



**Minutes of the Environment Committee
held on Tuesday, 7 November 2023 at 8.00 pm
Council Chamber, Council Administration Centre
245 Sturt Road, Sturt**

PRESENT

Mayor Kris Hanna
Councillor Jason Veliskou (Chair)
Councillor Sarah Luscombe
Councillor Joseph Masika

Apologies

Councillor Raelene Telfer

In Attendance

General Manager City Services - Ben Keen
Manager Engineering, Assets and Environment – Mat Allen
Executive Officer to the General Manager City Services - Colleen Madsen
Unit Manager Environmental Sustainability – Rebecca Neumann
Councillor Luke Naismith

1 Open Meeting

The Chair opened the meeting at 8.05pm.

2 Kurna Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Kurna people, the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to their elders past and present.

3 Elected Member Declaration of Interest (if any)

The Chair asked if any member wished to disclose an interest in relation to any item being considered at the meeting.

The following interests were disclosed:

- Nil

4 Confirmation of Minutes**4.1 Confirmation of Minutes of the Environment Committee Meeting held on 5 September 2023**

Report Reference EC231128R4.1

Moved Councillor Luscombe

Seconded Councillor Masika

That the minutes of the Environment Committee Meeting held on 5 September 2023 be taken as read and confirmed.

Carried Unanimously

5 Business Arising

5.1 Business Arising Statement - Action Items

Report Reference	EC231107R5.1
-------------------------	--------------

The Environment Committee noted the business arising statement, meeting schedule and upcoming items.

6 Confidential Items - Nil

7 Reports for Discussion

The Chair sought and was granted leave of the meeting to vary the order of the agenda and consider Item 9.1 ShineHub VPP Presentation first on the agenda.

9 Workshop / Presentation Items

9.1 ShineHub VPP presentation

Report Reference	EC231107R9.1
-------------------------	--------------

The Group Manager City of Mitcham, Matthew Romaine provided the Committee with a presentation on the City of Mitcham's "Mitcham Community Renewables" program.

The program is based on a partnership with the commercial solar technology provider ShineHub and consists of bulk purchasing options for solar and battery systems, and development of a Virtual Power Plan (VPP).

The presentation included why the City of Mitcham undertook the project, the steps/research undertaken, how it works, due diligence and cost and how the partnership with ShineHub and the City of Mitcham operates.

The Committee discussed the following:

- Query on whether any other councils have started the journey.
 - Lane Cove in Sydney has signed up. 17 other interstate councils have it in their agendas to commence. Cities of Charles Sturt (decision paper) and Campbelltown have a presentation in the coming weeks and another 12 councils in South Australia have shown an interest.
- Staffing component.
 - In the early stage of the project will need an offline thinker, not tied down with their daily job. Navigating the early complexity with capability and access to Mayor, CEO and Executive is important.

