

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday 14th February 2012 – 1.00PM – 3.30PM

Council Chambers

ATTENDANCE: Cr Walker, Cr Cameron, Cr Paul Steindl, Stuart Holley, Peter Cluff, Lisa Kermode, Robert Cocco, Bruce Milles, Joan Fitzsimmons and Margaret Lane.

APOLOGIES: Saskia von Fahland.

1. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held 13 December 2012 were accepted as a true and correct record.

Moved Paul Steindl

Seconded Lisa Kermode
CARRIED

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**1. Land Acquisition fund**

As per discussions held at the last meeting the possibility of increasing the funding cap to \$3 million was reviewed.

Stuart explained the reserve balance at the end of the financial year will have reached the \$2 million cap. This cap was introduced between 5 and 6 years ago and since then land and other costs have increased.

Stuart also advised that an application for Caring for our Country grant funding for approximately \$1.4 million was submitted recently, to assist with land acquisition.

Margaret advised if a Policy change is required it should be changed as part of the budget process.

It was agreed that a recommendation to increase the funding cap would not be provided until further consideration is given into the implications of this process.

2. East Point Development

A Development Application (DA) is currently before the courts requesting an extension of time so that the DA can be amended. Stuart Holley will advise further once an outcome is available.

3. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

1. **Coasts and Communities project/coastal activities update**

A detailed report on this item was received.

2. **Land for Wildlife Program**

A detailed report on this item was received.

3. **Sarina and Mirani Special Projects allocation**

Detailed reports on this item were received.

4. **Update on Natural Environment Plan**

Kerri Woodcock provided an update on the Natural Environment Plan:

Comments received and changes requested by Committee members have been recorded through the website, and Committee members are encouraged to review the plan and provide comments. Kerri also advised that mapping would be worked on and may be integrated with MiMaps as Council already uses this system. Additional features such as multimedia are still to come.

Kerri ran through the priority projects and budget allocations for the four chapters for 2012/13. Cr Cameron queried why the Peri-Urban project couldn't be included in the priority project listing as it would be good to have money available from the levy instead of needing to apply for funding grants. The peri-urban project is currently fully funded externally.

Bruce enquired whether the public washdown facility could be made into a project for NEAC instead of the Natural Environment Plan implementation. Stuart advised NEAC projects and the Natural Environment Plan projects are basically the same thing, with funding being allocated from the levy in both cases.

On a side note, Robert advised applications for two washdown facilities in Isaac and Whitsunday Regional Councils had been applied for.

It should be noted that the dollar figures recorded in the plan are Council's estimated cost of funds only.

4. **FINANCIALS**

The 2012/13 budget was discussed with minor changes to be made by Lisa.

The end result for next year's budget is to try and incorporate all works proposed into the Natural Environment review priority project listing, with approximately \$1.5 million total expenditure proposed.

It should be noted that the Land for Wildlife budget will be overspent by at least \$11,000 due to the contracts running over two financial years and the previously committed amount not being carried forward in this year's budget.

It should also be noted that the Significant Tree Register will start in March 2012 and funds may not be expended this financial year.

Margaret queried why \$6000 has been budgeted for a covered walkway to be installed at the Natural Environment Centre when she feels more important capital works are required at the site. Lisa to investigate what capital works are required at the Natural Environment Centre and report back to Stuart.

Robert asked that Reef Catchments be involved in the development of the workplan/contracts with the Landcare groups to ensure overlap is minimised and joint aspirations are achieved.

The committee asked that newly appointed Environmental Ranger be introduced at the next meeting and provide an overview of the work she is undertaking.

The committee noted the allocation for Sustainable Futures initiatives in the budget and asked that a presentation be given on the achievements to date of the Sustainable Futures Committee and Subcommittees.

Action - Lisa to amend the 2012/13 budget as per meeting discussions.

Action - Lisa to investigate what capital works are required at the Natural Environment Centre and report back to Stuart.

Action - Lisa to invite Jessica Renton to the next meeting to provide and overview of the Environmental Ranger's role.

Action – A representative of the Sustainable Futures Committee to be invited to present an overview of achievements at the next meeting.

Recommendation - The committee endorse the budget for consideration by Council in the 2012/13 budget review process.

Moved Margaret Lane

Seconded Joan Fitzsimmons
CARRIED

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

1. Grants Program Applications

Two grant applications were reviewed by the Committee, them being for:

- The construction of 50 Nest Boxes (medium mammal design) to offer to registered Land for Wildlife properties in the Mackay Region.
- To establish and monitor trial sites of the treatment of the weed *Ruellia tweediana* in Reliance Creek National Park and adjoining private land.

