



LATE AGENDA

Council Meeting

Tuesday 19 May 2026

AGENDA

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Melinda Curtis
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER

**ED25/26. Responses to Questions on the Business Paper - 19
May 2026**
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FILE: 26/00126

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide responses to questions submitted by Councillors in relation to items contained within the Business Paper for the 19 May 2026.

FOR INFORMATION

Under the provisions of the POL/1014 - Code of Meeting Practice, Councillors are entitled to submit questions regarding agenda items prior to a Council meeting. This process ensures that Councillors have the necessary information to make informed decisions during the meeting.

In line clause 9.16, there a Councillor or Council employee to whom a question is put is unable to respond to the question at the meeting at which it is put, they may take it on notice and report the response to the next meeting of the Council.

Attachments

AT-1 [↓](#) Collated Questions - Council Meeting - 19 May 2026

**RESPONSES TO COUNCILLORS QUESTIONS
REGARDING BUSINESS PAPER 19 May 2026**



Councillor	Report Ref	Question/s raised	Response/s provided
Cr Sue George	ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption – page 169	Given this ratio for the General Account is negative what actions are being taken to move it into a positive position during the life of this plan?	<p>The Financial Improvement Plan will be discussed with councillors in a series of workshops over the coming 6 months.</p> <p>Measures to improve the financial situation are likely to include service levels reviews and possible reductions to service levels, constant monitoring of expenditure, finding additional revenue streams, maximising current revenue streams.</p>
Cr Sue George	ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption – page 172	What steps are being taken to improve this ratio?	The level of asset renewals is driven by Council's asset management plans. The renewal expenditure will be considered as part of the Financial Improvement Plan.
Cr Sue George	ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption – page 178	How can the facility be costing us \$300 000 per year?	Since entering the lease arrangement with RLX, annual expenditure by Council is approx. \$52,000 (insurance & loan repayment). The balance is depreciation which is a non-cash expense.
Cr Sue George	ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption – page 180	Given the large number of carryovers what guarantee do we have that the Capital Works budget will be completed in the next financial year?	The large carryover into next financial year is mostly due to a few high-value projects which have experienced unexpected delays, notably Gym & Swim 25m Pool, Combo Lane Bridge and the Saleyards. Whilst not a guarantee, staff have recognised the need to critically assess the deliverability of every project in the capital program and introduce new systems and processes to ensure performance measurement practices are applied, including baselining, change management and

			earned value. Project delivery workshops have already commenced ahead of the anticipated circa \$50M 2027/28 program.
Cr Sue George	ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption – page 224	<p><i>The aim of our LTFFP is to not only ensure the financial sustainability of Council over the longer term, but also provide for the maintenance and construction of Council's assets into the future.</i></p> <p>This quote is from the document, how with a deficit for the next 10 years are we achieving this aim, what specific actions are being undertaken to work towards a balanced budget.</p>	<p>The LTFFP is a dynamic and living document and is developed to guide the future. It allows council the ability to test different scenarios.</p> <p>A scenario could be provided that would lead to a balanced budget and show what financial changes council would be required to undertake to create a balanced budget. Council would then decide if they are prepared to take the quantum of financial charges.</p> <p>The Financial Improvement Plan will be discussed with councillors in a series of workshops over the coming 6 months.</p> <p>Measures to improve the financial situation are likely to include service levels reviews and possible reductions to service levels, constant monitoring of expenditure, finding additional revenue streams, maximising current revenue streams.</p>
Cr Sue George	DCCS35/26 – March 2026 Quarterly Budget Review Statement (QBRS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explanations are to be in plain English and in a style that is easily understood by readers of non-financial information. The narrative is important in understanding why budget changes are necessary. <p>These words appear at the end of the tables on pages 359-364, I am uncertain that the</p>	<p>In relation to plain English comments, the points are noted and future reports will implement this suggestion.</p> <p>Pages 349-350 are additional information provided to support the legislative required reporting. The points are noted and will be addressed in future reports.</p> <p>Approx. of 2025/2026 capital budget is proposed to be carried forward, for a variety of reasons. The funding will also be carried forward, therefore no net impact on budgets.</p>

		<p>information provided on pages 349-350 do meet this requirement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information on pages 351-359 do nothing to add to the lay persons understanding of the figures, the budget implications or the ongoing impact <p>It is concerning that most of the capital works from 2025-26 is now being transferred to 2026-27, putting further pressure on an already tight budget</p>	
Cr Sue George	DI&P14/26 – Draft Building in the Vicinity of Water and Sewerage System Policy	4.2 1 st para 2 nd last line <i>activities</i>	Thank you – this will be updated from “actives” to “activities” in the public exhibition version of the policy.
Cr Sue George	DI&P14/26 – Draft Building in the Vicinity of Water and Sewerage System Policy	5 Heading – do you need TRUNK in the heading?	Thank you – this should read “PART 2 – BUILDING IN THE VICINTIY OF TRUNK WATER MAINS WATER ASSETS ” and will be updated in the public exhibition version of the policy.
Cr Sue George	ED24/26 – IP&R Service Review and Service Level Review (SLR) – Parks and Open Space	What were the 9 Council’s Singleton is compared with?	Data was benchmarked with the following nine councils who participated in the Service Review in a Box program: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cessnock City Council Maitland City Council Parks Shire Council Mid-Western Regional Council Newcastle City Council Clarence Valley Council City of Ryde Council

