

At 10.20am the meeting adjourned for morning tea and resumed at 10.45am.

Presentation by the Coolah Hall Committee

Mrs Eleanor Cook and Mrs Prue Thompson gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Coolah Hall Committee's plans for the renovation of the Hall. Council was advised that to progress the project, the following was required:

1. \$2,000 to match \$ for \$ grant funding to employ a Project Manager
2. a cash contribution by Council to the Project of \$50,000

The Mayor advised that Council will need to consider a report from the General Manager on the Hall Project and on possible sources of funding before making a decision on this matter.

It was Moved by Cr Connelly and seconded by Cr Sutton that \$2,000 be allocated from the Coolah Town Improvement Fund to match \$ for \$ grant funding for the employment of a Project Manager for the Coolah Hall Project.

The Motion was Put and Lost.

24/9/03 RESOLVED that a report be received from the General Manager on the Coolah Hall Project providing an assessment of the viability of the project and the possible sources of funding for the total of \$52,000 requested. (Bowman/Hill)

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING SERVICES

DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION CERTIFICATE APPROVALS, file 0619

30/03 RESOLVED that the information regarding the Development and Construction Certificate approvals be received and noted. (Bowman/Sutton)

MID WESTERN SUBREGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT, file 0338

31/03 RESOLVED that the information regarding the Mid Western Subregional Waste Management be received and noted. (Bowman/Sutton)

ENGINEERING SERVICES DIVISION

1. WORKS IN PROGRESS, file 0617

271/03 **RESOLVED** that the information regarding the Works in Progress be received and noted. (Bowman/Connelly)

2. PLANT REPORT, file 0618

272/03 **RESOLVED** that the information regarding the Plant Report be received and noted. (Sutton/Hill)

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT, item 1

1. COOLAH TOWN HALL DEVELOPMENT, file 0329

Mrs Eleanor and Mrs Prue Thompson from the Coolah Hall Committee joined the meeting while Council considered the report from the General Manager on the Coolah Hall development.

273/03 **RESOLVED** that a half-day workshop involving Councillors, staff, members of the Coolah District Development Group and stakeholders, be organised as soon as possible in order to reach consensus on the floor plan for the re-development of the Coolah Hall and that following this workshop, a further report be submitted for Council's consideration. (Connelly/Sutton)

It was **Moved** by Cr Mitchell and seconded by Cr Bowman that the Development Group be advised of the following requirements and decisions of Council which it should have regard to in the finalisation of the plan:

- the library should retain its location at the rear of the Hall
- the Council's HACC services will continue to be delivered out of their current premises.

The **Motion** was Put and Lost.

SECTION A - GENERAL MANAGER

1. SUBJECT COOLAH TOWN HALL DEVELOPMENT, file 0329

INFORMATION

At the September meeting, representatives of the Town Hall Steering Committee of the Coolah District Development Group made a presentation on plans for the upgrade of the hall and the state of play as far as applications for funding were concerned. The representatives advised Council that certain potential funding bodies (namely the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the NSW Department of State and Regional Development) had expressed the view that it would be necessary for the Council to make a significant cash contribution to the project – a figure of \$50,000 was indicated by the representatives. Additionally, the representatives advised that for the project to proceed a project manager would need to be engaged to progress the project to the point where funding commitments had been gained from the variety of potential sources. It was advised that \$ for \$ funding for a project manager would be available from the Department of State and Regional Development. A contribution from Council of \$2,000 to \$3,000 was mentioned.

Following the presentation, questioning and discussion focussed on: the funding requests made of Council and the possible sources of funds; the total cost of the project; the uses to be accommodated in the hall and particularly whether it was appropriate to plan for a large meeting/training room (given the availability of the recently constructed RFS building) and whether the HACC services should be delivered out of the hall; the layout and whether it was necessary or desirable to relocate the library from the rear of the building into the body of the hall.

Council resolved to consider a further report on the subject at the October meeting.

