



SHIRE OF  
**MERREDIN**  
INNOVATING THE WHEATBELT

# MINUTES

## Special Council Meeting

Held in by Zoom video conference  
Thursday 2 April 2020  
Commencing 5:30pm



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<b>Common Acronyms Used in this Document</b>	
ACEO	Acting Chief Executive Officer
CBP	Corporate Business Plan
CEACA	Central East Aged Care Alliance
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSP	Community Strategic Plan
CWVC	Central Wheatbelt Visitors Centre
DCEO	Deputy CEO
EA	Executive Assistant to CEO
EMCS	Executive Manager of Corporate Services
EMDS	Executive Manager of Development Services
EMES	Executive Manager of Engineering Services
GECZ	Great Eastern Country Zone
LGIS	Local Government Insurance Services
LPS	Local Planning Scheme
MCO	Media & Communications Officer
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRCLC	Merredin Regional Community and Leisure Centre
SRP	Strategic Resource Plan
WALGA	Western Australian Local Government Association
WEROC	Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils

Shire of Merredin  
Ordinary Council Meeting  
5.30 pm Thursday 2 April 2020



**1. Official Opening**

The President welcomed those in attendance and declared the meeting open at 6.02pm

**2. Record of Attendance / Apologies and Leave of Absence**

**Councillors:**

Cr JR Flockart	Shire President
Cr MD Willis	Deputy Shire President
Cr RA Billing	
Cr LN Boehme	
Cr AR Butler	
Cr RM Manning	
Cr MJ McKenzie	
Cr PR Patroni	
Cr PM Van Der Merwe	

**Staff**

M Dacombe	T/CEO
A Prnich	DCEO
C Brown	EMCS
M Ivanetz	EA to CEO

**Members of the Public:**

**Apologies:** P Zenni, EMDS

**Approved Leave of Absence:**

**3. Public Question Time**

Nil

**4. Disclosure of Interest**

Nil

**5. Applications for Leave of Absence**

Nil

**6. Petitions and Presentations**

Nil

<b>7.</b>	<b>Confirmation of Minutes of the Previous Meetings</b>
	Nil
<b>8.</b>	<b>Announcements by the Person Presiding without discussion</b>
	Nil
<b>9.</b>	<b>Matters for which the Meeting may be closed to the public</b>
	Nil
<b>10.</b>	<b>Receipt of Minutes of Committee Meetings</b>
	<u>Nil</u>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Recommendations from Committee Meetings for Council consideration</b>
	Nil
<b>12.</b>	<b>Officer's Reports – Development Services</b>
	Nil
<b>13.</b>	<b>Officer's Reports – Engineering Services</b>
	Nil
<b>14.</b>	<b>Officers Reports – Corporate and Community Services</b>
	Nil

**15. Officer's Reports – Administration**

**15.1 COVID-19 State of Emergency**

**Administration**



<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Mark Dacombe, Temporary CEO
<b>Author:</b>	Mark Dacombe, Temporary CEO
<b>Legislation:</b>	N/A
<b>File Reference:</b>	
<b>Disclosure of Interest:</b>	Nil
<b>Attachments:</b>	Nil

**Purpose of Report**

- Executive Decision                       Legislative Requirement

**Background**

To set the context for a range of policy and operational responses to the COVID-19 Emergency.

The World Health Organisation declared Coronavirus (COVID-19) as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. On 23 March 2020 the Western Australian Government Declared a State of Emergency.

On 27 March 2020 The Premier and the Minister of Local Government addressed the local Government sector in a tone that was strong and urgent. The key points in the presentations were:

- The impact of COVID-19 has been extremely fast and the conditions are changing daily;
- This is not business as usual;
- Local Government needs to be able to make quick decisions;
- Local Government needs to put all of its focus and resources into addressing the pandemic;
- Local Government has a critical role to play in looking after the health of the community, supporting the local economy and preparing for recovery;

- The Premier and Minister specifically requested Councils to keep their staff employed, fast track approvals that will contribute to economic development, use their budgets and reserves to stimulate the economy and create jobs;
- The Minister indicated that the State will not be able to help Local Government financially as they are putting all their resources into responding to the pandemic.

