

Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup – the VC Mitchell Sporting Precinct

General comments:

A level of planning had been undertaken by the Shire and this project was put forward to the State Government for funding under the WA Recovery Plan and received \$6 million.

This is a tremendous opportunity for the Shire to access funding that was not made available to everyone. This is one of only 14 projects in the Sport and Recreation sector that received funding from the WA Recovery Plan.

Should the decision be to not proceed, then the only other funding source for sports facilities is CSRFF, which is an annual \$12.5m scheme that offers up to 1/3rd of the total eligible project cost (maximum grant of \$2m). The maximum grant allocated in past 5 years has been \$1.5m for a \$20m project.

Focus must be on co-location of sports where possible and provision of multi-sport / multi-use.

Use of the available funds to upgrade existing facilities – need to consider what the long-term status of these facilities are. Funding is not for what would be deemed maintenance on existing facilities.

The following is responses to questions posed by Elected Members prior to the presentation that Troy attended with Council - 25 August.

1. How long does the Shire have to spend the remaining funding?

Whilst the funding does not have a specific deadline, it should be noted that this funding was allocated as part of the States "WA Recovery Plan". Funding is based on the assumption that a project will be completed within a reasonable timeframe as part of the economic stimulus aimed at supporting the state during the COVID period.

A financial allocation (\$250,000) from the committed project funding (\$6m) was approved and a Financial Assistance Agreement (FAA) was entered, specifically to assist the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup with the planning, design and preparation of tender documentation for the redevelopment of the VC Mitchell Sporting Precinct. Terms of this agreement ends – October 2021 (As at 15 September this was extended to 30 January 2022).

Upon completion of this first agreement, it is expected that the Shire will submit a final project for consideration and approval by the Minister in order to trigger a new FAA for the remaining funds which will be aimed at construction works.

There would be no obligation for the Shire to proceed with the full project, if during the planning stage the Shire discovered something that made the project untenable.

2. What is the possible very latest date that work can commence and the latest possible date to be 100% acquitted?

This will depend on the outcomes of the planning stage and whether the proposed project meets the original expectations of the previous Minister for Sport and Recreation, Mick Murray.

The "full project" is yet to be defined and would be an outcome of this initial stage. It is expected that the final project proposal and timelines will be presented to the current Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon Tony Buti for approval.

3. Is it possible that the Shire puts in less than 1/3? If so what % would be acceptable?

There isn't an obligation for the Shire to contribute \$3m however that is what the Shire indicated they were allocating to the project and what was publicly stated. This will obviously allow more of the master plan to be achieved.

4. Can the funding be spent on the entire "precinct" spread over the entire area from the Rec Centre to the Oval?

A key aspect of the masterplan was a central shared facility.

Ultimately the funding is to deliver on the key aspects of the masterplan, which incorporates the entire precinct. This could be staged, focusing on priority areas first and looking at other opportunities at a later date.

It is recommended that the priority areas be focused on essential "need" and not aspirational "want".

5. Would it be acceptable to modify the plans to have all the money spent on the sporting facilities spread across the precinct and a lesser amount spent on the "function room"?

The funding is not dictating as to what the project will be. The shire will need to demonstrate that the identified needs of the masterplan and the original expectations of the commitment are being met.

6. Your advice as to how to get sports groups to a point of agreement about governance model.

Ultimately this is a Council project and therefore the sports need to recognise this. I would suggest identifying 2 or 3 models, highlight the pro's and con's for each and then make a decision based on the majority. You may not satisfy everyone, but at least you have looked at the options and decided on what best suits the majority.

7. What if we can't get agreement about a governance model?

Council makes the decision on what best suits the majority.

8. Can you recommend a governance model which you think would be appropriate for this circumstance?

Not really, as what might work in one community may not necessarily work in another. Need to look at various options and pick what is best for Donnybrook. You could consider an interim model whilst formulating a model that best suits the users.