Margaret left the room at 3.06pm while the Committee discussed the applications. Margaret was then asked to return at 3.10pm to clarify to the Committee the possible budget structure over the three year period.

Margaret then left the room at 3.17pm while the Committee made its decision.

Action - Lisa to investigate the Grant Policy to determine if the Pioneer Catchment and Landcare Group Inc. will have any issue applying for future grants within the next three years as the Ruellia grant will not be finalised until 2015.

Recommendation – The Committee recommends that Council acquit funding to the Pioneer Catchment and Landcare Group Inc. on 1 July 2012 of \$4065 to fund the Nest Box project and \$6714 over three years starting on 1 July 2012 for the *Ruellia tweediana* trial and treatment sites project. (\$2214 in year 1, \$2034 in year 2 and \$2467 in year 3)

Nest Box Grant Application

Moved Cr Paul Steindl

Seconded Lisa Kermode

CARRIED

Ruellia tweediana trial and treatment sites Grant Application

Moved Cr Paul Steindl

Seconded Robert Cocco

CARRIED

2. Reef Catchment Grant Applications

Over the early part of January 2012 Reef Catchments has submitted the following project proposals within Caring for Our Country open grants and Clean Energy Futures program;

- ❖ Biodiversity Fund
 - Coastal Rescue - \$10,000,000 over 5 years - partnerships with GBR NRM RB's, local governments and private land holders. Based on the successful RR format the project seeks to rehabilitate key coastal landscapes and enhance bio diverse ecosystems and aligned landscape connectivity.
- ❖ Carbon Farming Futures Program (action on ground)
 - \$605,000 over 3.5 years - partnerships with CSIRO, Farmascist and PCL. Program focuses on on-ground demo trials which seek to evaluate the impact of farm BMP in sugar grazing and horticulture on soil carbon rate build up, nitrous oxide emissions. Outputs from BMP adoption area based on biophysical model outputs from programs such as APSIM and associated carbon models.
- ❖ Caring for Our Country (open call)
 - Implementing Feral Pig control - \$70,500 over 12 months. The project seeks to undertake catchment wide IMP action for reducing the landscape degradation caused from feral pigs. Operating in the Marion Creek, Gillinbin Creek, West Hill Creek, Carmilla Creek and Flaggy Rock Creek catchments respectively.

Reducing Parthenium and Giant Rats Tail seed spread – \$276,000 over 12 months. The project will undertake the installation of 2 public wash down facilities and create communication and promotions material for raising the awareness of seed dispersal across the region.

If successful the grants will provide additional funding for local Councils to put towards related environmental projects.

3. Climate Monitoring in Mackay Region

Professor Rodger Kitchner of Griffith University Queensland has developed climate monitoring technology which monitors the environment for climate change. There is an opportunity for Council to apply for funding to place 20-30 sites on Mt Dalrymple, Eungella. If installed, the sites would generate base data and once this was gained would then monitor any changes to the environment. This technology is currently used at sites in Northern New South Wales and the Atherton Tablelands in far North Queensland.

Action - Cr Cameron to forward detailed information to Robert.

Meeting closed 2.45 pm

Next meeting 3rd April, 12.00-2.00pm Council Chambers.

Actions arising from this meeting February 2012

Action - Lisa to amend the 2012/13 budget as per meeting discussions.

Action - Lisa to investigate what capital works are required at the Natural Environment Centre and report back to Stuart

Recommendation – The Committee recommends that Council acquit funding to the Pioneer Catchment and Landcare Group Inc. on 1 July 2012 of \$4065 to fund the Nest Box project and \$6714 over three years starting on 1 July 2012 for the *Ruellia tweediana* trial and treatment sites project. (\$2214 in year 1, \$2034 in year 2 and \$2467 in year 3)

Action - Lisa to investigate the Grant Policy to determine if the Pioneer Catchment and Landcare Group Inc. will have any issue applying for future grants within the next three years as the *Ruellia* grant will not be finalised until 2015.

Action - Cr Cameron to forward detailed information to Robert.

Actions arising from previous meetings

December 2011

Action: Stuart Holley to investigate the status of the East Point development and provide an update to the February meeting.

Action: Lisa to enquire about the committals for the Mirani projects.

Action: Committee to consider the 2012/13 budget at the February meeting.

Action: Reef Catchments to provide access to the NEP website for committee members and present the priority ranges, plains and waterways projects at the February meeting.

October 2011

Recommendation: That council further investigate opportunities to purchase the land at Blacks Beach Spit and keep the committee informed of progress.

June 2011

Action: Lisa to make the suggested changes to the Environment Levy brochure and present back to the committee for further comment.

In progress

Action: Committee to consider the Pest Management proposal at the August meeting.
To be considered by the committee