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**ITEM**

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**SPECIAL COUNCIL****DATE**

01 April 2020

**HEADING**

CEO Update - City of Salisbury Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

**AUTHOR**

John Harry, Chief Executive Officer, CEO and Governance

**CITY PLAN LINKS**

4.3 Have robust processes that support consistent service delivery and informed decision making.

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

**SUMMARY**

This report provides a summary of actions to date by the administration, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Council's previous decisions on 23 March 2020.

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the information be received and noted.

**ATTACHMENTS**

There are no attachments to this report.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The City of Salisbury is a public authority and community service provider, responsible for providing essential services and complying with statutory obligations.
- 1.2 Like all councils, it is confronted by significant challenges to ensure it does all it can to assist with protecting the community and Council staff from the health threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (coronavirus).
- 1.3 In particular, Council is faced with rapidly changing circumstances and disruption caused by coronavirus, coupled with dealing with numerous information sources of varying quality that, at times, can cause added anxiety among members of the community and staff, and pose a risk of inconsistent decision making.
- 1.4 Due to the often rapidly changing circumstances the administration has sought advice as appropriate and participated in teleconference discussions with the LGA about being well positioned to act responsibly and in a measured and timely fashion.
- 1.5 The contents of this report responds to the resolutions adopted by Council at its meeting on 23 March 2020 in relation to the Motions on Notice regarding Coronavirus; Essential Services to Support Seniors et al; Minimising Financial Impact on our Community and other measures.

**2. REPORT****Council Service Delivery Overview**

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- 2.1 Throughout the discussion and participation in a number of conference forums facilitated by the LGA by both the Mayor and the CEO there has been a lot of discussion on what is considered essential services in relation to the provision of services by Local Government.
  - 2.2 At the outset, it is important to state that while it is accepted that Council is responsible for providing essential services and complying with statutory obligations, those essential services are not listed comprehensively in any relevant legislation, such as the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act).
  - 2.3 For the purpose of this report and the decision making that is imperative in our response to the coronavirus, essential services are understood to reasonably include, but are not necessarily limited to public and environmental health, waste management and other matters that might pose a public risk, such as hazard protection or remediation. It also includes the provision of services to known vulnerable community members.
  - 2.4 In addition, Council and its administration are obliged to comply with legislated responsibilities allocated to them.
  - 2.5 The perspective given by Senator Birmingham at a recent LGA Conference Forum, articulated the position of the Government being that rather than specify provision of essential and non-essential services, their approach has been to identify those services/business operations/activities which they require to be discontinued in order to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. In adopting this approach they consider that this then provides the best opportunity of maintaining a level of economic activity whilst specifically targeting activities which will contribute to the spread of COVID-19.
  - 2.6 In this Forum and others with State Government Ministers, Local Government is regarded as a critical entity for the maintenance of services which support both economic activity and social wellbeing. Moreover, the intent is that as COVID-19 impacts arise, Local Government will become an important deliverer at a local/precinct level of initiatives being put in place by Federal Government to assist social and economic stability and recovery.

### **Coronavirus Working Group**

- 2.7 The internal Coronavirus Working Group meets on a daily basis to coordinate initiatives across the organisation and identify changed circumstances that need to be implemented in our business operations as a consequence of Federal and State Government directives.
- 2.8 The initiatives implemented are summarised below are in addition to those previously reported to Council in March.

### **Information Gathering, Communications from Council meeting held 23 March 2020**

- 2.9 Daily updates are being provided to all staff as events unfold and decisions are being made. Information to staff has also included advice about general hygiene and social distancing.
- 2.10 Elected Members have received periodic briefing as the administration responds to the advice from State and Commonwealth health authorities.

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- 2.11 Communications of previous Council resolutions have been provided to sporting clubs and alike and letters to Contacting Places of Worship regarding Social Distancing has taken place within the time.
- 2.12 Community Health and Wellbeing are currently coordinating care packages project to provide essential items to approximately 200 identified vulnerable persons. Each care package is expected to contain basic essential items such as non-perishable food and hygiene products to the value of approximately \$50-75.

Home Assist staff have been calling Commonwealth Home Care Support Package recipients for eligibility screening. Eligibility is determined by a person's access to support network, independence, ability to access essential items and health. Other community members from Seniors Centres and Disability Programs are also being considered.

Currently, staff are researching suppliers of the essential items. Supermarkets Woolworths, Drakes, Foodland and Coles have been contacted to partner with City of Salisbury on this project and provide a centralised supply of essential items. We are currently awaiting the result.

As a backup, individual suppliers of toilet paper, soap and hand sanitiser have been contacted:

- Cleaning Trade Sales & Service, Modbury
- Chesser Chemicals, Ferryden Park
- Rapid Clean, Greenacres
- K&A Clearing Supplies, Plympton

Should Council not be able to source items, staff are investigating a voucher offering as an alternative.

- 2.13 Other matters in relation to financial sustainability are dealt with elsewhere in this Agenda.

