

MEETING MINUTES



MEETING NAME: Agriculture and Rural Advisory Group

MEETING PLACE: Council Chambers / Boardroom, within the Shire Hall,
via Teams Link

MEETING DATE: Wednesday 7 February 2024

MEETING TIME: 6pm – 8pm

| Members | Present | Apology |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Mayor Matt Gould – (Chair) | ✓ | |
| Councillor Suzie Brandstater | ✓ | |
| Stephen Gardiner - Manager Sustainable Growth | | ✓ |
| Carolyn Whitten – Acting Manager Sustainable Growth | ✓ | |
| Nicole Dukinfield – Team Leader Employment & Rural Industry | ✓ | |
| Rob Seidel – Chief Financial Officer | ✓ | |
| Simone Fisher Team Leader (Revenue) | ✓ | |
| Bianca Klein – Team Leader Environmental Services | ✓ | |
| Karen Kennedy – Senior Administration Officer | ✓ | |
| Senior Detective Graeme Begley | | ✓ |
| Richard Stephens – Local Land Services | ✓ | |
| James Bell – Member | ✓ | |
| Vince Hewson – Member | | ✓ |
| Phil Bartolo – Member | ✓ | |
| Anthony Biffin – Member | ✓ | |
| John Fairley – Member | ✓ | |
| Marwan El-Chamy – Member | | ✓ |
| Mark Silm – Member | | ✓ |
| Chris Keanelly – Member | | ✓ |



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wollondilly.nsw.gov.au

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E council@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au

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| Agenda Items | | Notes | Actions |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| | Acknowledgement of Country | Meeting commence at 6.03pm with Acknowledgement of Country | |
| | Disclosure of Interests | Nil | |
| | Apologies | Vince Hewson Mark Silm Marwanel Chamy Chris Keanelly Stephen Gardiner Detective Senior Constable Graeme Begley Martin Cooper | |
| | Minutes from Previous meeting | Carried – James Bell Secunder – Tony Biffin | |
| <i>Briefing / Update</i> | | | |
| 5.1 | Biosecurity | <p>Bianca Klein provided a brief overview on the scope of the recently adopted Biosecurity Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biosecurity Policy is focussed on invasive weeds and Council's role as a Local Control Authority (weeds only) under the relevant legislation. However, in response to feedback, the finalised policy includes a point to recognise broader biosecurity matters such as invasive species, i.e. Fera mites, Fire Ants etc. Working with private land owners and providing advice. The Policy was exhibited for feedback in Oct – November 2023. Received 5 submission most which supported policy. | <p><i>Action –</i> Provide update on how much council spends on weeds removal / funding for roadside vegetation</p> <p><i>Action –</i> Request Council consider additional funding for roadside noxious weed control.</p> |

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| | <p>Carolyn Whitten spoke to Council's decision to adopt the Biosecurity Policy and the direction provided on biosecurity and invasive species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Biosecurity' will now be included as a standing agenda item on the Advisory Group's Agenda • This is to enable reporting on immediate threats of invasive species that could impact Wollondilly • a risk matrix framework is to be designed to guide an appropriate response. This will be developed at the next meeting. <p>The following discussion on this item is noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's roadside vegetation budget was questioned and clarified budget is very low. • Policies take the approach of prioritising investment in the species that Council can eliminate if highly invasive. • Roadside vegetation deemed as hazards are prioritised. • Richard Stephens advised last meeting lots of talk about deer, goats etc and provided group with information about most recent feral animal programs being rolled out. • Chair mentioned of cross contamination of weeds and advised works both ways ie. private land / roadside vegetation Raised question to group how they see this issue addressed. • Replacement of vegetation after being sprayed on roadside hills was raised. Example was provided of vegetation stabilising hill side. Spraying and removing vegetation causing landslip. | |

