

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES TO QUESTION TIME TUESDAY, 23 MAY 2017
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The following questions were addressed to the above meeting. Some questions were adequately responded to at the meeting, however others required a more detailed response in writing.

This document includes both verbal and written responses.

John Orchard asked:

- 1) How does Council reconcile the proposed amendment with the clear strategic objectives for the renewal and intensification of development in Central Geelong?
- 2) What consideration has Council given to the implications of the proposed amendment for the future use and development of the land?
- 3) What has occurred since 1991 to warrant upgrading the land from the “C” grading in the Geelong urban Conservation Study?

Laurinda Gardner responded the question will be addressed during debate of Agenda Item 2.

Markus Tschech asked the following in relation to Amendment C359:

- 1) Council is currently working on new planning initiatives, including the Revitalising Central Geelong Partnership and Enterprise Geelong, to encourage economic investment in the Geelong CBD. Does the proposed heritage protection assess the impact on how strategic development will be delivered within the Geelong CBD area?
- 2) As part of the heritage review, how does Council see heritage protection being balanced against the Activity Centre Zone and strategic development potential of the Geelong CBD?
- 3) How does Council reconcile heritage protection to the land at 44 Ryrie Street, when there is an existing planning permit for a 12 storey office building?

Laurinda Gardner responded the question will be addressed during debate of Agenda Item 2.

The following questions were asked in relation to the Review of the Library Network and will be responded to in writing and available on Council’s website:

Hilary Hoevenaars asked :

- Given the lack of consultation with the communities directly affected by your decision, and your apparent lack of understanding of the true value of our library to ur community;
- Given the decision has been based on flawed reviews and mis-represented viability figures which do not use the current Australian Guidelines for Reviewing Public Libraries;

- Given Chilwell Library is among the most cost efficient in the region, using only 1% of the total GRLC budget to service 5% of the community;
- Given that if Chilwell Library closes, the cost savings to GRLC's budget will be minimal, but the cost to the community (as measured by the current Australian Guidelines for Libraries) will be incalculable;
- Given Chilwell Library beautifully supports the Council's own municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan's pillars of Social Connectedness and Physical Activity, social determinants of health easily measured in health dollars;
- Given that Newtown residents pay some of the highest rates of the region simply because of the high property values which are directly related to the suburb's amenity and close proximity to local services such as our much loved library;
- Given close proximity to services is in line with broader government initiatives to reduce reliance on transport, roads, energy consumption and carbon emissions;
- Given the reliance of 100+ pre schoolers and 700+ primary school students on Chilwell's librarian and resources within walking distance of their homes and schools;
- Given your interest in social equity and universally applied economic rationalisation and with Geelong West retaining its own library, which is closest to the new City library at only 1.5km and serves a population 2/3 that of Newtown, and

In light of both the support we have received from our local State member, Christine Couzens, and the enormous public outcry regarding your decision to close Chilwell Library, without any prior consultation with the community most affected, will you now rescind this motion and allow the newly elected Council to consider this issue, after appropriate community consultation, and if not, why not?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

*I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.
Please note the following response:*

Your Question:

To the Administrators - In light of both the support we have received from our local State member, Christine Couzens, and the enormous public outcry regarding your decision to close Chilwell Library, without any prior consultation with the community most affected, will you now rescind this motion and allow the newly elected council to consider this issue, after appropriate community consultation, and if not, why not?

Response: As has been previously highlighted the decision to close the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads libraries was made following a number of reviews that highlighted that the library network within the City of Geelong is unsustainable. These reviews have been consistent over a number of years. The decision to close these libraries is informed by a number of factors. It is not just performance against the non-viability measures, but also the opportunity of residents to access other library services nearby, the physical limitations of the building and the sustainability of a growing the network in a more financially constrained environment. The Administrators were appointed on the back of a Commission of Inquiry report and they have the power to make decisions in line with any elected Council.

Lyn Dowling asked:

- 1) The community has been told that the Chilwell Library is not economic or cost effective and yet the Council's own figure show that the Chilwell Library serves nearly 5% or (9682 residents, of the whole population of the City of Greater Geelong with (210,000 residents), yet operates with less than 1% or \$109,748 of the Geelong Regional Library budget of approximately \$10million.