### Comment

The situation faced by the world is something the like of which has not been experienced in generations. The social and economic impacts are going to be far reaching and the impacts on communities profound.

It is trite to say that Local Government is the level of government closest to the community. It is, and at this time the well-being of the community now and in the future will be impacted by our leadership, sense of purpose, clarity and our ability to make decisions based on evidence, and expert advice in an environment that is at best ambiguous.

This is an emergency like no other in that it can not be seen or felt. There is no fire, flood or earthquake. In this environment the sense urgency to do something about it needs to be generated by leaders with clear communication and actions that support their words.

The purpose of this report is to formally acknowledge the State of Emergency declared by the Premier as the context for a range of actions, both policy and operational, being taken in response.

### Policy Implications

Decisions about policy amendments and new policies will need to be made in order to address the pandemic effects.

### Statutory Implications

Actions being taken are generally following the directives of State and Federal governments which are being made under the relevant legislation.

### Strategic Implications

#### ➤ Strategic Community Plan

Zone: 4 Communication and Leadership  
Zone Statement: Merredin Council engages with its Community and Leads by example  
Key Priority: 4.4 Advocating and lobbying effectively on behalf of the community



➤ **Corporate Business Plan**

Key Action: N/A  
Directorate: Chief Executive Officer  
Timeline: N/A

**Sustainability Implications**

➤ **Strategic Resource Plan**

N/A

➤ **Workforce Plan**

Directorate: Chief Executive Officer

**Risk Implications**

The pandemic emergency presents a high impact/high probability scenario under the Shire of Merredin’s Risk Management Policy 3.24 – Risk Matrix. The risk of health impacts is being managed by Federal, State and local actions directing and encouraging mitigation actions.

The economic impacts are already far reaching and being addressed by Federal and State actions which includes the request for local government to also contribute its resources.

**Financial Implications**

The effects of the COVID-19 emergency will have a significant impact on the Shire’s financial situation. The initial responses have not required significant expenditure. The Shire’s ability to raise revenue will be impacted and the need to provide community and local economic support will put significant pressure on cashflow and the balance sheet.

**Voting Requirements**



Simple Majority



Absolute Majority

### **Officer's Recommendation / Resolution**

**Moved:** Cr McKenzie

**Seconded:** Cr Boehme

**82528 That Council:**

1. **NOTE the World Health Organisation declaration that COVID-19 is a pandemic**
2. **NOTE the State of Emergency declared the Premier of Western Australia**
3. **NOTE the urgency of actions required to suppress the spread of the disease**
4. **NOTE that this situation is the context for a range of actions to ensure the Shire does everything in its power to minimise the social, health, and economic impacts on the Merredin community**

**CARRIED 9/0**

**15.2 Policy and Delegation Review**

## Administration



<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Mark Dacombe, Temporary CEO
<b>Author:</b>	Mark Dacombe, Temporary CEO
<b>Legislation:</b>	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
<b>File Reference:</b>	
<b>Disclosure of Interest:</b>	Nil
<b>Attachments:</b>	<a href="#">Attachment 15.2A</a> – 3.12 Purchasing Policy <a href="#">Attachment 15.2B</a> – 3.3 Regional Price Preference Policy <a href="#">Attachment 15.2C</a> – 1.11 Council Meetings <a href="#">Attachment 15.2D</a> – Delegation DL4.7 <a href="#">Attachment 15.2E</a> – Delegation DL4.1

### Purpose of Report

Executive Decision

Legislative Requirement

### Background

The scenario outlined in report 15.1 to this meeting has caused staff to consider several policies the amendment of which will assist the Council to respond to the immediate impact on the local economy.

### Comment

In considering the addresses of the Premier and the Minister for Local Government on 27 March 2020 I have undertaken a limited review of policies and delegations that could be amended to promote agile responses to issues, support for the community and support for local business.

The changes are designed to enable a quick reaction in the current rapidly changing times but also to strengthen the commitment to supporting the local economy wherever possible.

1. Policy 3.12 Purchasing Policy  
Recommending making changes at the lower end of the purchasing value to make it easier at all times to purchase goods and services from local suppliers, and to increase the threshold before going to tender. The

proposed threshold is still lower than the maximum (\$250,000) in the regulations.