Background

The Coolah Town Hall is a significant community owned building – similar to the Multi Purpose Centre at Dunedoo and the halls at Mendooran and Dunedoo. The front of the hall has not been regularly utilised for many years. The rear of the hall accommodates the library and the former stage is occupied by the Coolah District Development Group's Computer Technology Centre (CTC). The area occupied by the CTC and the hall itself are leased to the Development Group on an annual basis in return for the payment of electricity charges (\$400 for 2002/03).

The proposal for a Multi Purpose Centre arose out of community workshops conducted in 1996 and 1999. A concept plan was prepared in early 2001 and publicly exhibited in September of that year. A further survey, to confirm the need for various uses and levels of support for the concept, was undertaken in March 2003. Attachment One summarises the history of community involvement in the formulation of the proposal.

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The Current Proposal

Apart from the library, the uses currently proposed for the hall include the following:

- The existing Computer Technology Centre
- A combined auditorium/conference room/training centre
- Office accommodation for visiting professionals
- Accommodation for local radio station
- Business and government services provided pursuant to the federal Government's Rural Transaction Centre's program
- Tourist information service
- Exhibition/ display/ sales area
- Movie/live theatre

The proposal also suggests the possibility of the Coolah HACC services being relocated into the redeveloped building.

The Current Plan

The most recent layout plan is included as Attachment Two. The key features of the floor plan are as follows:

- Library is relocated into the centre of the hall and incorporates office/meeting space for visiting professionals and the like. The relocation opens up the possibility of library staff/volunteers delivering new services from the front of the building.
- Current library space is converted into a large auditorium/ conference and training area.
- A multi purpose space at the front of the building which would be variously used for: visitor information, displays and exhibitions, sales of local goods, business services and Government information, theatre (movies and live performance).

Cost and Funding

Attachment Three is the draft project budget. The net cost of the scheme (excluding the value of *in kind* contributions such as the value of the building) is \$1,243,600 excluding GST. The major cost components are:

- Direct building costs - \$774,000
- Building infrastructure (heating, cooling, plumbing etc) - \$129,000
- Equipment and furnishing - \$89,100
- Initial operating costs (including salaries of a project development officer and a Manager for 2 years) - \$150,500
- Fit out and equipment for Cinema - \$74,000

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Potential sources of funds identified include:

- NSW Ministry of Arts - \$74,000 for fit out of the Cinema
- Council – a possible contribution of \$50,000 from the proceeds of sale of the old surgery and house if the HACC service moved into the hall. Operating costs associated with the library.
- Libraries Board of NSW – a contribution towards the cost of setting up the relocated library
- The Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services – various programs would be the principal sources of the balance of funds required.

Attachment Four describes the projected income and expenditure associated with operating the complex. Annual expenditure is estimated at approximately \$185,000 (note this includes the costs of running the library). First year income of approximately \$195,000 includes a grant of approximately \$57,000 to cover the costs related to a Manager as well as normal library expenditure by Council and the State Government. The other major source of income is the cinema (\$37,000).

KEY ISSUES AND MATTERS FOR DECISION

1. Need for an auditorium/conference room

The current plan proposes the conversion of the current library space into an auditorium. Given that the recently constructed RFS building contains a reasonable training room which is available for use by Council and the public, this use is something of a luxury item. Not only does it add to the cost of the project directly but it assumes the relocation of the library. Because the proposed cinema/performance area is not a discrete stand alone space (but part of a multi use foyer) the option is also lost of integrating the auditorium use with that of a cinema/performance space.

2. Council office requirements

Provision is made for the accommodation of visiting professionals in a conference room integrated with the library in the centre of the building. In considering the plan, Council must have regard to its current and future needs for office space. At present the only space available within the administrative block is the Mayor's office. This office is frequently used for storage and to accommodate visitors such as the auditors or temporary staff. The Mayor's office is only available because the Mayor has his own professional office in close proximity to the Council Chamber. Looking forward, it is highly likely that in the not too distant future the Council will need to create a position of Economic Development Officer. No space exists to accommodate such a position. It is considered that Council should specify a requirement for two offices within the hall - one to accommodate temporary staff, visiting consultants and professionals, and the other for an additional full time senior position.