| Agenda Items | Notes | Actions |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Nursery offer rural landholders up to 100 trees and grass's for restoration projects every 6 months. • Members expressed not enough funds allocated to roadside vegetation management. • Council does what they can with their budget and priority is given to hazard areas. • Weeds under powerlines being an issue. Believes that Council should advocate to Endeavour to control weeds – removed not trimmed. Chair advised that Council have requested this but was not successful. • Road drainage due to vegetation was raised as an issue. • Chair informed group of process in reporting weeds / vegetation to Council. • Chair advised that a drainage crew has been established. | |
| 5.2 | <p>Farmland Rating Policy</p> <p>Members where informed that Policy will be place on exhibition for 28 days.</p> <p>Presentation was provided on the updates made to the policy. These updates were comments provided by the group from previous meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the presentation, a number of concerns that had been raised for further discussion was provided in detail and discussed by group. • The Advisory Group acknowledged they were happy with the Draft Farmland Rating Policy provided. • It was mentioned concern about grazing stock numbers in the policy. • Members where encouraged to make a submission. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horticulture agreement was raised and process was provided • The group were advised each application is assessed individually. • Leasing / share farm was raised by group as a concern. • Chair mentioned that a working group can take place with AG members to put a submission together. | |
| 5.3 | <p>Draft Horticulture Planning Proposal Update</p> <p>Carolyn Whitten presented on the progress of the Horticulture Planning Proposal since the workshop held in 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback that group provided has been massaged into the planning documents that were need to be prepared. • Overview was provided to group on the steps Council need to take in the planning proposal process / timeframes. • Process was explained to group. • All going well hoping to have public exhibition in May 2023. • Discussion from group about Government agencies on the proposal. • Parliamentary Counsel will draft the amendment and the final wording. • The group complimented the Extraordinary meeting - was a great meeting and would be frustrating if proposal was blocked. • Council have been advised that the Byron LEP has similar provision. • Council complimented by group on their efforts. • Chair welcomed anyone interested to come and speak in favour of the proposal at the upcoming | <p><i>Action – Advise group when published and how to register to speak at the forum.</i></p> |

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| | | Community Forum ahead of the Council meeting. | |
| <i>General Business</i> | | | |
| 6.1 | Sustainable Growth Update (Introduction new Team Leader – Employment & Rural Industry) | <p>New Team Leader Employment & Rural Industry introduced – Nicole Dukinfield</p> <p>Nicole commenced in December</p> <p>Staff have been allocated to team.</p> <p>Now have a team that is dedicated to focus more on actions coming out of the Rural Land Strategy jobs, rural land, economy etc.</p> | |
| 6.2 | SRG and AG – 2024 Council Elections | <p>Members were advised that at the end of this Term of Council the Advisory Group will cease.</p> <p>After the election (on September 14) it will be a matter for the new Council to determine its model for committees / advisory groups for the next Term of Council.</p> <p>Committee will be dissolved and new applications will be required.</p> <p>Member asked if AG and SRG met Council expectations. Chair confirmed that there has been a mixed response.</p> | |
| 6.3 | Rural Viability Study | <p>This item was included on the Agenda as an action from the last meeting. The intention had been for a briefing note to be tabled. The new team will prepare this work for the next meeting.</p> <p>Suggestion to utilise work undertaken from the farmland rating policy to inform the rural viability study (agenda item 5.2) - be used to assist the viability of farms and other areas / planners in Council.</p> | |



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| 6.4 | Maintenance of Roadside Vegetation <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Road side noxious weeds (Blackberry and Lantana)- Roadside Weed Spraying- Removal of Vegetation from road sides | Covered during broader discussion of item 5.1 – Biosecurity. |
| | Pastoral Feedlots <p>Pastoral Feedlots was discussed amongst members, particularly as a drought management tool. Interest in how its managed by Council in terms of compliance.</p> <p>Richard advised of a Drought Management Tool. DPI has information and can provide some links.</p> | |
| | Meeting finish: 8.10pm | |



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