			8. Goulburn Mulwaree Council 9. The Hills Shire Council
Cr Sue George	ED24/26 – IP&R Service Review and Service Level Review (SLR) – Parks and Open Space	<p>We seem to be spending a significant amount of money on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • garden beds given we only have 0.02 hectares per 1000 people? • Passive parks local is 10x the mean figure <p>Is there a reason there are no figures for asset type expenditure in the last table, but the table above showing revenue has significant amounts, are they correct?</p>	<p>The opportunity to benchmark data with participating councils has identified areas for closer review, including service levels and resourcing.</p> <p>For equal benchmarking, the area of garden beds was converted to hectares (Ha) and budgeted spend was converted based on 1Ha. Singleton has 0.617Ha of garden beds and the actual 2025/2026 Draft Budget available at the time of benchmarking was \$64,464. The service review has highlighted this spend on a service unable to be cost recoverable.</p> <p>Singleton has 115.3Ha of parks within the benchmarking category of 'Passive parks – local'. The benchmarking data shows that Singleton has 4.55Ha of 'passive parks – local' per 1,000 population with a \$14,424.70 spend/Ha, compared to the Group Mean of 2.04Ha per 1,000 population with a \$11,791.80/Ha. The service review has highlighted potential of over servicing of parks, particularly in this field, particularly as these parks are not likely to be cost recoverable with fees and charges.</p> <p>The 'Expenditure by Asset type per amount (\$/amount)' table displays \$0 as the current finance system does not provide the detail as was required for accurate benchmarking. The data provided for benchmarking was correct at the time of collection on 18 September 2025.</p>
Cr Yeomans	ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption	Regarding the \$233 per hour charge for extra work contained in the fees & charges. Is this for actual work hours or does it include breaks & non	The \$233 per hour rate is based on the total employee costs, such as salaries, superannuation and leave entitlements together with allocations for corporate overheads such as information technology, finance, human resources, legal services, accommodation and

		productive time, what is the approximate typical hourly pay rate for staff in these positions ?	<p>governance support.</p> <p>The rate also reflects the fact that staff are not billable for 100% of working hours due to meetings, corporate responsibilities, leave and other operational commitments.</p> <p>Using a standard local government cost recovery methodology, a senior strategic planning position with a total annual employment and overhead cost in the order of approximately \$220,000 to \$260,000, divided across productive annual hours, generally results in an hourly recovery rate in the range of approximately \$200 to \$260 per hour.</p> <p>Accordingly, a rate of \$233 per hour is consistent with full cost recovery principles. The rate can therefore be justified as reflecting the actual cost to Council of undertaking complex, proponent-driven strategic planning work, including planning proposals, LEP amendments, DCP amendments and associated policy or technical review processes.</p> <p>The rate has also been benchmarked against other councils, such as Port Stephens Council, whose rate in the current financial year is \$234 per hour.</p>
Cr Yeomans	ED24/26 – IP&R Service Review and Service Level Review (SLR) – Parks and Open Space	What is the average amount of parks (greenspace) square meters per person available to Australians, all, urban, regional	There is no one source of information relating to parks access across Australia. The benchmarking highlights that the Singleton community has access to 16.93Ha/1000 population compared to 14.22Ha/1000 population of the other 9 participating councils.
Cr Yeomans	ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and		Balancing the budget will be an aim of the Financial Improvement Plan and will involve a series of

	Reporting Documents for Adoption	What kind of motion would councillors need to pass, that directs the council to ensure that the budget is balanced ASAP, without increasing fees, charges & rates or borrowings, maintaining essential services, reducing or stopping non-essential services & programs. & could such a direction be achieved by an amendment to ED21/26 Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption	workshops with council over the next 6 months. Any intended motion should be discussed with council's governance team. However, given the quantum of the proposed budget deficit, it would require significant service level cuts to achieve in the 2026/27 year.
Cr Yeomans	ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption	re fees & charges - How is justified that some kinds of fee for service is charged based on the value of projects if the service provided by council is essentially the same regardless of value ? could this be considered unfair use of monopoly power to extract unearned resources?	Without reference to specific fees and charges being queried, the general principles are being applied when calculating fees and charges. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some fees are regulated – set by the NSW Govt. • Some on a cost recovery basis • Others are on market basis. Some fees are charged on an incremental basis, based on the value of the development. Larger developments create more assessment work, hence the incremental basis.
Cr Yeomans	DI&P13/26 – Sports Grant Funding Allocations Round 2 2026/2026	re sports grant funding. Why was the dollar for dollar funding for some of the sports grants overridden? why does it cost so much for the design elements of seemingly simple & standard items for MTB club? Is the funding for Jerrys Plains rodeo	Q1 Why was the dollar for dollar funding for some of the sports grants overridden The Sports Grant guidelines allow for 100% of funding under certain circumstances including Strategic planning activities, and where extenuating circumstances exist.