- 2) Further, the three libraries set to be closed serve close to 14% of the whole population of the City of Greater Geelong, yet only cost 3% or \$299,673 of the library budget. The relatively "minor savings" achieved by the City of Greater Geelong in closing the Chilwell Library will not compensate the Chilwell/Newtown community for the hurt and damage to our current and future communities and it will not help all the residents and the many thousands of children at the five kindergartens, 7 primary schools and three very large secondary schools in Chilwell/Newtown to fully participate in their education and being part of a "Clever and Creative" city.
- 3) Given the very low operating cost of the Chilwell Library at \$109,748 why does the City of Greater Geelong refer to the Chilwell Library (and two others) as being uneconomic and not cost effective?
- 4) If the Geelong Regional Library Corporation were to apply universal economic rationalisation in this area, why has it not recommended that the Queenscliff library serving 3069 residents be closed? I submit that the Administrators have been significantly misled by inadequate financial advice from the Geelong Regional Library Corporation and, as such, the basis for this recommendation was seriously flawed.

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following response:

Question:

The Community has been told that the Chilwell Library is not economic or cost effective And yet the Council's own figures show that the Chilwell Library serves nearly 5 % or (9682 residents), of the whole population of the City of Greater Geelong with (210,000 residents) yet operates with less than 1% or \$109,748 of the Geelong Regional Library budget of approximately \$10million. Further the 3 libraries set to be closed serve close to 14% of the whole population of the City of Greater Geelong, yet only cost 3% or \$299,673 of the library budget. The relatively "minor savings" achieved by the City of Greater Geelong in closing the Chilwell Library will not compensate the Chilwell/Newtown community for the hurt and damage to our current and future communities and it will not help all the residents and the many thousands of children at the 5 kindergartens, 7 primary schools and 3 very large secondary schools in Chilwell/Newtown to fully participate in their education and being part of a "Clever and Creative" city. Given the very low operating cost of the Chilwell Library at \$109,748 why does the City of Greater Geelong refer to the Chilwell Library (and 2 others) as being uneconomic and not cost effective?

Response:

As has been previously highlighted the decision to close the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads libraries was made following a number of reviews that highlighted that the library network within the City of Geelong is unsustainable. These reviews have been consistent over a number of years.

The decision to close these libraries is informed by a number of factors. It is not just performance against the non-viability measures, but also the opportunity of residents to access other library services nearby, the physical limitations of the building and the sustainability of a growing the network in a more financially constrained environment.

Question:

If the Geelong Regional Library Corporation were to apply universal economic rationalisation in this area, why has it not recommended that the Queenscliff library serving 3069 residents be closed? I submit that the Administrators have been significantly misled by inadequate financial advice from the Geelong Regional Library Corporation and, as such, the basis for this recommendation was seriously flawed

Response:

The Geelong Regional Library Corporation provided the City of Greater Geelong with access to the entire reports since 1999. The Library Corporation continually monitor the usage of each of the libraries across their network, and the City of Greater Geelong was well aware of the usage rates for other libraries across the GRLC network.

In relation to the Queenscliff Library, this is the only Library in the Borough of Queenscliff and the service is funded by the Borough of Queenscliff. Across the City of Greater Geelong there are 13 libraries that are being funded and maintained.

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

Tracey Stone asked that the GRLC, in their recommendations to COGG, failed to evaluate the Chilwell library against current national guidelines for reviewing Australian Public Libraries, which emphasises measuring outcomes and impacts on people's lives, rather than merely outputs (loans, visits). Why have these evidence-based standards been ignored? The Chilwell library delivers direct outcomes for our children: 1) Early childhood literacy foundations are built in this library for: • Newborns: Group sessions for "New mothers" held by the librarian promoting vital reading to babies • Story time every Tuesday to 25-30 preschool children • Convenient access for my family to read together, in line with the "1000 books before school" campaign Accessing other libraries is NOT always possible with small children particularly for grandparents. Chilwell library provides a hub, close to home, to interact with our community. It's free, kid friendly, safe and next door to the park. Where else in Chilwell meets these needs and delivers these outcomes? 2) Libraries are increasingly developing partnerships with education organisations to leverage resources and broaden accessibility again highlighted in these standards. Chilwell library has a long-standing partnership with Chilwell Primary School. How will students continue with their regular class excursions, access to resources in line with The Premiers' Reading Challenge and ensure Chilwell primary continues to deliver good quality educational outcomes?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following response:

