely.

## Development Services

Maintaining current processes and functions to serve customers and the community is the hallmark of business continuity in the response to COVID-19. This is being planned for specifically as follows:

- In respect of emergency management, immediate measures were put in place to enable the Shire's six brigades to respond effectively and maintain business continuity. These included:
  - Cancellation of planned and routine training to reduce risk of transmission;
  - Cancellation of all school and community engagement activities including face to face Bushfire Ready meetings;



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- Maintaining and encouraging digital communications for all aspects of preparedness and prevention education, so that the community keep this awareness high in their minds;
  - Cancellation of all non-essential gatherings and visits to stations (including non-essential contractors);
  - When responding to incidents, steps being taken to minimise exposure to vulnerable members of the community and brigade members (e.g. Baptistcare Graceford);
  - Response activities being conducted with a careful consideration of the size of brigade response required and the exposure level to brigade members;
  - Routine checks being conducted with a minimum number of personnel and all attendance being followed by enhanced cleaning protocols;
  - Enhanced cleaning at all stations and on all vehicles and appliances.
  - Introduction of two team response measures, and keeping these teams separate from each other to help underpin operational response;
  - Maintaining social distancing among the chain of command, being the Chief and Deputy Chiefs;
  - Advising WALGA on forecast need for required PPE.
- In respect of community safety, measures were implemented to ensure customer requests can still be captured and responded to in an efficient and risk-based manner. Being responsible for local law enforcement, the Team have reviewed and modified aspects of work processes and procedures in order to maintain operations across the 7 day service calendar. Officers are working to promote positive messaging regarding how the community can help each other and where support is available from various agencies.
  - In respect of strategic planning, statutory planning and statutory enforcement, process adjustment plans have been undertaken to ensure ongoing operability of the following core functions that support development, subdivision and planning regulation:
    - Development assessment and development compliance
    - Structure plan assessment
    - Scheme amendment assessment
    - Developer contributions assessment and management
    - New Scheme and Strategy assessment
    - Local Development Plan assessment
    - Customer service and response
  - In respect of building regulation, pool inspections and environmental health control, process adjustment plans have been undertaken to ensure ongoing operability of the following core functions:
    - Building permits, pool permits and inspections
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- Food premise inspections, water sampling, apparatus installations
- Customer service and response
- Across the service units, there has been planning to ensure a two team response model, which enables customer service coverage and support while having the desired effect of facilitating workplace social distancing through a combination of planned work from home, scheduling of site visits and the like.

An important issue for Council is to consider cancellation of the annual bushfire brigade volunteers award and recognition evening event. This will need to be rescheduled depending on the timing of Government decisions regarding public gatherings in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the critical dates approaching is the end of the Shire's prohibited burning period on 31 March 2020. In light of the very dry fire season that has been experienced, and the risk of response to incidents due to COVID-19 as discussed above, it is the intention of the Chief to extend the prohibited burn period for a further 2 weeks (ending on 14 April). This is recommended for Council endorsement of this extension.

It is important to note that the Shire's brigades are exempt from this extension, and it will be likely that the Shire begins with its prescribed burning activities commensurate with the mitigation activity funding it was awarded under DFES's Mitigation Activity Funding Program.

## **Corporate Services**

### Finance Team

The Finance Team discussed and is aware of critical functionality and upcoming project deadlines.

Given the significant distractions the team is experiencing currently it is inevitable that some deadlines will slip as we try to bring together the sustainability review, Budget Process, Long Term Financial Plan, develop the Corporate Business plan, begin the Onecomm implementation, continue the next phase of Onecomm implementation and implement a whole of Shire rates valuation review.

Information collected includes availability of key staff required. Work methods discussed include a shift roster, availability of working caregivers as well as work from home capability and functionality.

Working from home arrangements will be considered on a case by case basis and in line with Council's Business Continuity Plan.

Please note that the Rates Team has received their first request to suspend a rates payment arrangement for the 2019 / 20 financial year rates. The ratepayer cited loss of income as a result of the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. At this point, Officers believe the application of Council's existing policy for such requests continues to apply.