		<p>grounds going to benefit the wider community, is it going to be used regularly enough to justify.</p>	<p>Extenuating circumstances can include natural disasters, vandalism or where clubs do not have a source of income through levying fees and charge. The Mountain Bike Club applications relate to planning activities to retrofit new facilities, and the club has limited ability to raise income.</p> <p>Q2 Why does it cost so much for the design elements of seemingly simple & standard items for MTB club.</p> <p>The proposed planning will include a suitably qualified consultant undertaking site inspections, detail survey, environmental and archaeological investigation, Review of Environmental Factors, design engineering, and project planning. The quote provided is considered reasonable, and consistent with industry standards and councils recent projects.</p> <p>Q3 Is the funding for Jerrys Plains rodeo grounds going to benefit the wider community, is it going to be used regularly enough to justify.</p> <p>The funding will be used to repair unfunded degraded council assets (with limited grant opportunities) enabling the ground to be hired for other community activities.</p> <p>Council has received enquiries from Pony Club regarding the ground however the current state of the assets would preclude allowing use for the requested purpose. The proposed project will restore fencing, and functionality to the amenities. The project is considered</p>
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			<p>to provide longer term benefits for the local and wider Singleton community.</p>
<p>Cr Yeomans</p>	<p>ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption</p>	<p>Will the ev charger being installed at the gym & swim be required to provide a return on investment has a business case been made.</p>	<p>Any EV installation at the gym and swim will be required to comply with the requirements of the adopted Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure on Council Land Policy. The Policy details the procurement process for proponents, including the requirement to enter into a lease/licence/agreement with council for the facility, which includes making payment to council for the use of the land.</p> <p>In November 2023, the EV Charging Feasibility Assessment for Singleton LGA identified the Singleton Gym and Swim as a high-priority location for the installation of up to two dual-port 22kW destination chargers, servicing four parking spaces. This recommendation was based on its proximity to the Civic Centre and Quest Hotel, in addition to its existing visitor base, who typically remain at the venue for between 30 minutes and two hours.</p> <p>The assessment also outlined potential service models for Singleton Council, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a fee-for-service model to cover ongoing operational costs; • Offering free charging during operating hours; and • Introducing paid charging overnight to discourage misuse of the service by local residents. <p>In April 2024, Singleton Council staff collaborated with EVSE to better understand the Return on Investment (ROI) associated with installing Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure. The findings indicated that installation of EV chargers could deliver several</p>

			<p>benefits, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased foot traffic, improved public image, repeat visitation, longer dwell times, and potential for additional revenue; • Indirect economic benefits associated with prolonged customer stays; and • Attraction of new customers, particularly from the growing demographic of EV drivers actively seeking locations with charging facilities. <p>Based on 2024 assumptions, if two 22 kW if two 22 kW charger units operate at a cost of \$0.45 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), with an average session duration of 70 minutes and energy consumption of 10 kWh per session, the average user spend is approximately \$4.50 (including GST) per session. With an estimated 110 sessions per month, this would generate monthly revenue of approximately \$493.</p> <p>Taking into account the costs associated with hardware, installation, management software, and ongoing maintenance, it is estimated that the investment would be recovered over a period of approximately 12 years. While DC fast chargers require a higher upfront investment, they typically generate higher revenue per session due to greater energy delivery and higher charging tariffs. As a result, the return on investment is expected to be achieved within a similar timeframe compared to 22 kW chargers.</p>
<p>Cr Watson</p>	<p>QC3/26 – Questions with Notice Response – Cr Watson</p>	<p>Based on the annual report 2019 it had a budget and actual and the project went over budget. Can an explanation be given as to why this</p>	<p>The engagement for detailed design for GHD did not go over budget. However, a previously used work order for investigation and advice in relation to structural repair was consolidated into this budget.</p>

		project went over budget?	
Cr Watson	ED21/26 – Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents for Adoption	What is the timeline for the disability access project for the Civic Theatre?	<p>Three options have been presented to the internal stakeholders regarding stage access with the recommendation to proceed with a low rise passenger lift in lieu of an internal ramp or external ramp. Finalisation of the procurement and installation of a passenger lift is awaiting confirmation of the wider scope which includes the disability access amenities. In relation to the disability access amenities a design has been completed to accommodate a maximum of 550 patrons in a single event. Building Certification has confirmed 1800 user potential under National Construction Code (NCC) provisions. To accommodate the maximum allowable number of users, additional toilet facilities would be required to comply with NCC requirements. Additional floor area will be required to add fixtures accordingly. Capital Works is finalising this feasibility prior to releasing for tender. Tender is expected to be released in July subject to this work being completed.</p>