Your Question:

GRLC, in their recommendations to COGG, failed to evaluate the Chilwell library against current national guidelines for reviewing Australian Public Libraries, which emphasises measuring outcomes and impacts on people's lives, rather than merely outputs (loans, visits). Why have these evidence-based standards been ignored? The Chilwell library delivers direct outcomes for our children: 1) Early childhood literacy foundations are built in this library for: • Newborns: Group sessions for "New mothers" held by the librarian promoting vital reading to babies • Story time every Tuesday to 25-30 preschool children • Convenient access for my family to read together, in line with the "1000 books before school" campaign Accessing other libraries is NOT always possible with small children particularly for grandparents. Chilwell library provides a hub, close to home, to interact with our community. It's free, kid friendly, safe and next door to the park. Where else in Chilwell meets these needs and delivers these outcomes?

2) Libraries are increasingly developing partnerships with education organisations to leverage resources and broaden accessibility again highlighted in these standards. Chilwell library has a long-standing partnership with Chilwell Primary School. How will students continue with their regular class excursions, access to resources in line with The Premiers' Reading Challenge and ensure Chilwell primary continues to deliver good quality educational outcomes?

Response:

The Australian Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures, developed in 2012, are a national guiding document designed to assist public libraries aspire to and report on a series of agreed measures of library performance. The standards are framed on a per capita basis and can be used to describe activity across states and local government areas, but cannot be easily applied on a branch-by-branch basis. The GRLC uses these guidelines to assess its overall performance.

It is well understood that members of the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads libraries derive value from these libraries and the other libraries in the network that they most use.

The decision to close these libraries is informed by a number of factors. It is not just performance against the non-viability measures, but also the opportunity of residents to access other library services nearby, the physical limitations of the building and the sustainability of a growing the network in a more financially constrained environment.

The non – viability measures were used in the most recent review to provide consistency in the way the library services have been evaluated in a number of reports commissioned since 1999.

Pati Seiler asked the following questions in relation to the Library closures.

- 1) Newtown is a growing, high-density residential area which attracts premium property prices, because of the suburb's amenity and proximity to local services, such as our much loved Chilwell Library. Residents pay some of the highest rates in the region due to this amenity. More high density development is slated for the area. Why would residents continue to pay these higher rates if you remove facilities such as their only remaining community hub and library?
- 2) Planning for development in Newtown is consistent with broader government initiatives to encourage higher density living close to urban centres to reduce reliance on transport, roads, energy consumption and carbon emissions. It defeats the purpose (and reduces the attractiveness of this type of living) if inner urban residents are forced to hop on a bus or in their car to use a library. (300m walk from two primary schools to library, 200m from Bond Street Kindergarten). How is your proposed closure of Chilwell Library in line with best practice urban planning?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following responses:

Your Question:

Newtown is a growing, high-density residential area which attracts premium property prices, because of the suburb's amenity and proximity to local services, such as our much loved Chilwell Library. Residents pay some of the highest rates in the region due to this amenity. More high density development is slated for the area. Why would residents continue to pay these higher rates if you remove facilities such as their only remaining community hub and library?

Response: Councils raise rates to provide services across the whole municipality and not just within the area where rates are levied. Residents from the Newtown and Chilwell area access these services across the municipality. The rates that are raised provide for more than 126 services that Local Government are responsible for delivering.

Your Question:

Planning for development in Newtown is consistent with broader government initiatives to encourage higher density living close to urban centres to reduce reliance on transport, roads, energy consumption and carbon emissions. It defeats the purpose (and reduces the attractiveness of this type of living) if inner urban residents are forced to hop on a bus or in their car to use a library. (300m walk from 2 primary schools to library, 200m from Bond Street Kinder). How is your proposed closure of Chilwell Library in line with best practice urban planning?

Response: The Chilwell Library has three other library branches located within 3 km radius. The Geelong Library and Heritage Centre is located only 1.5km away and the Geelong West Library is located only 1.8 km away. In addition to this the area is well serviced by public transport. This is completely in line with modern town planning principals.

Jan Laidlaw asked the following in relation to the Library closures:

On the 'Your Say' section on the Council website, there is a survey about the Domestic Animal Management Plan. Time for responses to this survey has been extended to a four week period, due to strong community interest. Given the huge community interest in the close of the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads Libraries, why hasn't the closing date for Council's current library survey been extended?

Fifteen of the twenty-three questions on the Domestic Animal survey are along the lines of how can we encourage people, do you have feedback, any ideas that can help, what can we do. Previous library surveys carried out by the Geelong Regional Library Corporation have been totally lacking in any questions genuinely seeking community input. Why is the current Council Library Survey so lacking in any questions that genuinely seek community input?

No genuine community consultation was done prior to Council making the decision to close the three libraries. Why was it decided to have totally inadequate community consultation after Council made the decision, rather than before?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following response:

Your Question:

On the Your Say section on the Council website, there is a survey about the Domestic Animal Management Plan. Time for responses to this survey has been extended to a four week period, due to strong community interest. Given the huge community interest in the closure of the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads libraries, why hasn't the closing date for Council's current library survey been extended?

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No genuine community consultation was done prior to Council making the decision to close the three libraries. Why was it decided to have totally inadequate community consultation AFTER Council made the decision, rather than BEFORE?

Response:

The Library Branch Closure survey was conducted in the timeframes to allow the data to be analysed and information provided back to the Transition Reference Groups that have been established. The survey is one method of engaging with the community to identify issues that may be barriers to community members accessing library services. It was also undertaken to gain further information into how these spaces are used in addition to accessing library services.

As has been previously highlighted the decision to close the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads libraries was made following a number of reviews that highlighted that the library network within the City of Geelong is unsustainable. These reviews have been consistent over a number of years.

Dorothy Trezise asked :

- 1) How will the closure of the Chilwell Library support the first choice of the assembly – a vision for a clever, creative city and region – when the local means for this are taken away?
- 2) In what way does the closure of the Chilwell Library support the vision of a caring city and a lifestyle city and region for the next 30 years?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your Question Time letter submitted for the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please find below a response to your questions:

As has been previously highlighted, the decision to close the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads library was made following a number of reviews that highlighted that the library network within the City of Geelong is unsustainable. These reviews have been consistent over a number of years.

The decision to close these libraries is informed by a number of factors. It is not just performance against the non-viability measures, but also the opportunity of residents to access services nearby, the physical limitations of the building and the sustainability of a growing network in a more financially constrained environment.

The Chilwell Library has three other library branches located within 3 km. The Geelong Library and Heritage Centre is located only 1.5km away and the Geelong West Library is located only 1.8 km away. In addition to this the area is well serviced by public transport.

The City of Greater Geelong is continuing to invest in the library network. Each year the city spends approximately \$10m on the operation of the libraries and as the community grows and develops we are required to provide library services to those emerging communities.

Council will be developing a new library at Leopold and there are plans for an upgraded library at Drysdale and a new library at Armstrong Creek. There are a large number of libraries across the Geelong area that provide modern services that will meet the needs of the community.

Council will continue to engage and listen to its community as we seek to provide access to services for everyone in the community.

Jacqui Bennett asked how can you propose to close the viable Highton Library when it is used by so many, including the five local primary schools and three kindergartens, who walk their students to it in order to gain an appreciation of books, the values of a library and library membership?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following response:

Your Question:

How can you propose to close the viable Highton Library when it is used by so many, including the 5 local Primary Schools and 3 Kindergartens, who walk their students to it in order to gain an appreciation of books, the values of a library and library membership?