2. Policy 3.3 Regional Price Preference Policy

The maximum price preference that a local government can make to support local businesses is prescribed by the Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations 1996. The Shire of Merredin recognises two regions for price preferences. The first is the District of the Shire of Merredin to which the maximum preference under the Regulations is applied. The second region is the Districts of the Shires of Kellerberrin, Nungarin, Westonia, Narembeen, Yilgarn and Bruce Rock to which a preference of 50% of the maximum under the Regulations is applied. At this time there is no compelling reason to change this policy. Recommending no change.

3. Policy 1.11 Council meetings

Council meetings are currently held on the third Tuesday of every month. Whilst the policy does not state it, the meetings are held in the Council Chambers in Merredin. For the duration of the COVID-19 emergency it is recommended that the Council hold the meetings by video conference and conduct them in accordance with the WALGA guidelines. The policy should be amended to allow meetings by video conference. At this stage it is proposed that the meetings for April and May be held by video conference.

4. Delegation DL Write Off/Waive Small Fees and Charges

The Council may receive an increase in the number of requests to waive or write off small fees and charges. This delegation will ensure a quick decision-making process minimising Council and staff time.

### Policy Implications

This report amends several policies with a view to supporting the local community and improve the ability of the Shire to respond in a timely manner.

### Statutory Implications

The policy amendments proposed all comply with the Council's statutory obligations.

### Strategic Implications

#### ➤ Strategic Community Plan

Zone: 4 Communication and Leadership  
Zone Statement: Council engages with its community and leads by example  
Key Priority: 4.1 Ensuring all planning, reporting and resourcing is in accordance with best practice, compliance and statutory requirements

➤ **Corporate Business Plan**

Key Action: N/A  
Directorate: N/A  
Timeline: N/A

**Sustainability Implications**

➤ **Strategic Resource Plan**

N/A

➤ **Workforce Plan**

N/A

**Risk Implications**

There is a medium impact/high probability of some increased cost (unquantifiable at this stage) resulting from amendments of the policies designed to better support the local economy. At least for the time being it is recognised that the benefits to the community are likely to outweigh the increased costs to the Council.

**Financial Implications**

See Risk Implications

**Voting Requirements**

Simple Majority

Absolute Majority

**Officer's Recommendation / Resolution**

**Moved:** Cr Willis

**Seconded:** Cr Patroni

**82529 That Council:**

1. **Adopt Policy 3.12 Purchasing Policy amending the purchasing thresholds and adding a definition for “Preferred Supplier;**
  2. **Note that Policy 3.3 Regional Price Preference Policy has been reviewed and is considered appropriate without change;**
  3. **Adopt Policy 1.11 Council meetings providing for Council meetings to be held by video conference;**
  4. **Adopt Delegation 4.1 Tenders raising the threshold for acceptance of tenders by the Chief Executive Officer from \$150,000 to \$200,000;**
  5. **Adopt Delegation Write Off/Waiver of Small Fees and Charges allowing the Chief Executive Officer to waive or write off amounts up to \$1,000;**
- **NOTE: All policies to be reviewed by 1 March 2021.**

**CARRIED 9/0**

**15.3 Council Initial Response**

## Administration



<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Mark Dacombe Temporary Chief Executive Officer
<b>Author:</b>	Mark Dacombe Temporary Chief Executive Officer
<b>Legislation:</b>	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
<b>File Reference:</b>	
<b>Disclosure of Interest:</b>	Nil
<b>Attachments:</b>	<a href="#">Attachment 15.3A</a> – COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy

### Purpose of Report



Executive Decision



Legislative Requirement

### Background

On 27 March 2020 The Premier and the Minister of Local Government addressed the local Government sector in a tone that was strong and urgent. The key points in the presentations were:

- The impact of COVID-19 has been extremely fast and the conditions are changing daily
- This is not business as usual
- Local Government needs to be able to make quick decisions
- Local Government needs to put all of its focus and resources into addressing the pandemic
- Local Government has a critical role to play in looking after the health of the community, supporting the local economy and preparing for recovery
- The Premier and Minister specifically requested Councils to keep their staff employed, fast track approvals that will contribute to economic development, use their budgets and reserves to stimulate the economy and create jobs

The Minister indicated that the State will not be able to help Local Government financially as they are putting all of their resources into responding to the pandemic.