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3. Location of HACC services within the hall

The current plan does not make provision for the accommodation of HACC within the hall and it is not clear whether space would exist for this use. The advantages of relocating HACC relate to the benefits of co-locating Council staff and of enabling the sale of the old doctor's surgery and house. A proportion of the proceeds of sale of the existing HACC premises, however, would need to be applied towards the cost of the relocation. Additionally, it could be argued that the existing premises are quite functional in terms of accessibility, parking etc. At this point in time it is considered that Council should work on the assumption that the HACC services will continue to be delivered out of the existing premises.

4. Relocation of library and space needs

Part of the rationale for the relocation of the library is that such a move would allow for library staff and volunteers to exercise some supervisory and service responsibilities in respect of other uses proposed for the front of the hall. Such responsibilities could only be limited, however, given the narrow band of hours that the library is open and given that the demand periods of other uses (such as visitor information, displays, cinema) include week-ends and evenings.

Concerns related to the relocation of the library and its intermixing with other uses include:

- The cost of the relocation
- The complications it causes for formulating workable management arrangements for the facility (it is not appropriate to have a Section 355 Committee or a body such as the Development Group managing a library and its staff)
- The complications and confusion generated in funding applications when income and expenditure associated with the operation of the library are incorporated into the proposal

Given these concerns, and the question mark over the need for a discrete auditorium in the space currently occupied by the library, it is considered that Council should determine that any proposal for the hall should not provide for the relocation of the library. Further, it is considered that, if space permits, plans should make provision for the expansion of the library and related services into all or part of the space currently occupied by the Computer Training Centre. Additional area would allow for study areas and conduct of school holiday programs. It would also seem logical to accommodate the additional office needs of Council in this space.

5. Combining cinema/performance space in foyer with other uses

Because of the space requirements of the stand alone auditorium, the cinema/performance space has had to be incorporated into the multi use foyer. Logistically it would be very difficult to make this arrangement work given the fixed facility requirements associated with the delivery of exhibition, visitor information, sale of goods and RTC services. If Council agrees that the stand alone auditorium is not justified and that the library should remain in its current location, then it would seem logical to provide a dedicated space for the cinema/performance space to the rear of the multi use foyer. Such a space could also serve an auditorium function when needed as well as provide an indoor recreation space for the conduct of exercise classes and the like.

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6. Management of the facility

Funds are being sought to engage a project manager to oversee the project from commencement of construction through the first year of operation. Following this time it is assumed that income from the development will enable the employment of a centre manager. The positions of project manager and centre manager would report to a committee of the Development Group.

Given the current plan, which involves intermingling of staff and space associated with core council functions (library) with new uses, it would be very difficult for this arrangement to be made workable in terms of: authority in respect of staff; financial accountability, responsibility and reporting.

If Council services and occupied space at the rear of the Hall are kept discrete from new uses, however, a number of management models can be considered for the front of the hall and the services to be delivered from that space:

- Lease of portion of Town Hall to the Development Group – the Development Group would run the new facility independent of Council. The Group would employ any staff direct and would be solely responsible for income and expenditure and any debts if the facility ceased to operate.
- Section 355 Committee – Council could resolve to establish a Management Committee pursuant to Section 355 of the Local Government Act. The Committee membership would be as determined by Council but would be community based. Council would delegate to the Committee the authority to manage the front of the Hall. The Committee would keep its own accounts but the financial position of the Committee would be incorporated into Councils accounts at the end of each Financial Year. Council would be ultimately responsible for any debts associated with the Committee's operation.
- Direct management by Council – management of the facility would be the responsibility of a member of staff. Any grant funded positions would be the responsibility of Council. This is not a feasible option for Council at this time as there is no staff capacity available to exercise the management role. It should be noted that at Coonabarabran the Council's Economic Development Officer is, among other things, responsible for the management of the Visitor Information Centre though day to day operations and volunteer management are the responsibility of two part time assistants.