## Information and Communication Technology Team

In September 2018, Council adopted the Information Systems Strategy, a key result of adopting this strategy was that the newly formed in-house ICT team was given a clear and concise blueprint to work from which is solely the reason why the ICT team is able to respond to a significant change to the Shire's Operational needs.

The ICT Service Team was designed and implemented to remotely support staff who also may be working remotely from a systems perspective. Whilst the majority of our Service Desk staff will be working remotely, some staff will be scheduled to return to the administration building to ensure that our ICT server room and incoming mail (Australia Post) continue to function so ICT can continue delivering excellent services.

## Governance

### Council and committee meetings

Council performs a critical role within local government as a decision-making authority. In these challenging times, Council's role continues. The way that this role is performed, however, must be considered in the context of evolving pandemic requirements to protect public health and the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995* which establishes rules for the conduct of Council as a decision-making and quasi-judicial body.

An approach is required which both meets public health rules and continues Council business to be conducted in a legal manner in order to ensure the integrity, transparency and accountability of decision-making. While changes are proposed to meet public health requirements, to ensure the legitimacy of Council decision-making it is important that the rules concerning the conduct of Council meetings provided by legislation are not compromised.

The pertinent requirements in the Act are:

- Section 5.19 Quorum for meetings
- Section 5.23 Meetings generally open to public
- Section 5.24 Question time for public

and of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*:

- Regulation 14A Attendance by telephone etc
- Regulation 14B Attendance by telephone etc. after natural disaster

The legislation requires Council meetings to be open to the public with members attending in-person.

Notwithstanding, section 109 of the Constitution of Australia provides that when a law of a State is inconsistent with a law of the Commonwealth, the latter shall prevail, and the former shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be invalid. This means that the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (Cth) prevails over Western Australian law to the extent of any inconsistency. With a national biosecurity emergency declared in Australia indoor gatherings of over 100 people are prohibited.



### *Restrictions on the public gallery*

To comply with the *Commonwealth Biosecurity Act 2015* and evolving instructions from the Commonwealth, Council Meetings will need to be restricted including Councillors and staff. It is proposed that the layout of the public gallery places chairs in accordance with social distancing rules. This would limit access to the public gallery.

The approach of limiting members of the public gallery is consistent with the approach of WA Parliament. In March 2020, the Parliament of Western Australia announced that Parliament would continue to function but with the suspension of tours, functions and a limit on the number of people in the public gallery of 10 people at any one time.

### *Changes to seating at Council*

The guidance on social distancing applies equally to Councillors, staff and the public. To separate Councillors and staff, changes to the seating arrangements are proposed to achieve a physical separation of Councillors and of staff. These changes would see additional desks be placed within the 'horseshoe' to spread-out Councillors and move all staff except the CEO and minute taker from the 'horseshoe'. Due to the hardwiring of the Council chamber's computers and television, it is not practical to move the minute-taker or for all Councillors to have a desk-microphone. A floor microphone can be provided.

### *Live-streaming of Council meetings*

Clause 8.5 of the Shire's Standing Orders permits the visual recording of Council meetings with Council's permission. There are no other legislative barriers associated with the live-streaming of Council meetings. The current Council Chamber configuration is not well-suited to live-streaming which would limit broadcast quality. The possibility of audio-streaming needs to be considered further as there are technical considerations and limitations. It is proposed to report back to Council on the feasibility of audio streaming once these issues have been further investigated.

### *Participation by telephone*

Regulation 14B of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996* states that if a council member is prevented from being physically present because of a natural disaster they may participate by audio contact when approved by either the President or Council. The term 'prevented', is important because it does not infer discretion. It seems reasonable that if a Council Member was required to self-isolate they could be taken as being prevented. If a Council member is required to self-isolate, this could be available commencing immediately. This provision may be required if rules pertaining to social distancing continue to be restricted.

Officers are expected to receive further details on this matter next week.



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### *Public question time*

A period for public question time is a requirement of the Act and an important transparency mechanism. It is recommended that public question time continues with precautions used to sanitise the microphone used. There is nothing in legislation, including the Shire's Standing Orders or the relevant Council policy that would prevent public questions received prior to the meeting being read by Shire staff member.

### *Policy Concept Forum and Q&A*

Where possible, the Shire is continuing to operate business as usual. Policy Concept Forum and Q&A are a critical communication between Council and the Shire's administration and should, if possible, be continued albeit within the public health guidelines related to social distancing. The rules pertaining to social distancing may make holding PCF and Q&As impractical.

### *Committees and Advisory Groups*

Council has established two committees under the Act, an Audit, Risk and Governance Committee and CEO Employment Committee. There is no immediate need to cancel meetings of these Committees and it is recommended that they continue.

In December 2019, Council resolved to establish an Access and Inclusion Group, Cemeteries Advisory Group, and Equine Advisory Group. The appointments to these groups were scheduled to be made at the April Ordinary Council Meeting. Given the demographics of the nominees of these groups, it is recommended that Council defers appointment at this time.

### *Prioritisation of matters presented to Council*

The implementation of precautionary arrangements will impact the Shire as a workplace. The impact is unknown but is likely to involve a reprioritisation of projects. Matters presented to Council will reflect the challenging and evolving circumstances.

### *Strategic Risk Workshop*

At the 16 March 2020 Ordinary Council Meeting, Council recommended the Audit, Risk and Governance Committee and Councillors attend a Strategic Risk Workshop at the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale offices on 7 April 2020. Similar to PCF's and Q&A, this workshop can still continue albeit within the public health guidelines related to social distancing, pending the availability of the facilitator. It should be noted however that this piece of work would not be classed as "urgent council business" and could be rescheduled. The only implication would be a delay to the completion of the Shire's Strategic Risk Register project.



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## Governance and Council Support

### *Citizenship ceremonies*

The Shire delivers citizenship ceremonies on behalf the Department of Home Affairs. The Department of Home Affairs have issued rolling advice about ceremonies with each introducing additional precautions. The most recent advice is that ceremonies may continue but only the conferees should attend with no invited guests and that non-essential elements such as the playing of the national anthem, reading of conferee names, group affirmation and provision of refreshments should not take place. The next ceremony is due to take place on 3 May 2020. It is recommended that Citizenship ceremonies continue albeit with restrictions imposed and that the number of conferees is limited to 20 people.

### *Corporate business plan and service plans*

The rapidly changing environment may necessitate a reprioritisation of Council projects and services in line with financial constraints and considerations. This may impact the timetable for a new Corporate Business Plan and service plans.

### *Legislative compliance and continuous improvement*

Alternative work arrangements may complicate business improvement and governance initiatives including delegations review, policy improvement, strengthening internal controls and governance by limiting the engagement and interaction between staff that is an important element in the design and implementation of appropriate strategies. While progress in the Shire's efforts to mature the organisation from a governance perspective may be impacted, the conditions should not result in a decline in governance or legislative compliance.

## **Communication**

A Communications Plan has been developed to ensure there is open and regular communication with Councillors, staff, volunteers and the community regarding the Shire's response to COVID-19.

The Communications Plan details the activities and channels that the Shire will use to communicate with internal and external stakeholders. The key messages will be reviewed and updated daily as information and advice becomes available from government and health authorities.

The plan also recommends that the CEO be authorised to speak on behalf of the Local Government, in consultation with the Deputy Shire President, if the Shire President is unavailable.

A copy of this plan is attached at **attachment 2** for Councils consideration.

The Shire will promote updates to the Community, with links provided to the WA Health Department website



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### ***Shire staff leave entitlements***

It is possible that staff will contract the virus at some stage over the coming months. This will impact upon the sick leave entitlements available to staff.

In response to these impacts upon State Government public servants, the State Government has provided an additional 20 days sick leave for COVID-19. A copy of the media release regarding this announcement is attached for Councillors reference at **attachment 3**.

Officers are recommending Council approve an additional 10 days of paid sick leave for staff across the organization if they contract COVID-19. If Council is supportive of this recommendation, Officers would prepare a Policy for COVID-19 for consideration at the April Ordinary Council Meeting.