### Comment

In response to the Premier and Minister for Local Government the Council has discussed ways in which it can support the community and business through the emergency and the recovery period. This report recommends several decisions to guide staff in the development of the 2020/21 annual budget and to provide a clear signal to the community of the Council's position on a range of matters.

It is noted that Councillors have discussed the merits of offering a discount of 5% on 20/21 rates that are paid in full by the due date. It is recommended that this option be considered through the development of the budget. It is noted that a significant portion of rates are paid in full by the due date. For the 2019/20 year \$2,802,548 was paid by the due date. Had a discount of 5% been offered the financial cost would have been \$140,127 or 3.5% of the rates levied.

This report also recommends the adoption of a hardship policy for dealing with ratepayers who are impacted by the economic fall-out of the pandemic

### Policy Implications

N/A

### Statutory Implications

All recommendations are within the Council's statutory authority under the Local Government Act 1995 and regulations.

### Strategic Implications

#### ➤ Strategic Community Plan

Zone: 4 Communication and Leadership  
Zone Statement: Council engages with its community and leads by example  
Key Priority: 4.1 Ensuring all planning, reporting and resourcing is in accordance with best practice, compliance and statutory requirements

#### ➤ Corporate Business Plan

Key Action: N/A  
Directorate:  
Timeline:

### Sustainability Implications

#### ➤ Strategic Resource Plan

N/A

#### ➤ Workforce Plan

N/A

### Risk Implications

There is a high impact/high probability of increased costs to the Council as a result of the pandemic, coupled with higher than usual numbers of ratepayers requiring making arrangements for payment of rates. It is also expected that there will be a higher level of unpaid rates. The risk will be mitigated by managing costs carefully and working with ratepayers to make suitable arrangements for payment.

### Financial Implications

The effects of COVID-19 will have an impact on the Shire's financial position for an extended period. The extent of this is unknown at this time.

### Voting Requirements

Simple Majority

Absolute Majority

### Officer's Recommendation / Resolution

#### That Council:

1. **Not increase any rates in the dollar for at least the 2020/21 financial year, and will reassess its position in relation to rates increases for future years in the first quarter of 2021;**
2. **Not implement any 2020 revaluations (either unimproved of gross rental), which would normally be applied at 1 July 2020;**
3. **Not increase fees and charges in the 2020/21 financial year, and will reassess its position in relation to fees and charges increases in the first quarter of 2021;**
4. **Decrease its charge on overdue rates from the current (11%) pa calculated daily after 35 days from date of issue, to 0% to have immediate effect and lasting until 1 February 2021 at which time Council will reassess its position;**
5. **Remove the requirement for an administration fee of \$13 to be paid when paying by installment;**
6. **Decrease is interest charge related to those who elect to pay by installments from 5.5% to 0%;**
7. **Consider future financial relief measures available to it during its 2020/21 budget deliberations;**
8. **Adopt a new Policy COVID -19 Financial Hardship in accordance with attachment.**



## Officer's Resolution

**Moved:** Cr Boehme

**Seconded:** Cr Van Der Merwe

**82530** **That Council:**

1. **Not increase any rates in the dollar for at least the 2020/21 financial year, and will reassess its position in relation to rates increases for future years in the first quarter of 2021;**
2. **Not implement any 2020 revaluations (either unimproved of gross rental), which would normally be applied at 1 July 2020;**
3. **Not increase fees and charges in the 2020/21 financial year, and will reassess its position in relation to fees and charges increases in the first quarter of 2021;**
4. **Consider future financial relief measures available to it during its 2020/21 budget deliberations;**

**That items 4, 5, 6 and 8 be reviewed by Councillor's at the next Briefing Session as further discussions are required.**

