

# MINUTES

## SEARTG

### BOARD MEETING 9 AUGUST 2013

**SOUTH EAST AVON REGIONAL TRANSITION GROUP  
(S E A R T G)**

**MINUTES**

MEETING OF BOARD MEMBERS

MEETING ROOM, PERTH CONVENTION EXHIBITION CENTRE  
10:30AM FRIDAY, 9 AUGUST 2013

**1. DECLARATION OF OPENING/ANNOUNCEMENT OF VISITORS**

**1.1 Opening**

The Chairman took the opportunity of welcoming attendees, including Ms C Tuthill and Ms J Burges.

**1.2 Announcement of Visitors**

Invitations were extended to:

- Ms Caroline Tuthill - Senior Project Officer, Department of Local Government.
- Mr Tony Brown – Executive Manager, Governance and Strategy – Western Australian Local Government Association.
- Ms Joanne Burges – Regional Cooperation Manager, Western Australian Local Government Association.

**2. RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**2.1 Present**

Shire of Cunderdin	- Cr R Carter	- President (From 10:35am)
Shire of Cunderdin	- Cr D Whisson	- Councillor (From 10:35am)
Shire of Cunderdin	- Cr G Cooper	- Councillor (From 10:35am)
Shire of Cunderdin	- Mr P Naylor	- Chief Executive Officer

Shire of Quairading	- Cr D Richards	- President (Chair)
Shire of Quairading	- Cr B Caporn	- Councillor
Shire of Quairading	- Mr G Fardon	- Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Tammin	- Cr S Uppill	- President
Shire of Tammin	- Cr C Crane	- Councillor
Shire of Tammin	- Mr I Bodill	- Chief Executive Officer
Shire of York	- Cr T Boyle	- President
Shire of York	- Cr R Scott	- Vice President
Shire of York	- Mr R Hooper	- Chief Executive Officer
Department of Local Government	- Ms C Tuthill	- Senior Project Officer
Western Australian Local Government Association	- Ms J Burges	- Regional Cooperation Manager
Dominic Carbone and Associates (DCA)	- Mr D Carbone	- Executive Officer

## 2.2 Apologies

Shire of Quairading	- Cr G Anderson	- Deputy President
Western Australian Local Government Association	- Mr T Brown	- Executive Manager – Governance and Strategy

## 2.3 Leave of Absence

Nil.

## 3. DEPUTATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

### 3.1 Deputations

Nil.

### 3.2 Presentations

Nil.

## 4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

### 4.1 South East Avon Regional Transition Group Board Meeting held at the Shire of Cunderdin Community Resource Centre on Thursday, 11 July 2013.

*MOVED Cr R Carter, Seconded Cr S Uppill, that the Minutes of the South East Avon Regional Transition Group Board Meeting, held at the Shire of Cunderdin Community Resource Centre on Thursday, 11 July 2013, be received.*

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

### Business Arising from Minutes

Nil.

## 5. ANNOUNCEMENT BY PRESIDING MEMBER WITHOUT DISCUSSION

Nil.

## 6. MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

### (a) Feedback on Advisory Board meetings with the respective communities.

The Chairman drew attention to this item of business, inviting feedback from Participants, summarised as follows:

Cr S Uppill

- Stated that he was surprised at where the community is at with their education and acceptance of the Regional Business Plan.

- It is hard to communicate with the community if they are not on a level footing of understanding.
  - Discussions were held in relation to the Board, with nervousness evident at this first meeting.
  - Like each town, Tammin has a few community members that need convincing.
  - Need to get these people on side and convince them not to go to a poll.
  - There is a need for compromise.
  - Suggested that next step is to have a round table meeting with influential people and those against the process.
  - This meeting needs to detail fact sheets and the Regional Business Plan, whilst answering questions and concerns.
  - Confirmed that community know that amalgamation is going to happen, however they are not necessarily happy with the grouping.
  - Need to convince these people that this is an amalgamation with a level of control, rather than forced.
- Chairman
- Does not consider that the Tammin meeting was too bad.
  - There was the "Eric Charlton factor" in the room.
  - With Mr E Charlton's previous life as a Minister in the Government, he has a bit of sway.
  - Suggested that Mr E Charlton was out of touch with what is happening in local government.
- Cr R Carter
- Attended both the Cunderdin and Quairading meetings.
  - Received reports on Tammin and York meetings with interest.

