

8.12. Sydney Coastal Council Group - Membership Term

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ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

To seek approval to align the membership term of the Sydney Coastal Council Group (SCCG) to match the ordinary term of Councils.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

North Sydney Council is a member of the Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) comprising nine member Councils in the coastal and estuarine areas of the Sydney region. The SCCG has been in existence since 1989 and North Sydney Council has been a member since its inception. The SCCG is seeking the approval of its member Councils to change its current one-year annual membership term to a term of matching the normal ordinary term of Councils i.e. four year term. The reason for this change is to strengthen the resourcing of the group, provide more continuity of staffing and certainty for the delivery of significant grant funded projects that extend over several years.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Draft Delivery Program 2022-2026 (Item 8.3) and the Draft Resourcing Strategy 2022-2032 (Item 8.2), also presented at this meeting, contain provision for membership covering the proposed four-year membership term.

Council's annual membership fee for the SCCG was \$35,500 for 2021/22. Fees for future years are continued to be calculated based on per capita basis and subject to a CPI increase.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council agree to the request for North Sydney Council's membership of the group being extended to match the normal local government term for Councils and write to the Sydney Coastal Councils Group advising of this decision.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

1. Our Living Environment

1.1 Protected and enhanced natural environment and biodiversity

BACKGROUND

The SCCG was established in 1989 when several Councils sought a common purpose to fight against pollution of Sydney's coast and estuaries from sewage and industrial waste. The SCCG remains to this day a strong and collaborative regional organisation of Councils that advances sustainable management of Sydney's urban coastal and estuarine environment. The current membership of Councils include Bayside, Inner West, North Sydney, Northern Beaches, Randwick, Waverley, Willoughby, Woollahra and Sutherland Councils.

The SCCG member Councils represent 1.3 million Sydneysiders and collectively covers an area of approximately 800 square kilometers with a total coastline of almost 600 kilometers, encompassing the waterways of Broken Bay, Pittwater, Port Jackson, Port Hacking, Botany Bay, Middle and North Harbours and the lower reaches of the Lane Cove, Georges and Cooks Rivers.

The SCCG has the following goals:

1. People and places adapt to a changing climate and future shocks and stressors;
2. Waterways and the foreshore are protected and healthier;
3. Marine biodiversity is protected in the bioregion;
4. The SCCG region is comprised of sustainable, liveable and 'smart cities';
5. There is a collaborative, effective and consistent approach to coastal and estuarine management; and
6. SCCG is trusted and respected to make representations that reflect the values of its members.

The SCCG structure consists of three individual and specific collaborative forums. As the SCCG is an incorporated association under the NSW Associations Incorporation Act 2009, it has an Executive Committee which acts as the board of the SCCG and the governing body. This group is largely comprised of Councillors from those member Councils. The second forum is the General Managers (GM) Forum which comprises of a General Manager, CEO or senior staff member of each Council. The third forum is the Technical Committee which is made up of a mix of technical Council staff members of each of the member Councils.

At its meeting on 21 February 2022, Council resolved to appoint Cr William Bourke as Council's representative on the SCCG Executive Committee

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

The SCCG have requested from all their member Councils that the term of the membership mirror that of the ordinary term of Councils. The reasoning behind the request is twofold, staff contracts/retention and grant management.

The SCCG employ three staff, the Executive Officer, Project Officer and a part time administration officer. Funding to allow for the employment of these staff is largely achieved through the membership fees paid for by the member Councils. Successful grant applications also augment the membership fees and allow for additional research projects to be developed and accessed by those member Councils. All of the staff are currently on one year employment contracts and this has resulted in staff turnover and employment insecurity. Having a longer term membership commitment would allow the SCCG to have three-four year staff contracts thus providing greater staff employment security.

The SCCG are also currently managing two long term grant funding projects namely the development of the Greater Sydney Harbour Coastal Management Program (CMP), a multi council collaborative project comprising of twenty Councils and several State Govt agencies. The project has been underway for three years and has attracted over \$400,000 of State Government grant funding. SCCG Councils participating in the project have been financially subsidized due to our current membership. Another long-term grant project being managed by the SCCG is the Greater Sydney Litter Prevention Strategy that is worth \$190,000. Both projects have goals of greater waterway health but are managed over several years with key deliverables better provided with ongoing staff disruption.

Budgetary and Legal Implications

Council's annual membership fee for the SCCG was \$35,500 for 2021/22. Fees for future years are continued to be calculated based on per capita basis and subject to a CPI increase.

It is proposed that SCCG membership fees will continue to be paid on an annual basis. It is also important to note that while Council would be committed to a four year membership as per the 'normal' ordinary term of Council, under Clause 9.1 of the SCCG constitution, a member Council can resign from the group by giving a six month notice period. This provision would remain unaffected by any change in the membership term.

Council's Solicitor has reviewed the SCCG constitution and finds no legal reason not to agree to the SCCG request.

Conclusion

Council's continuing membership of the SCCG remains very important to Council. The SCCG continues to provide North Sydney with unique opportunities to collaborate with our fellow member Councils, to advocate with one voice to Government and to achieve mutual outcomes in the management of our estuarine environment.