

# Kojonup



SHIRE OF KOJONUP

**MINUTES**

**ANNUAL  
MEETING OF ELECTORS**

16 April 2024

At the Kojonup Sporting Complex commencing 6.00pm

**1. WELCOME**

The Shire President, Cr Roger Bilney, declared the meeting open at 6.05pm and alerted the meeting to the procedures for emergencies including evacuation, designated exits and muster points and outline the procedures of the meeting.

**Acknowledgement of Country**

The Shire of Kojonup acknowledges the first nations people of Australia as the Traditional custodians of this land and, in particular, the Keneang people of the Noongar nation upon whose land we meet.

We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

**2. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES**

Cr Roger Bilney	Shire President
Cr Cindy Wieringa	Deputy Shire President
Cr Ned Radford	
Cr Egerton-Warburton	
Cr Mick Mathwin	
Cr Kerry Mickle	

**STAFF**

Grant Thompson	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Judy Stewart	Manager Governance and Administration
Jill Watkin	Manager the Kodja Place, Tourism and Marketing

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Nil

**APOLOGIES**

Cr Paul Webb  
Robyn and Chris Evans  
Melvin Hettner

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

Frank Pritchard, Laurie Prandi, Jill House, Frank House, Jill Mathwin, Digby Stretch, Kath Mathwin, Ian Robertson, Kristel Thomson, Ryan Coleman, Debbie Keillor, Peta Zadow, Cathy Ivey, Ian Bignell

3. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION/DECISION

1AEM/24 Moved Laurie Prandi

Seconded Jill Mathwin

That the minutes of the Annual Meeting of Electors held 19 July 2023 be accepted.

CARRIED

4. REPORTS

4.1. Shire President

The Shire President, Cr Roger Bilney, spoke to his report as contained within the Annual Report.

**Question:**

If there is a reduction in untied grant, what period of notice would we get?

**Answer:**

In the last payment period the Shire became aware of the amount just a short time (approx. 2 weeks) before it was paid into the Shire's account.

Most recent Federal Assistant Grant (FAG) was \$2.4m. Two and a half years ago we received the FAG in November.

The past two years we've received it in June – The Shire has been informed that last year \$100,000 was overpaid which will be deducted off the next FAG payment in 2024.

**Question:**

What is the model of calculation – is the formula publicly available?

**Answer:**

Not aware.

30 June 2023 - \$1.7m into previous financial year then \$422,000 in November with a press release two weeks prior.

Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program (LRCIP) is winding down and funding will no longer be available for subsequent budgets – Phase 4 is the last of the LRCIP untied money. FAG is not for capital but can be used at discretion except for the road portion. We used that grant for any town road funding.

**Question:**

The items linked to that funding – do they drop out of the budget if the money doesn't come through?

**Answer:**

Not the current projects that are currently fully funded, but yes any future projects the Shire might have had allocated to LRCIP will require new funding sources or the Shire will have to prioritise projects.

**Question:**

Woodenup Road – widening?

**Answer:**

Legacy issues with roads that, overtime, agriculture machinery has scaled up faster than roads can support or the Shire can upgrade. The Shire is conscious of removing trees and native vegetation to support this but will continue to trim the trees using best endeavours without having to remove legacy flora.

The President presented a slideshow outlining the following:

- Shire's desire to be transparent, open and to communicate clearly and with integrity
- Sustainability discussion
- Grant funding and long term impact – why we are in the position we are: Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) in 2015 was for 15 years. From 2019 to 2023 the Shire's debt increased from \$0.453m to \$5.249m.

**Question:**

Put rates up to cover?

**Answer:**

The Shire needs to bring the community along with such a decision – look at services we provide, are they what the community requires?

**Question:**

Compare with other Shires?

**Answer:**

The Shire has limited data in this space so can't answer at this stage, suspect similar. Our facilities are punching above our weight – suspect others have cashflow problems to differing degrees. It seems that the culture in Local Government is to keep rates down as low as possible.