1. **(4) Decrease its charge on overdue rates from the current (11%) pa calculated daily after 35 days from date of issue, to 0% to have immediate effect and lasting until 1 February 2021 at which time Council will reassess its position;**
2. **(5) Remove the requirement for an administration fee of \$13 to be paid when paying by installment;**
3. **(6) Decrease is interest charge related to those who elect to pay by installments from 5.5% to 0%;**
4. **(8) Adopt a new Policy COVID -19 Financial Hardship in accordance with attachment.**

**CARRIED 9/0**

**15.4 Future Council Meetings**

## Administration



<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Mark Dacombe Temporary Chief Executive Officer
<b>Author:</b>	Mark Dacombe Temporary Chief Executive Officer
<b>Legislation:</b>	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
<b>File Reference:</b>	
<b>Disclosure of Interest:</b>	Nil
<b>Attachments:</b>	Nil

### Purpose of Report

Executive Decision  Legislative Requirement

### Background

The Council meeting dates and locations have been set and advertised for the 2020.

### Comment

It is proposed that the Council meetings for April and May be held by video conference with review at the May meeting. This change should be advertised.

### Policy Implications

N/A

### Statutory Implications

*Local Government Act 1995 and Local Government Administration Regulations 12, 14D and 14E*

### Strategic Implications

#### ➤ Strategic Community Plan

Zone: 4 Communication and Leadership  
Zone Statement: Council engages with its community and leads by example  
Key Priority: 4.1 Ensuring all planning, reporting and resourcing is in accordance with best practice, compliance and statutory requirements

➤ **Corporate Business Plan**

Key Action: N/A  
Directorate: N/A  
Timeline: N/A

**Sustainability Implications**

➤ **Strategic Resource Plan**

N/A

➤ **Workforce Plan**

Directorate: Chief Executive Officer

**Risk Implications**

This recommendation is being made to minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 to Councillors, staff and members of the public.

**Financial Implications**

Nil

**Voting Requirements**



Simple Majority



Absolute Majority

**Officer's Recommendation / Resolution**

**Moved:** Cr McKenzie

**Seconded:** Cr Billing

**82531 That Council;**

1. **Hold the Ordinary Council meetings scheduled for April and May by video conference in accordance with Regulation 14D and 14E of the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996;**
2. **Give Local public notice of the change in accordance with Regulation 12(2) of the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996;**
3. **Hold additional briefings on 7 April, 28 April, 5 May and 26 May at 5.30pm to enable Councillors to be regularly updated on progress with the COVID-19 emergency and recovery.**
4. **Review the means of conducting future Council meetings and the need for weekly briefings at the May Ordinary Council Meeting;**
5. **Note that provisions for Public Question Time at video conference meetings will be reported by the Chief Executive Officer.**

**CARRIED 9/0**

**15.5 Organisational Matters**

## Administration



<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Mark Dacombe Temporary Chief Executive Officer
<b>Author:</b>	Mark Dacombe Temporary Chief Executive Officer
<b>Legislation:</b>	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
<b>File Reference:</b>	
<b>Disclosure of Interest:</b>	Nil
<b>Attachments:</b>	Nil

### Purpose of Report

Executive Decision  Legislative Requirement

### Background

The COVID-19 emergency has required a number of actions affecting the services provided to the community and the jobs of the staff of the Shire.

### Comment

There has been a significant effort by the organisation to address the impacts of the pandemic. We have taken measures to protect the staff from exposure and have followed the directions of State and Federal Governments in closing down facilities and services.

When the State of Emergency was declared the Chief Executive Officer created a COVID 19 response team to oversee the Shire's response to the emergency. This comprises:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- Executive Manager Development Services
- Executive Manager Corporate Services
- Environmental Health Officer
- Community Development Officer
- Media and Communications Officer

An Emergency Support Team has been created reporting to the Community Development Officer. This team is focussed on community and business support and comprises all of the staff who were previously engaged in providing services through the now closed facilities. Some of these staff are also still engaged in providing online and phone services relating to their substantive jobs.

There will be changes in focus and of the Executive Managers as we navigate through the emergency and prepare for the recovery. These will be reported to the Council.

The recruitment process for the Executive Manager Engineering Services has been delayed while the immediate issues of the emergency are addressed. This recruitment process will now be progressed.