### ***Recovery arrangements***

Whilst Recovery from this virus is some way off, Officers are recommending work commence now in preparing a recovery plans. Officers anticipate there will be the following recovery plans:

- Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale Organisational Recovery Plan. Officers expect this plan will be presented to Council, at least informally at a point in the future.
- Community Recovery Plan. This will be developed by the Local Recovery Coordination Group and is not expected to be presented to Council in accordance with the Local Recovery Management arrangements, however it may share with Councillors for their information.

The State Government is encouraging Local Governments to consider an economic stimulus. Officers are currently investigating this matter.

### **Options and Implications**

Options have been outlined as part of the report and are for Council's consideration.

The main option for Council to determine is if it wants a staged closure of Shire operations as outlined in the report or a more direct closure at this time. To mitigate risk for the entire organisation and continue to service the community, Officers are recommending that the business be able to operate for as long as possible prior to any potential forced closure.



## **Conclusion**

There is no certainty on how the COVID-19 virus will affect the Shire over the coming weeks and months.

The measures outlined above are designed to ensure the organisation is as well prepared as possible and staff are supported during this time. It should be noted that Officers expect to see some impact upon efficiencies and productivity and the ability to complete projects in a timely manner. Planning to protect the critical functions for the community is a key consideration for the organisation.

It is likely that further reports will be presented to Council regarding this matter as the situation changes and unfolds. However, the recommendations contained in this report are designed to be the best for the organisation at this time.

## **Attachments (available under separate cover)**

- **6.1.1 - attachment 1** – Draft Business Continuity Plan – COVID-19 Pandemic Response (E20/3494)
- **6.1.1 - attachment 2** – Draft Communications Plan (E20/3474)
- **6.1.1 - attachment 3** – Media Release Public Service Sick Leave COVID-19 (E20/3448)

## **Alignment with our Strategic Community Plan**

COVID-19 was not identified or planned for in the Shire's Strategic Community Plan or Corporate Business Plan.

The Shire is currently reviewing its Corporate Business Plan which is expected to be completed in the coming months prior to June 2020.

Depending upon the impacts of COVID-19 on the organisation (which won't be known for some time) Council may need to reconsider timeframes and priorities in the Corporate Business Plan. This will be the subject of a future report to Council for consideration.



## Financial Implications

It is too early to determine what the financial impacts upon the organisation will be a result of COVID-19. Whilst it is enviable there will be increases in expenditure there is also going to be significant changes to income the Shire receives. These costs will need to be identified as part of the Third Quarter FACR process.

It may be that governments reimburse local government for costs associated with COVID-19, however, this is not known at this stage. In preparation for this, Officers are capturing all direct costs associated with the virus in a particular account for future reference.

In terms of the additional sick leave proposed as part of the policy, the cost of two weeks salary for the organisation is up to \$500,000, depending on who accesses the leave. This is not an additional cost for the Shire but is the value of the potential lost productivity if staff are not at work.

The State Government is encouraging Local Governments to freeze rates in the coming financial year.

## Risk Implications

Risk has been assessed on the basis of the Officer's Recommendation.

Risk	Risk Likelihood (based on history and with existing controls)	Risk Impact / Consequence	Risk Rating (Prior to Treatment or Control)	Principal Risk Theme	Risk Action Plan (Controls or Treatment proposed)
Council does not adopt the Business Continuity Plan and related recommendations contained in this report resulting in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service delivery to the community being halted</li> <li>• Organisation non-compliance with Public Health and Workplace</li> </ul>	Possible (3)	Catastrophic (5)	High (10-16)	Service Interruption - 5 Catastrophic - Indeterminate prolonged interruption of critical core service deliverables –  Health - 5 Catastrophic - Fatality, permanent disability  Compliance - 4 Major - Non-	Council approval and subsequent implementation of the Business Continuity Plan and related recommendations contained in this report.