### **3. Changes in Service Delivery and Governance**

- 3.1 ***Meetings via teleconference and or other electronic means*** – On 31 March 2020 Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Local Government Stephan Knoll issued the Electronic Participation in Council Meetings Notice (No1) 2020 allowing Council meetings to be conducted by electronic means.
- 3.2 The administration has enabled this to now occur.
- 3.3 ***Council's meeting schedule*** – The sustainability of Council's current Council/ Committees/ Sub Committees schedule is now not at risk due to the above Notice from the Minister. However, further consideration is being given to how best to manage the reporting agendas to sub-committees and committees in order to reflect changed operating conditions at both Council and administration areas.
- 3.4 ***Social Distancing – Continued Initiatives.*** The following has been implemented:
- Playgrounds and exercise areas within parks have been closed in accordance with Government directives.
  - In addition, City of Salisbury dog parks have been closed in the interest of public health and safety. Our decision provides additional controls and risk mitigation for environments that pose a potential area for virus transmission and also a potential for larger gatherings and breaching social

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distancing. By closing these now we significantly reduce our risks and in particular over the school holiday period. Other risks include the close contact between owners, due to dogs engaging with each other and or being required to be separated in the event of an incident.

Whilst the transfer of the virus from one dogs coat to another dog through contact and then to its owner has not been proven the risk potential is also there and cannot be discounted at this time. NZ have advised everyone to keep their dogs in the family circle.

Our staff patrolling these areas will advise anyone on the playground equipment or gym equipment they are closed and ask that do not use them, If they continue to use the facilities, we will provide them with a flyer advising of the closure but not enforce unless social distancing is a concern and we can request SAPOL to attend and support.

- ***Carparking*** - Currently the approach to parking controls is that we are applying a pragmatic approach to support the businesses / community, given that the demand on spaces is not at a premium as you would appreciate, and to provide a safe work environment for our staff.

For example time limit parking which is not a premium at the moment as it is mostly empty and hence our management of those spaces is of a lower priority and inspectors are tasked to other inspectoral activities.

Given less people are travelling and more cars are home during the day, for verge parking that is not causing a safety and/or access hazard we have enhanced the provision of information to the vehicle owner; however we are maintaining our existing practices when verge parking impacts on footpath access.

All 'red zones' are still being enforced (areas where parking is potentially dangerous) eg no stopping, yellow lines, any clear issue that will affect public safety and convenience.

In essence if the parking has a safety effect we will be patrolling it, and as indicated above management of spaces (vehicle turnover) noting we only patrol the on street sections which are not currently busy.

### ***Business Changes***

- Field Operations are now staggering their start times to avoid contact.
- Additional vehicles (15-20) have been hired to ensure that each staff member has their own vehicle to travel in to ensure social distancing within the field vehicles and enable continuation of service.
- Irrigation team attend their work sites directly from home without first attending the Operations Centre.
- Staff who are able to work from home have been enabled to do this, with the appropriate WHS criteria applied and technology provided, and regular contact being made by senior staff members to ensure they remain connected and work safely. In addition some 110 people are currently working from home, some on a rotational basis to ensure back-up for core service delivery.

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- Staff in the Salisbury Community Hub have been dispersed to ensure the social distancing requirements are met and all meeting rooms have signage indicating the number of people permitted in the room.
  - To assist in the management of social distancing and in accord with the Council resolution of putting in place appropriate measures for staff impacted by COVID-19, a Leave Policy which provides for additional leave provision of up to 15 days to be accessed only by those staff who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are required to self isolate or require special carers needs as a consequence of COVID-19 will be advised to staff tomorrow. This is generally consistent across Local Government at a metropolitan level.
  - *Business Hours* – In light of changing demand patterns for services at the Salisbury Community Hub and other library facilities (where direct front of counter and library Click and Collect services are offered) those facilities will be closed on weekends and late night provisions beyond 5pm will be similarly ceased.
  - As a consequence of the closure of facilities staff are being redeployed or re-tasked to provide alternative solutions to maintain a service. In addition where demand for particular contact for the organization has increased, eg emails and via phone resourcing has been dispersed to support these increased demands. Specific examples include the following :
  - ‘Click and Collect’ services allow for community to phone and place an order for items to collect at the customers convenience at all sites will no physical contact with staff. All available items are sanitised and then once the customer arrives at the designated collection area, they are placed in the vehicle providing for social distancing protocols. As an extension of this, ‘Library to your Door’ allows of delivery and pick up of any items from the collection to customer’s home again without any physical contact. Home Library Services have increased services by 100% allowing all existing customers to increase number of items delivered or the frequency of delivery. Likewise Nursing Home and Retirement Village visits have increased in response to demand.
  - Virtual Library service includes an increase in available online resources, and promotion of existing content. Community members who do not currently have an online account are assisted to do so over the phone without the need to provide identification. Online programming and early literacy resources have been in high demand.
  - Telephone calls to all sites has increased by 500%, of these calls community are seeking access to the alternative services, set up of new accounts or have queries regarding general Council services, opening hours and available community resources
  - With the closure of face to face contact at library sites staff have been deployed to the alternative service delivery options, whilst others have chosen to take leave provisions.

***Other businesses impacted***

- Salisbury Mausoleum has closed.

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- All various retail and cafes – watching brief being undertaken by Polaris Economic Team and discussion held with Minister for Trade and Industry regarding partnership arrangements for stimulating investment and attraction at a local and sector based level.

#### **4. CONCLUSION / PROPOSAL**

- 4.1.1 This report be received and we are continuing to look at initiation of new work practices to reflect changing directives and community needs as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19. This includes ongoing consideration of service delivery and management of resources. These matters will be further considered in the April round of meetings as is required.

#### **CO-ORDINATION**

Officer:

Date: