

Questions Submitted in Writing – Council Meeting – 23 February 2022

James Judd, Colac

1. **When is the Colac Otway Shire Council going to hold an urgent review of all proposed development options under the Colac 2050 Growth Plan, then make certain all drainage and access will be able to handle a once in 100 year storm now that it is out from official channels that these events will occur at far more frequent intervals in all future years?.**

***Response from General Manager, Development and Community Services***

Council does not plan to revisit the Colac 2050 growth Plan. The flood and drainage studies undertaken for Colac in recent years modelled future impacts of flooding. Residential growth areas identified in the Growth Plan took this modelling into account. Future development will take account of flood prone areas and include flood mitigation measures where appropriate to ensure that development is flood free.

2. **While we hear the Colac regions is advancing, when will the Colac Otway Shire Council give a definite answer if the required open space and playing fields needed if the Colac 2050 Growth Plan is introduced will actually be provided in a usable state by the time the plan is due to be introduced?**

***Response from General Manager, Development and Community Services***

Open space, recreation and sporting facilities required to support Colac's growing population will be enhanced and expanded as required through future land development. Usable open space will be provided within new subdivisions where appropriate, and cash contributions required in other circumstances to embellish existing open space elsewhere. Future land developers will also make financial contributions towards the provision of new sporting facilities to meet the needs of new residents.

3. **To settle proceedings commenced by the Colac Otway Shire Council prior to a court decision being handed down in Council's favour, what was the total legal fees paid by or on behalf of the Colac Otway Shire Council in the 2020-2021 financial year?**

***Response from General Manager, Corporate Services***

Specific to Mr Judd's question, Colac Otway Shire did not incur any legal fees as a result of proceedings commenced and settled prior to a court decision in the 2020-21 financial year.

Total Legal costs for the Colac Otway Shire in the 20-21 financial year were \$153k including reviewing legal documents, providing professional advice/opinion and other governance matters.

4. **How much money did it cost the ratepayers and others of the Colac Otway Shire Council to send contaminated loads of recycling material to land fill in the 2020-2021 financial year, since contamination of loads by broken glass was not the users fault but the fault of the Colac Otway Shore Council for allowing lids to remain on bins after Council had prohibited items being put in this bin, when the lids specifically state that glass bottles and jars are permitted in this bin – the property of the Colac Otway Shire. When Council officers have a very long history of blasting the community at Council Meetings for doing the wrong thing and costing Council money as loads cannot be sold and you have to pay a landfill levy.**

***Response from General Manager, Environment and Infrastructure***

Council has not been charged for contamination in co-recycling during the 2020-2021 financial year, nor did any loads of recycle end up in landfill.

Glass has up until recently has formed a component of our co mingle collection stream. Contamination rates within this stream have been minimal with the inclusion of glass and readily accepted by our recycle processor.

With the fourth kerbside collection service for glass we are seeing month on month greater volumes of glass and a more consistent cleaner recycle stream.

5. **In a critical period of the year for people to enjoy the water, why did it take the Colac Otway Shire Council over three weeks to release a report that water in Lake Colac was not safe for swimming when this period included a number of hot days?**

***Response from General Manager, Development and Community Services***

Council undertakes a regular monitoring program for water quality in Lake Colac over the summer months, and took the decision to install signage discouraging swimming in the lake based on results from this testing.

**Justin Mason, Barongarook**

1. **Does council intend to grant a lease to the Forrest Caravan Park whilst the park is still non compliant?**

***Response from General Manager, Development and Community Services***

Council is working with the EPA to upgrade the wastewater facilities at Forrest Caravan Park. The Forrest Caravan Park is able to continue operating whilst the EPA review upgrade plans.

2. **In 2020 Council announced a new wastewater treatment plant for the Forrest Caravan Park and that there was \$250000 in the budget to complete the works. What has happened to the funds allocated?**

***Response from General Manager, Environment and Infrastructure***

Funding for the Forrest Caravan Park Wastewater Upgrade Project is currently allocated in Council's current budget. Some of these funds have been spent to date on the wastewater system design and project management costs. The balance will be retained for the upgrade when it has received EPA approval.

3. **The EOI process for the Forrest Caravan Park was extended numerous times after the advertised closing date. Why was this and how many other EOI 's within the same timeframe were extended ?**

***Response from General Manager, Development and Community Services***

As described in the Key Information of today's agenda item 10.2, the submission deadline for Forrest Caravan Park EOI was extended twice due to COVID restrictions preventing site visits, and at the reasonable request of proponents. It is not unusual for EOI's or Tender deadlines to be extended or re-opened if circumstances require it.

4. **Is Council going to change the plans for the wastewater treatment plant that were advertised and designed at great expense to the ratepayers of the shire?**

***Response from General Manager, Environment and Infrastructure***

There are no plans to change the wastewater treatment system design for the Forrest Caravan Park. Council is seeking approval from the EPA prior to commissioning the construction of the works.

**Nasser Kotb, Forrest**

The current contract of the “Forrest Caravan Park” lease stipulates loosely four times a year of overflow of visitors into the Common. This has been problematic and illustrated lack of foresight among those involved in drawing the contract. The proposed lease suggests the overflow into the Common to be the total of 41 days spread over 8 separate times per year.

- 1.1 Considering the limited capacity of onsite toilets and amenities, did the Council specify the limits on numbers of visitors allowed per each day of overflow (or the 250 patrons cap apply)?**

***Response from General Manager, Development and Community Services***

As per Clause 2.3.4 of the Invitation for Expression of Interest attached to today’s agenda item 10.2, once the Forrest Caravan Park Wastewater Upgrade Project is complete, the maximum patron capacity for the site will be approximately 264 patrons inclusive of the Forrest Common area.

- 1.2 What are the policies/procedures instituted in the lease contract to guarantee that “The Caravan Park (Leased area) must be 100% full before the overflow area is offered to customers”**

***Response from General Manager, Development and Community Services***

Terms of the Forrest Common use will form a clause in the lease agreement and managed appropriately through the management of the lease.

- 1.3 Would the Council publish on its website the actual outcome of the community consultation conducted by the Council; not the summarised version but the actual people’s opinions as provided to Council?**

***Response from General Manager, Development and Community Services***

De-identified results of community consultation regarding the future of Forrest Caravan Park were published in the 24 June 2021 Ordinary Council Meeting agenda, which can be accessed via Council’s website.

**Leonora Coolhaas, Forrest**

It is now known that methane emissions from gas warm our climate 83% faster than carbon dioxide in the short term. As well, we know that gas burned in our homes and public spaces can have serious health consequences contributing to asthma, some cancers and reproductive health concerns.

The pressure is on – Victoria needs to switch off the gas in the coming decade, and local governments have a powerful role to play in the transition towards electrification and the necessary switch away from gas.

Council has proudly shared with the community, its recent achievement of carbon neutrality in its operations. Just getting Bluewater off gas is thought to have reduced 8-10% of the Council’s total corporate emissions for the Shire (Council Meeting Agenda, 28 April 2021).

There is more to do.

- 1. In relation to Council facilities, will Council take action to transition all gas appliances that are at the end of their useful life and replace them with renewable-powered electric appliances?**

***Response from General Manager, Environment and Infrastructure***

When major gas powered appliances reach their end of their useful life Council will evaluate all options for providing the required service.

2. **Will Council take action to ensure that an amendment to the planning scheme is drafted in order to ban new gas connections across the municipality?**

*Response from General Manager, Development and Community Services*

There are no plans at present to undertake an amendment of this nature.

3. **Will Council staff and Councillors write to the State Energy Minister requesting:**
  - 3.1 a rapid transition away from gas state-wide?
  - 3.2 the equitable planned retirement of the gas network?
  - 3.3 an expansion of the energy upgrade program to help us switch off the gas forever?

*Response from General Manager, Environment and Infrastructure*

Council has not resolved anything in relation to this issue.

**Mary Dracup, Forrest**

1. **In 2021, Colac Otway Shire joined other councils leading the way in achieving carbon neutrality for their Council's own operations. I note that many neighbouring councils have also now stated higher ambitions in setting municipal-wide targets for net zero emissions, that is, reaching beyond just their Council operations to the whole community (for example Golden Plains by 2040, Geelong by 2035, Warrnambool by 2040, Ballarat by 2050). When will COS set its municipal-wide (community) targets for achieving net zero emissions?**

*Response from General Manager, Environment and Infrastructure*

Council has not resolved anything in relation to this issue.