Across 34 years the average rate increase was 4%: 1991 was 8.5% - 10 years later it was 25% (therefore, large increases in mix as well), increase doesn't drop off - base includes those previous rises. The goal is to stop the highs and lows and stabilize the cashflow over a longer period.

If 4.25% over the same period year in year out, the Shire could have raised an additional \$0.5m in last year's rates on UV rateable properties only. This would have covered the requirements for inflationary cashflow issues we are seeing.

**Question:**

4.25% each year?

**Answer:**

Average of 34 years (on UV – farming land).

**Question:**

Differential % to UV?

**Answer:**

UV values have increased but the rates on UV properties have not inflated inline with GRV such that GRV rate has increased 11 to 12 times, whereas the UV rate has only escalated 3-4 times compared to the increase in valuations and earning capacity of the land.

**Question:**

Is local government allowed to have a tiered rate?

**Answer:**

Not as suggested in the question, but the Shire does have flexibility between UV and GRV areas of value.

**Question:**

Smaller landowners pay less?

**Answer:**

No, the ability to differentiate between small and large land owners is problematic – last year charged 2023/24 \$570m valuation. UV – previously 1.5c in the dollar charged has halved to 0.7c in the dollar charged - value in farming land has outpaced increase in UV rate. GRV – different values and greater escalator on the rate in the dollar.

Shire is not wanting to increase the rates by 10% - when we do the Long Term Financial Plan, we need to build in a buffer to cater for cashflow requirements in the future. We manage by:

- Removing or delaying projects as cash is available
- Reducing reserves (\$750,000 in recent years)
- Increasing borrowings – we are currently at peak borrowing capacity with WA Treasury Corporation.
- LRCIP – Phase 4 is coming to an end – have received in excess of \$2m over 4 years (Men's Shed \$750,000, Toy Library roof, Harrison Place toilets, Soldier Road, parking at Netball Courts, Soldier Road, Memorial Hall restoration and re-roof, EV Charging Station (Shire site works), Apex Park, CCTV.

**Question:**

Any additional grants?

**Answer:**

Whilst LRCIP is no longer available, there are alternative grants but they are tied capital funding mechanisms – i.e.; 50% equivalent funding has to come from the Shire. Kojonup-Darkan Road – fully funded from Black Spot. Regional Road Group funding is 1/3<sup>rd</sup> Shire funding. Road grants – Milestones are 40% accounted for as a first payment, apply for next 40%, project needs to be completed to get last 20%.

Initial funding of projects can create cashflow issues. Rumble strip encountered contractor shortages and needs completion before getting last of money, \$447,000. \$1.875m trade receivables – gone up by \$1.5m due to long time projects.

**Question:**

Rates up .25% each year?

**Answer:**

May well need more than .25% but, if we had done that previously, we would be in a better position.

The LTFP is a fantastic model and allows looking at the next 15 years' cashflow. Can factor in things like streetscape by adding .25% to what we would raise.

Need to bring document out of drawer each year, consult with community on an annual basis, alter numbers as the plan rolls out e.g.; due to unforeseeable events and update each year for such things as the swimming pool, youth precinct, main street pipes/powerline problems.

The LTFP document can cover the continuity gap when we get a new CEO or Council.

**Question:**

Grants – people not factoring in cost of maintaining and operating?

**Answer:**

Need a change to project budgeting and estimates process to include the cost of operating and maintaining. May not happen but aiming for people to have their rates late July/Early August, not mid-September. Need to review services with community – Springhaven, the Kodja Place precinct. In good conversation with Springhaven provider.

The Shire is not selling the land or building assets at Springhaven, only leasing.

**Comment:**

It has gone from a low care hostel to high care.

**Response:**

Hall and Prior run home care packages and this is the future of Aged Care with mobile services.

**Question:**

Does the Shire have plans for extension?

**Answer:**

The Shire hasn't reviewed any plans at this stage.

**Comments:**

Malcolm Watson was President when original plans were drawn up, a public consultant was brought in – the Recreation Room didn't go down well with the community at the time. (Jill Mathwin will have a look for those plans). Judith McDougall drew plans up.

**Comment:**

Historically, consultants were engaged to do plans, this cost a lot of money and was a most cost inefficient waste of money resulting in parked projects.

**Response:**

Consultants are a resource where the Shire does not have the inhouse capability, LTFP requires a consultant – large, complex document, a consultant needs to be engaged.

**Comments:**

Right direction, community consultation – community knows what it wants.

Frustration with grants projects – should be asked what community wants. Historically, Community not asked but given to consultant who designed completely differently – community had no input – have a list of what people want. Staff told to employ people with the knowledge.

**Response:**

The project pipeline and framework we are now doing ensures that the Shire communicates with all stakeholders first so they can tell us what they want. Community wants to be involved.

**Comment:**

Difficult road ahead because time spent should be respected. Came back four years later – in the past nothing happened or was asked for, again and again – frustrated by bureaucracy.

**Response:**

Need to regain trust of community. The physical activity of decisions of borrowing money is strategic and for Council to decide.

Shire genuinely wants to know what the community wants.

Support strongly that every decision re borrowing needs to be clear – limits on capacity needs to be set by Council.

**Comment:**

Consistency needs to be there – look at all assets Shire owns, some are looking tired. Whatever is put in place needs to be able to be followed through.

**Response:**

Large projects (e.g.; Spring –\$2m. Men’s Shed, Streetscape etc), need to be fully considered before consultants are engaged. The scale of the project needs to be considered and benchmarked against the LTFP and capacity of the Shire to borrow money.

It’s not what consultants want, it’s what community wants – involve community in the design phase of the project earlier in the process.

Consultants do have a role when there is no capability in house and at certain points in any project. From an audit perspective, they do add value, i.e.; quantitative surveyors, designers, etc.

**4.2 Chief Executive Officer**

The CEO, Mr Grant Thompson, tabled the CEO’s report as read.

**5. REPORTS**

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION/DECISION**

2AEM/24 Moved Ian Bignell

Seconded Digby Stretch

That the Shire of Kojonup 2022/2023 President’s Report be received.

**CARRIED**

**6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS/OTHER BUSINESS OF A GENERAL NATURE**

**6.1 Questions Taken on Notice**

Nil

**6.2 An Opportunity for Questions, Feedback or Items to be raised from the floor**

Strategic Community Plan (SCP)

The CEO presented a slideshow relating to the SCP.

First year of new SCP – two and a half years focusing on performance to get to this point with a lot of internal items. Cultural change takes five years - now have to focus on the next three years. SCPs are subject to four yearly reviews – the SCP is a Community plan.

**Question:**

Now what happens?

**Answer:**

Implement the Corporate Business Plan – Council will identify the ‘how’ to achieve the strategic initiatives identified by the Community. e.g.; Diverse Accommodation Options, land packages – Council considering how to release for new development.

**Question:**

Environment Action?

**Answer:**

Engagement is the next phase, asking Community to allow us time to fix this space. We are currently recruiting for expertise in this space.

**Question:**

Document system/electronic system?

**Answer:**

Yes, looking for an evolution in technology – Enterprise Resource Planning system and Managed IT system (software, records – we have a backlog to catch up) are currently in a tender process.

Audit findings – significant items will be addressed. The Shire missed out on a qualified audit, given 12 months to improve, internally focused, stabilising team, managing cashflow and all financial controls under constant review.

**Comment:**

Follow up that Councillors are getting things done.

**Response:**

Planning to have two councillors at the Kodja Place for once per month Councillor meetings (roster system). If hearing gossip, Community are asked to come to source and ask, give us a call if not happy.

**Question:**

The Kodja Place?

**Answer:**

The CEO presented a slideshow on the Black Cockatoo Café. The President advised that the Shire is looking at transitioning the Café back to the Community, have refrained from making any rushed decisions and would like to discuss with community. Goal in the first year is to break even as a minimum and medium term profitability, make it a success and have available for precinct? As a package, fantastic place to stop, best place Perth to Albany, we’re prepared to fund that as it is a major stopping place.

**Comment:**

Other Community services? This is a service? The real beneficiaries are the people travelling – how much are we prepared to invest?



**Comment:**

Lease should possibly be private.

**Response:**

Shire understands the comment. The Council doesn't want to make that decision on Community's behalf. The Shire needs to weigh up the value proposition of privatising the Café versus to work toward making the Kodja Place cost less to the Community and return value to the Kodja Place as it was originally setup. Using the highway to make Black Cockatoo Café work. Now making positive for community, previously profit was going out of town – it is considered a better community outcome to manage inhouse.

**Question:**

Any attempt to count people getting out of cars? More people spending now than 10 years ago.

**Answer:**

Traffic counters are in place and counting.

**Comment:**

Tourism is costing us money.

**Response:**

Café and visitor centre use flows on through multiplier effects into the community—people walk up the street and buy something. During the Bloom Festival, some businesses more than doubled their takings. The more niche shops, the more spend. Could consider adding toys to courtyard, holding more community events to attract people - will get better not worse. See Kodja Place as community hub – need community support and progress will continue.

**Comment:**

A large portion of funding, what the centre would contribute to the Community – don't lose that background.

**Response:**

People from all over the region are utilising KP for education etc, five other Shires coming in in the short term with large groups, need to get better at selling KP.

**Comment:**

Congratulations on Springhaven and Black Cockatoo Café turnaround.

**Comment:**

Bypass route will equate to 30% less income, lose 3 or 4 businesses – daft to close the main street.

**Response:**

Alternative freight route for heavy vehicles under review by the Council – Council want to find an alternative and not looking at bypass.

**Comment:**

COVID-19 – shut highway, business turnover dropped by 65%, Bridgetown said no to bypass.

**Response:**

We do have trucks which pose a risk and present a danger to community. Need to discuss with community this year.

**Comment:**

Parking on main road – people keep driving because they can't park, they don't realise they can walk through from behind shops.

**Response:**

Community discussion sessions are required on this item.

**Comments:**

Serious discussions/slow down going downhill, 50kms going up 40Km coming down – not three caravans outside IGA. Need caravan parking.

**Response:**

1. Set speed limit going down at 40kph maximum
  2. Median strip in middle
  3. Moving traffic not needing to stop - slip lanes placed so trucks don't have to stop
- Need wider road for the above.  
Data needs to support changes.

**Comment:**

Reduce to 40kph going down, leave at 50kph going up. Stop turning right into Gregory Street going down.

**Response:**

Need to have the discussion with the community re: alternative freight route.

**Question:**

Every couple of months get together?

**Answer:**

Generally every quarter is more practical.

**Question:**

What is happening with Landcare?

**Comment:**

Natural Resource Manager being recruited.

**Question:**

Committed to look after the land that we use etc.

**Answer:**

Looking at reviewing initiatives around this. It is a clear item in the SCP.

*Kristel Thomson and Ryan Coleman left the meeting at 8.20pm.*

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION/DECISION**

3AEM/24 Moved Cathy Ivey

Seconded Digby Stretch

That the Shire of Kojonup 2022/2023 Annual Report, as circulated, be received.

**CARRIED**

**7. CLOSURE OF MEETING**

There being no further business the Shire President declared the meeting closed at 8.20pm.

**8. ATTACHMENTS**

3. Unconfirmed Minutes of an Annual Electors Meeting held 19 July 2023
5. Annual Report and Annual Financial Report 2022/2023

UNCONFIRMED