The Mount Barker District Council has listened to community feedback and will deliver significant community and recreation projects and services with a modest rate increase of 2.33%.

A record number of submissions were made during consultation on Council’s Draft 2019/20 Annual Business Plan and Budget. Council decided to increase general rates by 2.33% (which includes the 1% sustainability required by the long term financial plan.)

Acting Mayor Greg Morrison thanked the community for its active participation in the consultation process and said the Council had listened to all of the individual responses.

“This is both a responsive and responsible budget,” Acting Mayor Morrison says.

“We understand the increasing pressure on household budgets with the rising cost of living and we’ve worked hard to balance the community’s concern with meeting the increasing needs of maintaining and providing for a rapidly growing district.

“Council has listened to the community feedback provided. Getting this balance right is the greatest challenge for any Council and we’re constantly working to achieve this, all the while considering local priorities and an ever-changing national economy.”

Operations have been reviewed for savings and efficiencies.

Council plans to deliver an extensive capital works program that balances the need to maintain our current asset base with the requirement to develop infrastructure for the future.

The single largest capital investment in the budget is for the construction of Stage One of the long-awaited Regional Sports Hub in Mount Barker, with $15.77 million set aside for the project this financial year (largely grants.)

The Council will (in addition to the $10 million already committed by the Federal Government) pursue additional funding for the Regional Indoor Aquatic Centre.

Other budget highlights include $3.7m for the new Environmental Services Centre; $740,000 for the Dumas Street Community Learning Precinct; $300,000 to develop the Nairne Village Green; $760,000 to extend the popular Linear Trail, $228,000 for the Callington Recreation/Community Facility Renewal; $188,000 for the Littlehampton Peace Memorial Hall Toilet Upgrade and over $400,000 of community/recreation renewal projects at Hahndorf, Nairne, Echunga, Macclesfield, Littlehampton and Prospect Hill.
“We are committed to maintaining the enviable quality of life we have in our district and our focus on improving community and recreation facilities will greatly support the lifestyle and wellbeing of our residents,” Acting Mayor Morrison says.

Council has also decided not to pass on to ratepayers (this year) the estimated $90,000 p/a increase in the solid waste levy, following the State Government’s unexpected recent State Budget announcement. The Government’s decision to raise the levy by 10% from 1 July, 2019 and a further 40% from January 2020 came without any consultation with SA Councils.

“This levy increase is disappointing and adds extra pressure to our financial sustainability,” Acting Mayor Morrison says.

“Ten years ago the State Government potentially quadrupled the 2009 population of Mount Barker with its rezoning process, against the wishes of the Council and the community. Meeting the demands of this rapid growth and the new infrastructure required continues to be a challenge for Council - and the extra funds spent on the levy is money that could have been invested in community infrastructure.”

In order to continue to deliver the infrastructure needed, Council has adopted significant increases of between 7.5-10% in charges for developers in relation to wastewater. This follows a significant increase last year in the amount payable by developers to contribute to recreation, sport and community infrastructure.

“Council has always held the view that the cost of growth should not be borne by ratepayers alone and it expects developers that benefit from this growth to assist in delivering the infrastructure required,” Acting Mayor Morrison says.

“As Mount Barker’s continued expansion places significant upfront infrastructure investment demands on Council, further grant funding from Federal and State Governments also remains critical to meeting essential community needs, and we’ll be working hard to attract more.”

Council has retained supportive mechanisms to assist ratepayers experiencing hardship. It will also continue to limit the maximum increase that applies to any individual ratepayer.

- ENDS -

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