- Similar concerns were evident at all of the meetings, with some more positive than others.
  - Concerns and issues raised by the community have been discussed and addressed by this Board over a long period of time.
  - Community is questioning "why York", which is an issued that has been discussed a length by the SEARTG Board, and with agreement already reached on the need for York's inclusion.
  - Community has queried why York is not amalgamating with Northam, which has also been addressed and dealt with.
  - Evident that some community members are staying up to date.
  - Concurred with Cr S Uppill on the need to convince the public that this is a positive amalgamation with some control, rather than a forced process.
  - Rational decisions have been, and continue to be, made by this Group.
  - Board Member involvement in community understanding and perception of the work undertaken has been discussed with Participants.
  - Community response is disappointing and difficult to deal with.
  - Spoke highly of the Groups' collective intelligence and integrity, stating that it has been a privilege to get to know the Board and work through issues in a rational sense, along with the Executive Officer's assistance and guidance.
  - Spoke of frustration in not "getting this over the line".
- Chairman
- Attended the Tammin, Cunderdin and Quairading meetings.
  - Considers the Tammin meeting to have been the best.
  - Tammin meeting had a positive tone.

- Tammin had good speakers for and against the amalgamation.
  - Mr Carter stood out as a community member who was well versed, with a good understanding of the Regional Business Plan.
  - Need for more people to have this level of knowledge and understanding.
  - Mr Carter disputed some of the misnomers of other community members.
  - Considers that the Advisory Board had good control of both the Tammin and Cunderdin meetings.
- Chairman
- Quairading meeting had approximately 160 people in attendance.
  - Suggested that the Advisory Board wanted to provide additional meeting time given knowledge of "hecklers" in Quairading.
  - Believed that those creating "all the noise and misinformation" in Quairading, are those to have had private hearings with the Advisory Board.
  - Took comments to heart on behalf of the Council, SEARTG Board, and staff.
  - Believes the positive to be that the community now has more information, and the more they want to know, the more this Group needs to tell them.
  - It is clear that the community have said they understand the process, when they actually don't.
- Mr G Fardon
- Issue of the Group not being "like minded" Councils is still coming through.
  - Strong comment received in relation to York's involvement.
  - Considered the request to speak at the meeting from Cr David White of Beverley as inappropriate.

- Suggested that the "anti amalgamation" group and Cr Davies who are opposed to the proposed amalgamation, have realised that:
  - Wards will not necessarily disappear.
  - Quairading would maintain representation as will other districts.
  - It will be up to the new Council to review representation and ward boundaries.
  - This information is now being filtered back.
- The political environment, and the Premier's comments relating to metro reform followed by country, is creating statements of "why not wait until 2016/2017".
- Advice received from Mayor Carpenter included:
  - Continue to release good solid information, it is not too late.
  - His experience is that misinformation and detractors will continue until the last minute.
  - Speak to as many people and as many groups as possible.
- Request was received to meet with the "anti amalgamation" group.
- Meeting request was withdrawn following the Chairman's radio interview.
- Was happy to meet to determine reasons for objection, whilst seeking the opportunity to explain:
  - The benefits of the Regional Business Plan.
  - Extensive work undertaken over recent years.
  - Clarify the political and asset funding gap.
  - Loss of the Country Local Government Fund and its impact.
  - These factors fall in favour of the reform process.



- Remains happy to meet with the "anti amalgamation" group.
  - This is the first that the "anti amalgamation" group have wanted to meet.
  - Council were in support of the proposed meeting, which was seen as "the door being opened for communication".
- Chairman
- Sought explanation on why the request to meet was withdrawn.
- Mr G Fardon
- Understands that the content of the radio interview was considered offensive by the "anti amalgamation" group.
  - The proposed meeting day coincided with the Minister's announcement, ie "reform day".
  - Cr T Wittwer of Cuballing advised of his disappointment with the decision of the Popanyinning community.
  - Mayor Ennis from Narrogin was interviewed.
  - The Chairman was interviewed as representing the SEARTG Board, and provided a balanced view on how the communities were sitting at this time.
  - The Chairman used the term "the noisy minority", with the "anti amalgamation" group considering that this referred to them, with their belief that they are actually the majority.
  - People are entitled to their opinion.
  - No reason provided for the withdrawal of the request to meet.
  - Concern may be due to:
    - The willingness to meet without Elected Members in attendance;