- How do private batteries benefit renters? The idea of private batteries is through the agreement they have signed. They do not own the energy, only subscribe to it. The idea is to take the power that is surplus in their batteries and give it to the renters cheaply. Currently being modeled at 50% of the market price of the day. Private batteries are 'behind the meter' and community batteries are 'in front of the meter.' They can take the excess energy from the batteries 'behind the meter' and store it so that the community can access it to power streetlights etc. Benefits are for the supply to both private and commercial.
- EV charging stations – how do they fit into this?
 - Doing a trial with SAPN to pilot their charges, which are going on their stobie poles. Council will procure and contract manage a charge point operator and the power will come from the VPP. If that proof of concept works, this energy is used to power your car and the revenue gained will become part of this program.
- What are some of the challenges and opportunities for industrial and commercial?
 - Commercial multi-tenanted buildings are difficult due to their set up as it is not an individual decision, there is usually a Board, CEO and other staff making the decisions. Several tenants in the one building will often have a landlord with one electricity meter. Going with owner operated businesses reduces navigating these complexities.
- Do a certain number of homes have to register to become viable?
 - Not to say viable but there is a conversion rate (25%). X number interested divided by 4 is the sales conversion.
- Do you need a certain number of properties for the retail plan to kick in?
 - Yes, it may not be the actual power that is used by the retail plan customers – taking spare energy and using profits to subsidise the program. Needs to be enough in it to subsidise their retail plan costs to make it viable commercially.
- The Zen model used to work on trust, is there anything to be learned from that?
 - That trust Zen model got flooded by businesses that did not have a strong brand, which eroded it, they then diversified their business.
- Can others join without having to do their own due process?
 - A few councils have received legal advice if they can rely on Mitcham's procurement. The answer to them has been yes, but that is not global. It depends upon the procurement policy, and it would be prudent to get advice relevant to your own policy.
- Is there a benefit to collaborating with another council?
 - It would be good to explore that possibility. No advantage to the mechanics but there may be with the trusted branding of three large councils banding together.
- Where is the risk? Are councils able to keep up?
 - Their internal operations and algorithms do not change; however, they need to have enough installers. Have needed to cut bulk buyers due to lack of electricians available.
- Is there a cost benefit analysis for those just purchasing battery or is it comparable to those that do both?
 - It is comparable, the unit price of one does not affect the other.
- More loans are taken out through this model, how does that affect the program?
 - This is not a loan or hire purchase, it is a subscription. No credit check for the customer. Ongoing operating is more valuable to ShineHub than once off capital.
- Through the partnership you have with Flinders, can you do this partnering where it crosses into another council? – Yes.
- Given we are neighbours are there benefits to linking up in terms of geography and having VPP across a few councils?
 - If local government could help provide cheap power to its customers that would be exciting. Mitcham could partner with Marion.
- Residential plan and car charges pilot, what is the ideal roll out?

- Stage 1 on the EV charges is to have 10 on SAPN stobie poles by end of January 2024 in different locations and within 10 months 1,000 installed within the City of Mitcham.
- Retail plan looking at first 100 residents being renters and run for six months. ShineHub has all three key items, are the most inexperienced but have all the relevant licensing in retail. Mitcham wants to trial it and work on building up the pilot, watching how it goes and then make a decision about scale.

The chair thanked Mr Romaine for his presentation.

Moved Councillor Luscombe

Seconded Councillor Masika

That the Environment Committee:

1. Receives a presentation from City of Mitcham Group Manager Matthew Romaine on the Mitcham Community Renewables Program.

Carried Unanimously

7.1 Environmental Initiatives

Report Reference EC231107R7.1

The Unit Manager Environmental Sustainability, Rebecca Neumann introduced the report on Environmental Initiatives.

The report was taken as read, and the Chair invited the committee to provide comments on anything they wished to add.

Discussion by the committee included:

- Resilient South Climate Action Plan – some initiatives within that plan are on this list such as supporting our community in reducing fossil fuels. What is the council doing to support them? Can we improve visibility and bring them to the forefront? We are moving towards zero emissions and the community want to know what council is doing to support them to reach that target. Is access to support available?
 - Worth looking at what other councils are doing in this space. City of Charles Sturt is looking at footpaths, identifying and reporting carbon emissions at a community level.
- The new Infrastructure and Environment Committee next year is an exciting opportunity. How do we work collaboratively and move towards an initiative and aspirational space?
 - Tie into planning processes and connect through our planning processes.
- To be proactive as a local government to harness external resources, can we partner with universities get in graduates to look at some of this work and add a different perspective.
- Sustainable homes, it would be good for council to have a best practice - does council have a model home that people can investigate sub-dividing. Don't really have capacity to deliver that. Do we need external support and is there an affordable way to do this?
- Deep dive into what other councils are doing. What works, what does not.
- Issues with stormwater planning.
- Challenges with FOGO – how do we do that to get maximum support?
- Container deposit scheme do we take the initiative on how that can be expanded – looking at glass i.e., wine bottles.