As long as the plans are revised to keep library and council office uses separate from the new uses at the front of the Hall, than management of the facility by the Development Group is appropriate. A Section 355 Committee would also be a sound model.

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7. Request for cash contribution by Council towards capital costs

Possible sources of a cash grant towards the cost of a redevelopment are the Shire Wide Hall Improvement Reserve (\$33,000) and the Coolah Town Improvement Reserve (\$30,000). It would be premature for Council to commit funds, however, given that a new plan needs to be prepared and costed and endorsed by Council. Further, it is not clear that a cash contribution by Council, in addition to the contribution of the building and acceptance of responsibility for on going maintenance costs, will be a precondition for funding support from the key funding agencies.

8. Request for a contribution towards the cost of managing the project to the stage where grant funding is gained

The Development Group received a grant to prepare the plans and funding applications for the project. Expenditure was incurred on an architect to prepare the layout plans and on a consultant, attached to the Department of Transport and Regional Services, to assist in the preparation of the application document. It is understood that the Development Group holds approximately \$2,000 as the remainder of the initial grant. Advice received from the Regional Manager of the Department of State and Regional Development is that matching \$ for \$ funding would be available if Council committed funds to allow the Development Group to engage a party to manage the application stage to a conclusion. The Regional Manager advised that an application for matching funding could be approved within two weeks of receipt.

The main tasks that need to be undertaken include: preparation of a new plan which satisfies the requirements of Council, the Development Group and the key funding agencies; preparation of meaningful cost estimates; preparation of amended applications; consultation and liaison with representatives of the funding agencies. It would seem logical that the architect who prepared the current plan be engaged to prepare a new plan and cost estimates as well as assist in the preparation of amended applications. Liaison and negotiation with funding agencies could be undertaken by another party.

Given the professional time required for the architect to consult and finalise plans and cost estimates, along with travel costs associated with both the redesign and the liaison stages, it would not be unreasonable to expect costs in the order of \$8,000. On the assumption that the Development Group still holds project funds of \$2,000, a contribution of \$3,000 by Council would result in a project budget of \$8,000 if matching funds for the Council contribution were forthcoming from the Department of State and Regional Development.

Conclusion

The Town Hall refurbishment is a worthy and important project. The community has been widely consulted on the matter and a number of people have contributed significant time and effort to getting the project to the penultimate stage. If the project is to proceed it is now incumbent on Council to provide clear direction and advice in respect of a number of key matters.

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RECOMMENDATIONS: That:

1. the Coolah District Development Group be congratulated on their efforts in respect of this important project and advised of Council's ongoing support for a redevelopment of the Hall and an expansion of the uses delivered from the facility.
2. the Development Group be advised of the following requirements and decisions of Council which it should have regard to in the finalisation of the plan:
 - the library should retain its location at the rear of the Hall
 - the plan should assume that the space currently occupied by the CTC will be used for the expansion of the library and the construction of two offices – one of these offices will be available for use by visiting professionals
 - the Council's HACC services will continue to be delivered out of their current premises.
3. the Development Group be requested to have regard to the following views of Council:
 - the need for a stand alone auditorium/conference space has been reduced as a consequence of the construction of the RFS headquarters that incorporates a training room
 - the cinema/performance space should be separated from the multi use foyer and should also be designed to satisfy a secondary function as auditorium.
4. Council allocate \$3,000 from the Coolah Town Improvement Reserve to the Development Group to enable an application to be lodged for matching funds from the NSW Department of State and Regional Development. Such funds to be used for the engagement of professional services to redesign the floor plan and re-cost the project as well as cover the costs associated with liaison and negotiation with potential funding agencies.
5. a decision as to whether Council will make a cash contribution to the project be deferred until after new plans and cost estimates have been prepared and a further report placed before Council.