All staff are now located working from home and in communication by electronic means. All staff are fully employed in their substantive or redeployed roles.

### Policy Implications

Nil

### Statutory Implications

*Section 5.2 Local Government Act 1995* – The Council of a local government is to ensure that there is an appropriate structure for administering the local government

### Strategic Implications

#### ➤ Strategic Community Plan

Zone: 4 Communication and Leadership  
Zone Statement: Council engages with its community and leads by example  
Key Priority: 4.1 Ensuring all planning, reporting and resourcing is in accordance with best practice, compliance and statutory requirements

#### ➤ Corporate Business Plan

Key Action: N/A  
Directorate:  
Timeline:

### Sustainability Implications

#### ➤ Strategic Resource Plan

N/A

#### ➤ Workforce Plan

Directorate: Chief Executive Officer

### Risk Implications

There are no identified risks.

**Financial Implications**

Nil

**Voting Requirements**

Simple Majority

Absolute Majority

**Officer's Recommendation / Resolution**

**Moved:** Cr Patroni

**Seconded:** Cr Willis

**82532 That Council:**

1. **Notes the changes the Temporary Chief Executive Officer has made in order to respond to the COVID-19 Emergency while also ensuring service delivery is maintained as far as possible while the critical response is progressed.**

**CARRIED 9/0**

**15.6 Budget Amendment**

## Administration



<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Mark Dacombe Temporary Chief Executive Officer
<b>Author:</b>	Mark Dacombe Temporary Chief Executive Officer
<b>Legislation:</b>	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
<b>File Reference:</b>	
<b>Disclosure of Interest:</b>	Nil
<b>Attachments:</b>	Nil

### Purpose of Report



Executive Decision



Legislative Requirement

### Background

The COVID – 19 emergency will require that we undertake a review of the budget for the final quarter of the 2019/20 year.

### Comment

The review will consider how we can utilise the budget to support local business through these difficult times and this will also be a consideration in the development of the 2020/21 budget.

In the meantime it has been necessary to incur expenditure related to management of the emergency. It is expected there being on-going requirements related to the Shire response to the emergency and support for the community. A budget allocation to cover this is recommended with the funds being allocated in the interim from the projected surplus for the year as quantified in the statutory budget review adopted by the Council in March 2020.

### Policy Implications

Nil

### Statutory Implications

*Local Government Act 1995*

## Strategic Implications

### ➤ Strategic Community Plan

Zone: 4 Communication and Leadership  
Zone Statement: Council engages with its community and leads by example  
Key Priority: 4.1 Ensuring all planning, reporting and resourcing is in accordance with best practice, compliance and statutory requirements

### ➤ Corporate Business Plan

Key Action: N/A  
Directorate:  
Timeline:

## Sustainability Implications

### ➤ Strategic Resource Plan

N/A

### ➤ Workforce Plan

Directorate: Chief  
Executive Officer

## Risk Implications

## Financial Implications

This is an interim measure to ensure that funds are available to meet the unplanned cost associated with the emergency whilst undertaking a review of the budget for the last quarter of the year.

## Voting Requirements



Simple Majority



Absolute Majority



## Officer's Recommendation / Resolution

**Moved:** Cr Butler

**Seconded:** Cr Van Der Merwe

**82533 That Council:**

1. Allocate the sum of \$70,000 to cover the unplanned costs associated with the COVID-19 emergency and that pending a review of the budget for the final quarter the funds be allocated from the projected surplus for the year as quantified in the statutory budget review adopted by the Council in March 2020;
2. Requires a report to be provided, as part of the weekly Council briefings, outlining the expenditure incurred from the COVID-19 Response Account.

**CARRIED 9/o**

<b>16.</b>	<b>Motions of which Previous Notice has been given</b>
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Nil

<b>17.</b>	<b>Questions by Members of which Due Notice has been given</b>
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Nil

<b>18.</b>	<b>Urgent Business Approved by the Person Presiding or by Decision</b>
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Nil

<b>19.</b>	<b>Matters Behind Closed Doors</b>
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Nil

<b>20.</b>	<b>Closure</b>
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There being no further business the President thanked those in attendance and declared the meeting closed at 6.37pm.

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