- Partnering with Green Adelaide, analyse are we getting the same people coming to them are people expecting more or not aware of what we have.
- Don't have much on community education - we do have things but not clearly visible i.e., Green Adelaide forums, how do we get an EV charger for our garage? Perhaps need a summary page on the website with links to the information.
- Need to consider that not all residents are computer savvy so how would we get this information to them? Who are we targeting?
- Ceiling gaps, putting in insulation are low-cost ways of reducing energy consumption and fuel emissions. Residents do not know this. What are other councils doing? We can learn from other councils that are doing this.
 - Community education is very challenging as there are so many diverse communities. We try to make sure the education on the website is relevant and up to date in appropriate language. We have partnered with other councils to develop resources such as my cool home resource. We have also partnered with other community organisations and Junction Australia on energy efficiencies.
 - The chair mentioned that working in culturally and linguistic diverse communities for ATO, they went to community events to deliver messages. Assists to identify the key groups that are likely to benefit from the message. Bring them along and make them champions, this does take time, and resource is a consideration. Run a schools' competition, providing initiatives to get points, is grant funding available?
- For the new Committee it would be good to explore comparisons on a whole range of areas on what other comparable councils are doing.

Moved Councillor Luscombe

Seconded Councillor Hanna

That the Environment Committee:

1. Notes the Environmental Trends, Opportunities, and Initiatives Report (Attachment 1) and discusses areas of future interest and potential discussion by the Environment Committee in 2024.

Carried Unanimously

7.2 Year in Review

Report Reference

EC231107R7.2

The Manager Engineering Assets & Environment, Mathew Allen offered the Committee an opportunity to workshop the year in review, in particular what worked and what could be improved.

The committee provided the following feedback:

- Meetings before and after with staff to discuss the agenda have been valuable.
- There has been limited time at the meetings due to BAU so unfortunately due to limited time not all opportunities have been discussed.
- Opportunities in education and aspirational items.
- Soft plastics was handled well and thanked Cr Luscombe for going through that process.
- Opportunities with living smarties, climate action now initiates, waste and recycling.

- It has been a useful year and has given opportunities for what we can improve on for next year.
- More time for innovation opportunities.
- Coastal management would like to know more about how we are linking with other councils.
- Regarding coastal management we need to recognise we are a distant cousin to the councils north of us as they have different geographical and climate considerations.
- Next year how can we spread across the four years? Mark what can be dealt with in years 1,2,3 4 and allow more time to forecast.
 - At high level we have a very good environmental strategy – what we do not have is an environmental plan that focuses on what we will be doing – we need to develop a four-year plan.
- Federal grants open in February 2024. If we have a clear plan of what we can apply for.
- Opportunities to partner with other environmental organisations and have community forums about the environment e.g., nature festival/sustainable living festivals – can that be part of the plan to looking into plans to engage the community more effectively.
- Community education, i.e., festivals can we see what other councils are doing and can we piggy pack.
- To make sure the community knows what we are doing we need to make them part of the ownership.

Comments from staff included:

- There is a lot that can be done in developing an environmental plan. Acknowledges the team delivers a lot of environmental initiatives.
- Feel that everyone has had a voice and a space to raise ideas and provide feedback.
- There has been a balance with working through the planning phase and seeking feedback from the committee.
- Many topics have crossed over between the Infrastructure Committee and the Environment Committee.

The Chair thanked the committee and staff for the year.

Moved Councillor Masika

Seconded Councillor Luscombe

That the Environment Committee:

1. Notes the Year in Review feedback.

Carried Unanimously

8 Reports for Noting - Nil

10 Other Business - Nil

11 Meeting Closure

The meeting shall conclude on or before 9.30pm unless there is a specific motion adopted at the meeting to continue beyond that time.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.29pm.

CONFIRMED THIS 28 DAY OF NOVEMBER 2023

CHAIRPERSON