Response:

There are no school or kinder visits recorded for Highton since June 2016.

There have been no school or kinder visits this year despite invitations from the Branch Librarian to attend.

The school or kinder visits to the Highton Library (the space is very constrained) have been low for many years, however there was one kinder that visited weekly during April and May in 2016.

Other than this, the visits are infrequent:

2013 – 3 school visits

2014 – 2 school visits

2015 – 2 school visits and 1 kinder visit

2016 – 1 school visit and 6 kinder visits

Robert Hamilton-Jones asked:

Geelong is currently transitioning from a manufacturing hub to industries such as search and innovation. Indeed one of the five priorities of the City of Greater Geelong's current "City Plan" is to foster 'A prosperous and innovative Geelong'. How is this pivot towards the so-called knowledge economy compatible with the proposal to close the public library in Highton, especially when the suburb's population grew 11.5% in the five years to 2016. Surely instead of closing, the library needs modernising so it can provide a 21st century 'knowledge centre' for more than 18,000 residents, plus several local educational institutions?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following response:

Your Question:

Geelong is currently transitioning from a manufacturing hub to industries such as research and innovation. Indeed one of the five priorities of the City of Greater Geelong's current 'City Plan' is to foster 'A prosperous and innovative Geelong.' How is this pivot towards the so-called Knowledge Economy compatible with the proposal to close the public library in Highton especially when that suburb's population grew 11.5% in the 5 years to 2016 (source: ABS)? Surely instead of closing, the library needs modernising so it can provide a 21st century 'knowledge centre' for more than 18,000 residents plus several local educational institutions?

Response:

The City of Greater Geelong is continuing to invest in the library network. Each year the City spends approximately \$10m on the operation of the libraries and as the community grows and develops we are required to provide library services to those emerging communities. Council will be developing a new library at Leopold and there are plans for an upgraded library at Drysdale and a new library at Armstrong Creek. There are a large number of libraries across the Geelong area that provide modern services that will meet the needs of the community.

Ray Box submitted two questions but was not present at the Meeting.

Brian McGlade as the area has been rezoned medium density and with major development in the Barrabool Hills, the library should be expanded, not closed. Your own figures show the need for a library and they meet the KPI. You are unelected officials making decisions without consulting the impacted community.

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following response:

Your Question:

This area has been rezoned medium density and with major development in the Barrabool Hills the library should be expanded not closed. Your own figures show the need for a library and they meet the KPI. You are unelected officials making decisions without consulting the impacted community.

Response:

The Highton Library is one of 13 libraries that is maintained and operated across the City of Greater Geelong. There are larger libraries in Waurin Ponds, Belmont and Geelong that would cater for the residents in the Barrabool Hills area.

Yvonne Berry submitted two questions but was not present at the Meeting.

Ron Nelson asked:

- 1) Why did the Administrators decide to close the Highton Library by saying it does not meet 21st century needs when the recently published Highton urban Design Framework recommends upgrading the library to meet 21st century.
- 2) Why have the Administrator's chosen to close the Highton Library sighting poor figures when recent figures suggest that the Highton Library meets all KPI's set by the GRLC.
- 3) The GRLC has put out a leaflet suggesting people in the Highton community catch the number 16 bus to either Belmont or Waurin Ponds. Do the Administrator's know that bus 16 does not exist?
- 4) Highton Library is earmarked for closure on the basis that libraries are more needed in growth areas like Leopold and Armstrong Creek. Highton has a resident population of 16,000 and growing compared to 11,000. Council is even opening a new child care facility within 500 metres of the Highton Library. With hundreds of children to attend the new childcare centre, where will they go for their knowledge hub?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following responses:

Your Questions:

Q1. What consultation process has the Council had with the community before making its decision to close Highton library?

Q2. Why did the Administrators decide to close the Highton library by saying it does not meet 21st Century needs when the recently published Highton Urban Design Framework recommends upgrading the library to meet 21st Century needs.

Q3. Why have the Administrator's chosen to close the Highton library sighting poor figures - When recent figures suggest that Highton library meets all KPI's set by the GRLC.

