



DEVONPORT CITY COUNCIL

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COUNCIL ENDORSES HARDSHIP POLICY

COVID-19 Update

COUNCIL UPDATE

Residents suffering economic hardship as a result of the Coronavirus can apply to defer their rate payments for six months – double the typical period for such arrangements - under a Hardship Policy approved by the Devonport City Council at last night's meeting.

Council has also endorsed a zero per cent general rate increase for 2020/21 across all property categories and will freeze fees and charges at current levels.

Under the Hardship Policy Council may also waive the applicable late payment penalties, for a specified period, due to financial hardship.

It will not charge any payment penalties or interest for late rate payments during the 2020 COVID-19 state of emergency until at least 30 June 2020.

Remission of any rates, in part or in full, is reserved only for the most serious and exceptional of financial hardship cases.

Even in these cases, deferral of rate payments must be applied for and granted before an application for rates remission can be considered.

Council will continue to work with ratepayers having difficulty meeting their payment obligations by designing personal payment plans taking into account their particular circumstances.

Applicants will need to provide evidence of their circumstances of financial hardship to be eligible.

The Mayor, Annette Rockliff, said Council was determined to assist those most critically impacted by the slowdown with a robust and fair Hardship Policy.

She also urged those who could continue to pay their rates to do so.

"Their contribution will continue to make a big difference to the delivery of services the community needs."

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CURRENT COMMITTEE PREFERRED PROPONENT TO OPERATE HISTORIC KETCH THE JULIE BURGESS



PICTURE: Greg Close

The Devonport City Council has chosen the current crew and volunteer operations committee as its preferred proponent to take ownership of the historic sailing ketch the Julie Burgess following an Expressions of Interest process.

Council was told the Julie Burgess Working Committee was committed to retaining the ketch in Devonport and aimed to establish an incorporated organisation to own and operate the vessel, similar to the Tasmanian Sail Training Association, which operates the Lady Nelson out of Hobart.

"The application is made by the current crew and volunteer Operations Committee (and) therefore the applicant possesses a significant understanding of the operations of the vessel and their application demonstrates a depth of knowledge related to the vessel and its history."

The commitment to operate the vessel in Devonport met Council's desire to retain the Julie Burgess in the city, in part respecting the investment made by the community in the vessel.

Council received many letters of support from community members keen for the vessel to remain in

Devonport, and for the city to seek to capitalise on its rich maritime history.

The Committee will work with Council over the coming months, to develop its administration and marketing capacity and the parties will seek to negotiate an agreement subject to several conditions.

It is also seeking \$210,000 in financial assistance from Council to operate the vessel over the next five years, a licence to use the existing pontoon at Reg Hope Park and capital expenditure, specifically the construction of a concrete pad at Reg Hope Park on which to install a shipping container.

From a financial aspect the agreement between the parties will not be significantly different to the current model. However, it will reduce some of the operational overheads and risk for Council and give the Julie Burgess more autonomy by being operated by the group.

Expressions of Interest closed on Friday 29 November 2019 and the eight applications were reviewed by Council with four applicants being shortlisted for further consideration.

Three of the four shortlisted applicants presented to Council last month.

GIRDLESTONE PARK LIGHTING CONTRACT AWARDED

Council has awarded the Girdlestone Park Ground Lighting tender to Devonport Electrical Services for a total sum of \$228,774, to be funded by a Federal Government grant.

The project involves the design and construction of lighting to regional training specifications, an upgrade of the power supply to 200amp capacity, decommissioning of the existing lighting infrastructure and relocation of the current infrastructure from the existing light poles to the new poles.

HARDSHIP POLICY ENDORSED (CONT.)

While acknowledging that some in the community were seeking a general waiving of rates, Cr Rockliff said that was not practical for Council.

"Council understands that the pandemic is having a serious economic impact on the community and is seeking to support the community as much as it is able," she said.

"But Council provides many essential services to the community - from rubbish and recycling collections, through to cleaning our streets and gutters, and fixing our roads and footpaths - and all these services come at a cost."

"While the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are not fully known, it will significantly impact Council's financial position.

"It is likely that a full revision of Council's 10-year financial plan will be necessary to reset the annual parameters to guide Council's budget process."

As a result of the pandemic Council is now projecting a deficit of between \$800,000 and \$1 million this financial year, after previously indicating a small surplus was likely.

Cr Rockliff said Council had already enacted measures to support the community such as waiving parking fees, ground fees for sporting clubs and business licence fees, removing late payments fees for the April rates instalment if paid by 30 June and a commitment to pay suppliers within 14 days to assist their cash flow.

"We will continue to look at ways we can provide further support to the community."