4. PECUNIARY INTEREST RETURNS, file 0460

291/03 **RESOLVED** that the tabling of the Pecuniary Interest Returns of Councillors and Designated Persons be noted. (Sutton/Bowman)

5. PROPOSAL FOR 'COUNTRY WEEK', file 0738

292/03 **RESOLVED** that Country Week Pty Ltd be advised that Coolah Shire Council:

1. Strongly supports the concept of Country Week.
2. Would almost certainly participate in Country Week if the marketing cost for Council was reduced to \$2,500 by either:
 - Introducing a category of up to 5,000 residents with the contribution being \$2,500.
 - Allowing two communities with a joint population less than 15,000 to share the marketing contribution of \$5,000.
3. Seeks further details on how the marketing fund would be controlled and who would constitute the Marketing Fund Management Committee. (Connelly/Sutton)

6. COOLAH TOWN HALL DEVELOPMENT, file 0329

It was **Moved** by Cr Hill and seconded by Cr Mitchell that :

1. the Coolah District Development Group and its Town Hall Committee be congratulated on their efforts in respect of the Town Hall project
2. Council allocate up to \$8,000 from the Coolah Town Improvement Reserve to the Development Group to enable the project architect to be engaged to:
 - a. amend the current plan to delete the auditorium and provide for the accommodation of HACC in the space currently generally occupied by the library
 - b. prepare an alternative plan which maintains the library in its present location but provides for its expansion into the CTC space
 - c. prepare indicative capital cost estimates for both plans
3. Council consider this matter further in the context of the formulation of the 2004/2005 budget.

An **Amendment** was moved by Cr Connelly and seconded by Cr Abbott that :

1. the Coolah District Development Group and its Town Hall Committee be congratulated on their efforts in respect of the Town Hall project
2. Council allocate up to \$8,000 from the Coolah Town Improvement Reserve to the Development Group to enable the project architect to be engaged to:

- a. amend the current plan to delete the auditorium and provide for the accommodation of HACC in the space currently generally occupied by the library
 - b. prepare indicative capital cost estimates for the plan
3. Council consider this matter further in the context of the formulation of the 2004/2005 budget.

The Amendment was put and **Lost**

A **Further Amendment** was moved by Cr Sutton and seconded by Cr Abbott that :

1. the Coolah District Development Group and its Town Hall Committee be congratulated on their efforts in respect of the Town Hall project
2. Council allocate up to \$8,000 from the Coolah Town Improvement Reserve to be used to match funding for the engagement of a Project Manager to progress the funding application and also to enable the Project Architect to be engaged to:
 - a. amend the current plan to delete the auditorium and provide for the accommodation of HACC in the space currently generally occupied by the library
 - b. prepare an alternative plan which maintains the library in its present location but provides for its expansion into the CTC space
 - c. prepare indicative capital cost estimates for both plans
3. Council consider this matter further in the context of the formulation of the 2004/2005 budget.

The further amendment was put and **Carried**.

The **Further Amendment** became the **Motion** and was **Put** and **Carried**.

293/03 **RESOLVED** that:

1. the Coolah District Development Group and its Town Hall Committee be congratulated on their efforts in respect of the Town Hall project
2. Council allocate up to \$8,000 from the Coolah Town Improvement Reserve to be used to match funding for the engagement of a Project Manager to progress the funding application and also to enable the Project Architect to be engaged to:
 - a. amend the current plan to delete the auditorium and provide for the accommodation of HACC in the space currently generally occupied by the library
 - b. prepare an alternative plan which maintains the library in its present location but provides for its expansion into the CTC space
 - c. prepare indicative capital cost estimates for both plans
3. Council consider this matter further in the context of the formulation of the 2004/2005 budget.
(Sutton/Abbott)

The meeting adjourned at 11.10am for morning tea and resumed at 11.25am.