Q4. The GRLC has put out a leaflet suggesting people in the Highton community catch the number 16 bus to either Belmont or Waurin Ponds. Do the Administrator's know that bus 16 does not exist?

Q5. Highton library is earmarked for closure on the basis that libraries are more needed in growth areas like Leopold and Armstrong Creek. Highton has a resident population of 16,000 and growing compared to 11,000. Council is even opening a new child care facility within 500 metres of the Highton library. With hundreds of children to attend the new Childcare centre, where will they go for their knowledge hub?

Q6. Will Council Administrators reverse their decision to close the Highton library and undertake a 6-month community consultation process with the new democratically elected Council to decide on the fate of our library?

Responses:

As has been previously highlighted the decision to close the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads libraries was made following a number of reviews that highlighted that the library network within the City of Geelong is unsustainable. These reviews have been consistent over a number of years.

The figures quoted in the report are not KPIs, they are non-viability measures.

The non-viability measures are a threshold – they represent 50% of the average of visits per hour, loans per hour, internet sessions and stock turnover of all the GRLC's library branches. The Highton results are marginally above the non-viability threshold, but this still places the branch at the low end of performance when compared with others in the network.

The decision to close these libraries is informed by a number of factors. It is not just performance against the non-viability measures, but also the opportunity of residents to access other library services nearby, the physical limitations of the building and the sustainability of a growing the network in a more financially constrained environment.

The issue of the Urban Design Framework and the decision to close the Highton Library is clearly addressed on the City of Greater Geelong website and states:

"On 26 April the City of Greater Geelong Administrator's voted to close the Highton Library on 30 June 2017 as a result of recommendations made in a number of strategic reviews undertaken by the Geelong Regional Library Corporation.

The implications of this decision on the UDF project has been raised by interested members of the community.

A UDF is about the design and function of a place. It cannot determine operational matters about council service provision. A UDF provides principles about how community spaces and services could be incorporated into the physical design of a place. These principles are then used by other City departments to inform decisions about designing and siting of new or expanded community facilities.

In the case of the Highton Library site, the draft UDF will provide suggestions for the short and long term use of the site. These suggestions will be guided by the City's Community Development Department and the opportunities to improve the pedestrian amenity in the laneway beside Woolworths with the long term relocation of the loading bay to the west side of the building."

It is clear that there is no recommendation within the UDF about the Library Service.

The proximity of the Highton Library to both the Belmont Library and Waurin Ponds Library were also taken into account when considered the viability of each branch. While you have highlighted that the number 16 bus does not exist, the area is serviced well by a public transport network and the number 42 bus runs regularly from Highton to Waurin Ponds.

As highlighted in the reports that have been presented to Council, the Belmont Library is located 1.8km from the Highton Library. In addition to this the library at Waurin Ponds is within 4km and the main City Library is only 6km away.

Sandra Gatehouse asked:

As you are aware the Barwon Heads community is a strong community. The process the Barwon Heads Library has strengthened us and given us an opportunity to meet and share the values we all have, and talk about why we have chosen to live in our coastal village. We note the amount of money being allocated to sporting clubs in the budget; and ask why there isn't any value given to the fact that young and old can walk/ride to our local library, and that the community obviously values having this resource. We have over 1,200 signatures on our petitions to keep the library open and this list is growing each day. We have not been involved in the decision making process to close the library; we have not been listened to and our contribution has not been taken into account. We are now being bombarded with conflicting messaging from the Council and the Library Corporation, and a useless survey, which is confusing to many.

Why is there a 5 page questionnaire on line with no opportunity to comment, and a 9 page version when we go into the library and ask them to print it? Coupled with the fact the library is actually closed for painting and refurbishment for a few weeks, our community has had enough. We request that all this messaging and patronising instruction now ceases until after the June 27th Council meeting so that we can have further constructive discussion about the future of library services in Barwon Heads.

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following response:

Your Question:

As you are aware the Barwon Heads community is a strong community.

The process the Barwon Heads Library has strengthened us and given us an opportunity to meet and share the values we all have, and talk about why we have chosen to live in our coastal village.