9. Can you recommend anyone to help develop a business plan for the precinct?

Given that the Shire has engaged ABV Consultants to undertake the initial masterplan, I would suggest looking at using them as they have the background to the groups. Getting a new consultant in will require them to start from a long way back.

Regardless of who is appointed, the consultant needs to be independent and very firm.

10. Do the SSA's have any opinions/guidance for their sports here in Donnybrook that you can share?

Most sports do have standards, such as change room specifications for AFL etc. Whilst gaining insight from SSAs is worthwhile as this potentially keeps the local groups honest, there needs to be a level of clarification that the facilities are for community level need and not focus on one off opportunities.

11. Please give examples of other similar projects in other LGs i.e. in particular their community consultation process, expectations vs actual deliverable project.

I had first-hand experience with the Katanning project (more than 25 years ago), which had a very strong consultation process and ultimately the final project delivered quality facilities for many sports that is still well used today.

More recently there are several LGs that have looked at co-location opportunities and redevelopment of older facilities. In all cases they had a clear objective, they had independent consultants undertaking community/stakeholder consultation and they had a realistic expectation of what was needed based on what they could afford.

12. Coming from community feedback and the criteria of grant funding, would like Troy's thoughts on 'village' style development and the definition of 'shared/multi-use'. Please breakdown (defining) the grant funding criteria.

This funding is not based on CSRFF criteria, so it is not comparable.

Ultimately the department is recommending where possible the opportunity to have multi-sports is preferred as it ensures long term sustainability. It is no longer sustainable to have standalone facilities for singular sports.

As a department we support co-location – relocating sports from a singular use to a shared use option. making sure facilities are used as often as is practical.

13. When comparing similar projects in other LGs and the comparisons, in terms of total floor area in the improved facilities, would you consider them reasonable for our current and future population?

Difficult to compare as it comes down to the number of user groups / uses as well as understanding what else is available within the community.

I would assume that any design would be based on what is available now and what is the shortfall in meeting existing needs and potential opportunities. I believe that too many are unrealistic and end up with a facility that is beyond their need and therefore are left with the proverbial "white elephant" that costs a fortune to manage and maintain. So again, need to focus on what is the need and not what everyone wants.

In most cases our experience is that communities build facilities that are too big, trying to replicate floor areas of existing facilities and not recognising that modern facility floorplans are more efficient with space that older facilities (no columns, hallways etc).

Build what is needed and what you can afford.

14. From Troy's experience with other Shires, how would he suggest we get the clubs back to the discussion table? Can he help chair a meeting for club reps?

Ultimately this is a shire project and the funding is to provide better facilities at VC Mitchell. If a sport has had the opportunity to be part of this and decide not to contribute, then I don't think there is much else the shire can do.

If a sport has unrealistic expectations and they do not recognise this then it will be difficult to change their minds and sooner or later the project needs to proceed with or without them.

End of the day, what are the clubs contributing?

15. How can we deal with the clubs' concern that the Precinct will not be allowed to have more than one liquor licence? How will the flow of revenue from bar sales go to the clubs?

With there being three licences existing now on VC Mitchell, I would suggest if there were no licences on VC Mitchell and they all wanted to apply for one, then there would be a realistic chance that only one would be allocated based on location, distance and number of other licenced premises in Donnybrook.

From a department perspective, liquor licencing is not a priority.

I would suggest the clubs could look at engaging with Clubs WA or the Australian Sports Foundation for alternative revenue streams for clubs that do not have a liquor licence.

16. Can he point us to successful multi-club facilities?

*Oasis Club Rooms, Kalgoorlie – Touch, Teeball and Rugby
Leschenault Sports Pavilion, Australind – Soccer, Cricket, Football, Swimming (as an external user) as well as general community
Katanning Leisure Centre – indoor and outdoor sports
Centennial Park, Albany – 2 Football Clubs*

17. Does he think there might be any flexibility to vary the terms of the grant e.g by scaling the project back and no longer requiring a Shire contribution?

Already answered - # 1

No shire contribution – remember the Shire had committed up to \$3 million prior to any commitment from the State, so there would be an expectation of a shire contribution