<p>Health and Safety law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Non-compliance with other legislative requirement</li><li>• Possible threat to public health, including Staff, Councillors and Volunteers as well the general community.</li></ul>				<p>compliance results in termination of services or imposed penalties</p>	
<p>Community expectations for service delivery can not be met within the constraints of the Business Continuity Plan and related recommendations</p>	<p>Likely (4)</p>	<p>Minor (2)</p>	<p>Moderate (5-9)</p>	<p>Reputation - 3 Moderate - Substantiated, public embarrassment, moderate impact on key stakeholder trust or moderate media profile</p>	<p>Implementation of the communications plan</p>



## Risk Matrix

Consequence		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic	
		1	2	3	4	5	
Likelihood	Almost Certain	5	Medium (5)	High (10)	High (15)	Extreme (20)	Extreme (25)
	Likely	4	Low (4)	Medium (8)	High (12)	High (16)	Extreme (20)
Possible	3	Low (3)	Medium (6)	Medium (9)	High (12)	High (15)	
Unlikely	2	Low (2)	Low (4)	Medium (6)	Medium (8)	High (10)	
Rare	1	Low (1)	Low (2)	Low (3)	Low (4)	Medium (5)	

A risk rating of **15** has been determined for this item.

Any items with a risk rating over 10 (considered to be high or extreme risk) will be added to the Risk Register, and any item with a risk rating over 17 will require a specific risk treatment plan to be developed.

**Voting Requirements:** Simple Majority

### Officer Recommendation

#### That Council

1. **ADOPTS** the revised Business Continuity Plan – COVID 19 Response as contained within attachment 1.
2. **ADOPTS** the communications plan attached at attachment 2.
3. **REQUESTS** the Chief Executive Officer to commence preparing an organisational recovery plan for Councils consideration.
4. **REQUESTS** the Chief Executive Officer to draft a policy for COVID-19 including approving an additional 10 days sick leave for those staff confirmed as having the virus for Council's consideration.
5. **ENDORSES** the cancellation and future rescheduling of the annual bushfire brigade volunteers award and recognition evening event.
6. **APPROVES** the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale's prohibited burning period being extended by the Chief Bushfire Control Officer for a period of 14 days to end on 14 April 2020.
7. **NOTES** that extension of the prohibited burning period does not apply to prescribed burn activities undertaken by the Shire's bushfire brigades commensurate with the mitigation activity funding awarded under DFES's Mitigation Activity Funding Program.
8. **APPROVES** the closure of the Youth Space and Youth Drop-in program until such a time as the Chief Executive Officer deems it safe to reopen.
9. **APPROVES** the cancellation of the Youth Fest 2020 event.



10. **AUTHORISES** the Chief Executive Officer to determine the date of closure of the Serpentine Jarrahdale Community Recreation Centre in consultation with the YMCA WA, when deemed necessary.
11. **ENDORSES** the cancellation of the ANZAC Day Processional March and Commemorative Service 2020, and supports the alternative arrangements as outlined in this report.
12. **AUTHORISES** the Chief Executive Officer to cancel any Shire delivered events, programs and activities deemed necessary.
13. **RESOLVES** that Council Policy 5.1.4 Facility Hire- Cancellation Fees is not applied to any bookings where the cancellation is made in the period 16 March to 30 June 2020.
14. **ENDORSES** that the May 2020 round of the General Grants not be run and **REQUESTS** the Chief Executive Officer bring a report to Council as soon as practicable with a review of the community grants program.
15. **AUTHORISES** the Chief Executive Officer to close the Mundijong Public library when deemed necessary.
17. **APPROVES** limiting seating in public gallery at Council and Committee meetings in line with Government requirements.
18. **APPROVES** changes to the seating arrangements for Councillors to achieve Government requirements.
19. **REQUESTS** the Chief Executive Officer investigates the opportunity to broadcast audio from Council and Committee meetings via internet streaming with options presented Council for consideration.
20. **REQUESTS** that the Chief Executive Officer write to the Department of Home Affairs to limit the number of conferees for future citizenship ceremonies in accordance with Government requirements and **NOTES** that future ceremonies will be conducted based on abridged format recommended by the Department of Home Affairs subject to future Commonwealth or State Government advice.
21. **APPROVES** that the Chief Executive Officer to cancel future PCF and Q&A meetings in consultation with the Shire President, in line with Government requirements, when deemed necessary.
22. **APPROVES** that the Chief Executive Officer write to nominees to the Access and Inclusion Advisory Group, Cemeteries Advisory Group and Equine Advisory Group advising them that Council will be defer appointing members to the groups at this time.



**7. Motions of which notice has been given:**

**8. Urgent business:**

**9. Closure:**