We note the amount of money being allocated to sporting clubs in the budget; and ask why there isn't any value given to the fact that young and old can walk/ride to our local library, and that the community obviously values having this resource. We have over 1,200 signatures on our petitions to keep the lib ray open and this list is growing each day.

We have not been involved in the decision making process to close the library; we have not been listened to and our contribution has not been taken into account. We are now being bombarded with conflicting messaging from the Council and the Library Corporation, and a useless survey, which is confusing to many. Why is there a 5 page questionnaire on line with no opportunity to comment, and a 9 page version when we go into the library and ask them to print it? Coupled with the fact the library is actually closed for painting and refurbishment for a few weeks, our community has had enough. We request that all this messaging and patronising instruction now ceases until after the June 27th Council meeting so that we can have further constructive discussion about the future of library services in Barwon Heads.

Response:

The Library Branch Closure survey was designed to be completed on-line. Printing off the on-line version of the survey will result in the survey being spread out over many pages. A hard copy version of the survey was available at each of the libraries and this has been completed by a number of community representatives. We are committed to strengthening our engagement, with the survey only one means of input and we welcome other ideas of input.

Mandy Bridges asked:

Council's Community Engagement Policy in its City Plan states that Council recognizes "that effective community engagement enables Council to best meet the needs of the community by ensuring that planning and decision making is based on an understanding of the needs and aspirations of the community". It further states that the objectives of community engagement are to facilitate an exchange of ideas and information and that Council believes that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision making process. Why did the Council fail to follow its own policy when it decided to close the Barwon Heads, Chilwell and Highton libraries?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following response:

Question:

Council's Community Engagement Policy in its City Plan states that Council 'recognizes "that effective community engagement enables Council to best meet the needs of the community by ensuring that planning and decision making is based on an understanding of the needs and aspirations of the community"'.

It further states that the objectives of community engagement are to facilitate an exchange of ideas and information and that Council believes that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision making process. Why did the Council fail to follow its own policy when it decided to close the Barwon Heads, Chilwell and Highton libraries?

Response:

Council is undertaking consultation on the impact of the closure of the three libraries and how communities can be supported through the transition phase.

As highlighted at the Council Meeting on 23 May, we continue to be committed to working with communities to design new service delivery arrangements which encompass the ancillary benefits of local libraries that people have reported, such as social gathering places within walking distance.

If you are familiar with the IAP2 Framework for consultation there are a number of different formats that community engagement can take.

Phil Joyce – President Chilwell Primary School addressed Council as follows:

As highlighted on the City of Greater Geelong website, the Chilwell Library has a long and close history with Chilwell Primary School and other local primary schools. Chilwell Library provides support for class visits and events including book week events, library tours, study and free reading and access to an excellent collection focused on the educational need of primary school students. Chilwell primary School students use the library space for presentations, art exhibitions and club meetings. Indeed, with approximately 900 primary school students able to access the Chilwell Library within the area, the impact of student outcomes cannot be underestimated. Students at all levels of Chilwell Primary School undertake walking visits to the Chilwell Library during the year. This provides students with access to a resource that will underpin their education and learning for the rest of their lives. Moreover, teaching staff at Chilwell primary schools staff use the resources of the library to expand the educational horizons of the students and provide a culture of knowledge and community.

Therefore, as School President and on behalf of Chilwell Primary School, we respectfully ask:

Has the City of Greater Geelong proposed closure of the Chilwell Library taken into account the increased resources (financial, management and environmental) to Chilwell Primary School in transporting large groups of students, multiple times during the year to other libraries within the area? If so, can the City of Greater Geelong provide details of their plans and strategies to tackle this issue by providing resources to Chilwell Primary School?

Has the City of Greater Geelong proposed closure of the Chilwell Library taken into account the reduced local access to educational resources and events (book week events, library tours, study and free reading) by Chilwell Primary School students now that this proposed closure will require students to travel to alternative sites?

