



THE ENTRANCE COMMUNITY
PRECINCT COMMITTEE

**Wyong Shire Councillor's Emma McBride's presentation on
17 October, 2009 on
"Wyong Shire's Strategic Finance Committee"**

BACKGROUND:

From the Wyong Shire Council minutes of the ordinary meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber Wyong Civic Centre, Hely Street, Wyong on 14 October 2009 commencing at 5:07 pm

Item 6.2 Proposal to establish a Strategic Finance Committee.

RESOLVED unanimously on the motion of Councillor MCBRIDE and seconded by Councillor GRAHAM:

- 1** *That Council note the report on establishing a Strategic Finance Committee (SFC).*
- 2** *That Council establish a Strategic Finance Committee in accordance with the attached proposed Charter.*
- 3** *That all interested Councillors be members of the Committee with a quorum of three required for any meeting.*
- 4** *That Council appoint Councillor McBride as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee.*

FOR: COUNCILLORS BEST, EATON, GRAHAM, MATTHEWS, MCBRIDE, MCNAMARA, SYMINGTON, VINCENT, WEBSTER AND WYNN

AGAINST: NIL

PRESENTATION

Emma began her presentation by on Wyong Shire's " Strategic Finance Committee " (SFC) by reminding us that the Shire's Strategic Vision (SSV) prioritises the council's objectives and requires a 20 year plan to implement it. To implement the SSV council needed a financial plan. Emma said she when she was elected she saw the need for strategic planning and worked hard to achieve this committee. By way of background she explained that from 1993 to the year 2000 there was a committee that looked at financial planning that consisted of Corporate and seven Councillors. WSC has not had a finance committee for many years and has either considered financial performance as a full Council, or more lately, through the Governance Committee.

Emma first meet with WSC's General Manager, Kerry Yates in February, 2009 to discuss financial planning and here proposal was greeted with some reluctance. Her attempt to have it discussed by Council in April, 2009 failed and it was eventually discussed at the Governance Committee. The new planning regime requires WSC to develop a Long-Term Financial Strategy and to make provision of services in accordance with the SSV and shorter term Four Year Plan. Councillors present at the August 2009 Governance Committee meeting expressed the concept of a "Strategic Finance Committee" (SFC) as a mechanism for ensuring appropriate knowledge in Councillors. The object of the concept was for Council to be properly able and informed in the strategic financial aspects of planned performance and the impact of service prioritisation decisions. The Governance Committee recommended the establishment of an SFC.

Emma explained that the Governance Committee was about ensuring probity, transparency and good governance. It was not about planning a financial plan into the future.

Here Emma digressed to say that Wyong Shire had fared very well in the 2009 financial crisis. While our neighbours made losses, Gosford \$23million and Lake Macquarie 14million, Wyong was not effected due to its prudent and conservative investment policies.

A Strategic Finance Committee was finally seen as the best way to move forward. Not only the SSV required a financial plan. The Local Government Act requires Council to now have a 10 year action plan and a operation plan.

The four year delivery plan will now be developed within the context of the SSV. The Strategic financial plan will help Councillors manage its \$405million budget which is the second largest in NSW behind the City of Sydney's. While Wyong Shire is in a sound financial position the SFC will allow better community input with the community being able to put items to the SFC for consideration.

Emma was asked a question on the goals for the next four year plan. She advised the goal of the SFC is improved financial governance. This will be achieved by better prioritising objectives, both capital assets and services. There is a Asset Management Survey being held and this will allow WSC to measure the gap in assets and services. It will allow us to ask " have we planned for that? " when making a decision on a particular item. It will provide timely input into planning, ensuring it is robust.

Discussion then went to WSC's record in receiving NSW Government and Federal Government Grants. Emma advised that action was being taken to ensure items were being better investigated and prioritised. WSC had only been given two weeks notice to but in an application for a grant and this was not enough time without a prioritised list of items already investigated. Council is establishing a Register of Grant Funding and a Protocol for Grant Submissions to ensure the best possible case for funding is put forward.

Vivienne Scott commented that it was good to have more substantive professional input from Councillors introduced into Council's decision making – and commended Emma on her initiative.

Emma was congratulated her on being made Deputy Chairperson of the new Strategic Finance Committee. Chairperson Marlene Pennings warmly thanked Emma for her attendance and stepping in at the last moment in the absence of our advertised guest speaker David Jack who was unable to attend at the last minute.