

Notice of Motion, Cr Mayne: Revised Budget Procedures for 2015-16 and 2016-17

Motion

That Council agrees:

1. To the public release of draft year 3 actions by no later than 14 April 2015, to allow for a period of public consultation before the release of the draft 2015-16 budget in May 2015;
2. The administration is to informally present Councillors specific recommendations and options on the level of rates in 2015-16;
3. The adoption of the final budget at a Special Council Meeting in June is to include the full budget document, not just a summary of submissions and any proposed changes to the draft budget;
4. Public submissions on capital works priorities will be sought in the first quarter of 2016, BEFORE the release of the draft 2016-17 budget;
5. Before the action in point 4 is commenced, the community must have access to a detailed breakdown of projected capital works expenditure, including identification of individual projects worth more than \$5 million for the 10 year period concluding on 30 June 2025.

Background

City of Melbourne prides itself on being the most open and transparent council in Australia.

At present, we do not conduct any specific community consultation related to the budget before it is released in May each year. The budget, in allocating more than \$400 million of public monies, is our most important council decision each year.

Each year we release our annual actions in the draft budget, but these tend to be lost in the focus on the budget. Historically, we've received few submissions on our proposed actions.

This motion proposes de-coupling the public release of the draft annual actions from the release of the draft budget, which the public tends to treat as "a done deal" if the lack of submissions historically is any guide.

Internal deliberations have proceeded efficiently so far this year and we are close to agreeing on more than 100 proposed actions for the 2015-16 financial year. Why wait another 3 months before releasing these in the draft budget?

Neighbouring councils such as Neighbouring councils such as the City of Port Phillip are currently in the field seeking submissions on what the community would like to see as year 3 action items in the 2015-16 budget. Melbourne has not done a similar exercise.

Point 4 gives the administration 12 months' notice to organise a public submissions process related to capital works, before the 2016-17 draft budget is released.

At the moment, the community and councillors are only informed of proposed capital works in any particular financial year in the months leading up to the commencement of that year. There is little visibility of the capital works program beyond the coming financial year, yet there is an apparent very large infrastructure funding gap.

The forthcoming 10 year financial plan will give the community some insight into the long term capital works challenge, but point 5 in the motion requires the public release of a quite specific 10 year capital works spreadsheet, which would then allow councillors and the community to assess sequencing, trade-offs and competing projects when both allocating the 2016-17 annual capital works budget and determining the on-going rating strategy.

Moved: Cr Mayne