If so, can the City of Greater Geelong provide details of their plans and strategies to tackle this issue by providing resources to Chilwell Primary School to maintain their current level of library usage into the future years?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your Question Time letter submitted for the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please find below a response to your questions.

We understand the libraries within our network provide a variety of services for the communities. They are not designed to provide the services that a school library should be providing, as the City of Greater Geelong is not funded to provide this service.

Funding for libraries across the Greater Geelong network from other tiers of Government has dropped significantly over the years from 50% approximately 25 years ago, to only 14% today.

The Chilwell Library has three other library branches located within 3 km. The Geelong Library and Heritage Centre is located only 1.5km away and the Geelong West Library is located only 1.8 km away. In addition to this, the area is well serviced by public transport.

The City of Greater Geelong will work with the affected communities to identify barriers to accessing library services however we do not propose to provide resources or funding to the Chilwell Primary School.

Colin Bridges asked:

The Administrators have informed library members that “libraries are essentially a district level service for broader groups rather than local services”. Council has also stated that it understands the value libraries play as a community meeting space and that social connectivity cannot be valued in numbers and statistics. If past democratically elected Councils have had the foresight to establish and maintain for many years a policy of providing smaller diversified library services at a local level more readily accessible to less mobile residents, why is it right or acceptable for a temporary administration to change such policy shortly before it ceases office?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the questions asked by you at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017.

Please note the following response:

Question:

The Administrators have informed library members that " libraries are essentially a district level service for broader groups rather than local services." Council has also stated that it understands the value libraries play as a community meeting space and that social connectivity cannot be valued in numbers and statistics. If past democratically elected councils have had the foresight to establish and maintain for many years a policy of providing smaller diversified library services at a local level more readily accessible to less mobile residents, why is it right or acceptable for a temporary administration to change such policy shortly before it ceases office?

Response:

As has been previously highlighted the decision to close the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads libraries was made following a number of reviews that highlighted that the library network within the City of Geelong is unsustainable. These reviews have been consistent over a number of years.

The decision to close these libraries is informed by a number of factors. It is not just performance against the non-viability measures, but also the opportunity of residents to access other library services nearby, the physical limitations of the building and the sustainability of a growing the network in a more financially constrained environment. The Administrators were appointed on the back of a Commission of Inquiry report and they have the power to make decisions in line with any elected Council.

Graham Hobbs and Ulrike Wurth, as Highton residents, ratepayers and business proprietors in Barrabool Road, Highton since 1979 for 32 years (now a retired lawyer and veterinary surgeon respectively), my wife and I have witnessed the growing population and full primary schools (Bellaire, Highton, Montpellier and Belmont) all four situate within 1.5 kilometers of the library, major influx of young families, substantial subdivision still continuing and growth of the Highton community and Highton Village.

There has been a constant population growth in Highton, as per the following census figures: 2001 (11902), 2006 (14494), 2011 (15961), 2016 (18265).

There has been a 14.44% increment in five years, plus an increasing need to provide a convenient ratepayers public information source for the youth and older residents in the growing Highton community centre.

Accordingly, with this constant and projected growth in residents and ratepayers in Highton:

Why is the Highton Community Library proposed to close?

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
Director Investment and Attraction in the following terms:**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your Question Time letter delivered by hand for the Ordinary Council Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2017. Please find below a response to your question.

Your Question:

Why is the Highton Community Library proposed to close?

Response:

The decision to close the Chilwell, Highton and Barwon Heads libraries was made following a number of reviews that highlighted that the library network within the City of Geelong is unsustainable. These reviews have been consistent over a number of years.

Since June 2016, there have been no school or kinder visits recorded for Highton despite invitations from the Branch Librarian to attend.

The school / kinder visits to the Highton Library (the space is very constrained) have been low for many years, however there was one kinder that visited weekly during April and May in 2016.

The decision to close these libraries is informed by a number of factors. It is not just performance against the non-viability measures, but also the opportunity of residents to access other library services nearby, the physical limitations of the building and the sustainability of a growing the network in a more financially constrained environment.

The Administrators were appointed on the back of a Commission of Inquiry report and they have the power to make decisions in line with any elected Council.