



LATE REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 December 2017

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Department:	General Manager's Office
Submitted by:	General Manager
Reference/Subject:	Late Report 2 - Response to ARC Letter - Cooperation

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of 13th December 2017 the Armidale Regional Council resolved, by way of Mayoral Minute, to write to Uralla Shire Council regarding working collaboratively on regional strategic directions.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION:

That the Mayor responds to Armidale Regional Council's correspondence dated 14th December 2017, reference ARC16/0607, noting as follows:

- a) Council acknowledges the positive and cooperative sentiment contained within the letter; and*
- b) Council reciprocates such sentiment and looks forward to working collaboratively with Armidale Regional Council for the benefit of the residents of our respective communities.*

REPORT:

On 18th December 2017 the Mayor received correspondence (Attachment A) from the Armidale Regional Council (ARC) regarding working collaboratively on regional strategic directions.

The letter from ARC reflects an ARC Mayoral Minute considered at the ARC Ordinary Meeting of 13th December.

The report of the Mayoral Minute (Attachment B) establishes that the newly formed ARC, together with a new executive team, acknowledges the history between the two councils (Uralla and Armidale). It states *"In order to show the neighbouring Council that Armidale Regional Council's intention is not to amalgamate – it has been suggested that a rescission motion be put. Unfortunately there are a number of constraints, one that it was a previous entity and further that over three months has elapsed. It is suggested that a letter from the Mayor to the neighbouring Councils be drafted indicating that this Council would like to work and collaborate closely with all the neighbouring Councils. This may go some way to improving the legacy issues left by Fit for the Future"*.

Prepared by: Andrew Hopkins
Attachment A: Letter from mayor of Armidale Regional Council – 14th December 2017
Attachment B: Background report for ARC Mayoral Minute – 13th December 2017

14 December 2017

Your ref:

Our ref: ARC16/0607

Cr Michael Pearce JP
Mayor
Uralla Shire Council
PO Box 106
Uralla NSW 2358

Dear Cr Pearce

Working collaboratively on regional strategic directions

As you would be aware Armidale Regional Council is a newly amalgamated Council and it is aware of the history between Uralla Shire Council and Armidale Dumaresq Council. I write to advise that Armidale Regional Council considers itself a new and very different entity. We have a new recently elected Council with a fresh executive management team committed to creating a new organisation and new identify and work culture.

A Mayoral Minute was tabled at the Council meeting held on 13 December 2017 and the Councillors and I am pleased to advise that Council unanimously committed to sending you this letter and with an intent to work collaboratively with Uralla Shire Council on regional strategic directions.

Council recognises the importance of local autonomy valued by the Uralla community and acknowledges the importance of working collaboratively with Uralla Shire Council for the betterment of our respective communities and the broader region.

The New England regional area is increasingly becoming a stronger economic force within NSW while being a sustainable, liveable and affordable place to live. We look forward to sharing the journey forward.

Yours sincerely



Cr Simon Murray
Mayor

Item: 13.1 **Ref:** AINT/2017/20547
Title: FOR DECISION - Mayoral Minute - Cooperating with Neighbouring Council for Future Strategic Direction
Container: ARC16/0607
Author: Nathalie Heaton, Service Leader Governance, Risk and Corporate Planning
Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

That a letter be drafted to the Mayor of Uralla Shire Council giving a commitment to work collaboratively on the regional strategic directions.

Background:

As Councillors would be aware, Armidale Regional Council was formed by amalgamating Guyra Shire Council and Armidale Dumaresq Council. Prior to the amalgamation a program called Fit for the Future was run to establish whether Councils could stand on their own or whether they should be amalgamated.

Councils received advice from the Department of Premier and Cabinet that it had until 18 November 2015 to lodge feedback on IPART's final report – Assessment of Council Fit for the Future Proposals, which was released by Premier Mike Baird on Tuesday 20 October 2015. At that time Mayors were advised that they would be provided 30 days to consult with their Councils and the adjoining Councils to examine the possibility of voluntary mergers.

Some discussions had taken place in the past, however it was reported that Mayor Cr Herman Beyersdorf contacted the Mayors of Guyra, Uralla and Walcha to arrange a meeting of all Mayors to discuss the Premier's request and to see if a voluntary merger opportunity would arise. Individual discussions between the Mayors identified that Uralla wished to stand alone, that Guyra was seeking further information from the local member and would go back to their Councillors for advice and that Walcha preferred to stand alone and would seek to talk to Armidale Dumaresq Council as they worked through their options regionally.

A report was presented to Council and the following was resolved at the meeting held on 9 November 2015:

Minute No. 300/15

Moved Cr Bishop Seconded Cr Halligan

That Council complete the IPART feedback form required by the Department of Premier and Cabinet by 18 November 2015 to advise the following:

- (a) Preference 1: That the preferred merging partners are Armidale Dumaresq, Guyra and Uralla Councils.*
- (b) That Council advise: "That any Council merger will require negotiation around long-term funding for asset improvements and boundary adjustments to ensure communities of interest are supported and financial viability can be achieved. That retention of Councillors*

be upheld until the next election in September 2016 to transition community interests into a new council". (50 words maximum)

The amendment on being put to the vote was CARRIED.

In May 2016, Armidale Dumaresq Council and Guyra Shire Council were amalgamated. Time has elapsed since the resolution, however it should be noted that Council endeavours to work closely with all its neighbours. In order to show the neighbouring Council that Armidale Regional Council's intention is not to amalgamate – it has been suggested that a rescission motion be put. Unfortunately there are a number of constraints, one that it was a previous entity and further that over three months has elapsed. It is suggested that a letter from the Mayor to the neighbouring Councils be drafted indicating that this Council would like to work and collaborate closely with all the neighbouring Councils. This may go some way to improving the legacy issues left by Fit for the Future.

The body of the letter could read as follows:

As you would be aware, Armidale Regional Council is a newly amalgamated Council and it is keenly aware of the past history between Uralla and Armidale Dumaresq Council. I write to advise that Council considers itself very much a new entity. A new management and a newly elected Council enables a new culture to thrive.

A Mayoral Minute was tabled at the Council meeting held on 13 December 2017 and the Councillors and staff earnestly advise that Council commits to Uralla Shire Council to work collaboratively on the regional strategic directions. Council recognises the importance of local autonomy that the Uralla community values and very much recognises the importance of working in close collaboration with Uralla Council for the betterment of our respective communities and the broader region. The New England regional area is increasingly becoming a stronger economic force within NSW while being a sustainable, liveable and affordable place to live. We look forward to sharing the journey forward.