- The Minister's firm statements in relation to reform; or
  - A personality clash between the President and one of the main leaders of the group.
  - Meeting needs to be held to get to the bottom of the issues.
  - Need to "shoot home" correct information.
  - The politics of what has been announced in the last week, and half and the 2016 deadline, reaffirms that regional is next.
  - Budgetary pressures from the loss of the Country Local Government Fund adds weight to the argument.
  - Attempt to correct misinformation at the Advisory Board meetings was a disappointing and frustrating exercise.
- Chairman
- Believed that Mr Tom Whittwer spoke well during his interview.
  - Complimented Mr Whittwer on his comments, with Mr Whittwer stating that he missed the Chairman's interview because an antagonist rang him from Kojonup.
  - Received a positive phone call following the Advisory Board meeting, the second call of its nature in four years.
  - The caller advised that the Advisory Board meeting had gone well, with recognised need to run on the economic terms to get people to understand the process and reasons for it.
  - Thanked the caller for his call and positive feedback.
  - People are starting to comprehend the process, however the more they know, the more they realise they don't know.
  - Frustration with the communities' lack of understanding at this stage, despite dissemination of information.

Cr T Boyle

- Suggested it was pertinent that he was not interviewed by the radio.
- Believed that the York meeting was well chaired by the Advisory Board.
- Briefed by Mr G Fardon following the Quairading meeting.
- Advisory Board allowed the Quairading meeting to become a ratepayers meeting.
- Advisory Board permitted one person to ask 19 questions at the York meeting, mostly directed to Cr T Boyle and Mr R Hooper, with unsavoury comments directed by this person to the Executive Officer.
- Approximately 110 people were in attendance, with the suggestion that 50% were there to learn, and 50% there to "knock" the process.
- Believed that the people knocking the process were being led by the "anti amalgamation" group, with questions raised having been answered many times.
- Cr M Cogerton stated that the York meeting was the "tamest" of the four held, yet Cr T Boyle believed it to be a hostile meeting.
- Advice from Cr M Cogerton was to hold a further meeting prior to closure of the submission period (15 August 2013).
- Meeting therefore scheduled for 13 August 2013.
- Those against the process advised their belief that it is a waste of time "trying to get this across the line in York", as they will target Tammin and Quairading.
- Disappointed with Ministerial advice that poll provision changes under the Act will be split between metropolitan and country areas.
- Requested that the Minister count the four Participating Local Governments as one for voting purposes.

- Queried the Minister's thoughts on the six years of work undertaken by this Group.
  - Executive Officer has been requested to attend 13 August 2013 meeting.
  - Full Council will attend with the exception of one opposing Councillor.
- Cr G Cooper
- Unfortunate that first meeting was held in Tammin, with this meeting turning out differently to what had been expected.
  - All Participants got a lot out of the Tammin meeting, with discussions held by the Group following this.
  - Request from the Advisory Board Chair that the Tammin President provide an overview at the beginning of the meeting.
  - Technical questions were referred to Mr I Bodill and others to provide correct information.
  - Supporters at the Tammin meeting "held the sway" on the night.
  - Tammin has gone from not being of concern to worrisome given indication of targeting by the "anti amalgamation" group.
  - Understood that Mr E Charlton is driving the "anti amalgamation" group.
  - National Party understood to be against changes to the poll provisions.
  - Tammin believed to be 50/50, Quairading slightly in favour, and Cunderdin also 50/50.
  - Vulnerability is a poll provision in Tammin, with a need to swing this by 5-10% to stay on top.
  - "Like minded Councils" concern is a red herring without substance.
  - Need for the Group to be more aggressive on the financial aspect.

- Ratepayers need to be told of impending rate increases if there is no amalgamation.
- The "anti amalgamation" group need to provide a financial plan to counter what this Group have provided.
- Query the "anti amalgamation" group on how they will deal with the impact of the State Budget.
- Recent projects and growth has only been possible through Royalties for Regions and Country Local Government funding.
- With loss of the Country Local Government funding, regional funding will become regionally competitive for the State.
- Realistically, chances are very remote for the wheatbelt to receive funding in this scenario.
- Similar situation with Federal funding.
- All Participating Local Governments rely on at least one third of their income from the Federal sector, with pressure mounting in this regard.
- The "anti amalgamation" group need to provide answers to the community on how they will keep rates down and projects going.
- Suggested publicly meeting with the main "knockers" following the process to hear their case on solutions in moving forward, and for them to articulate their alternate options.
- The fallback of it being a voluntary process has been removed by the State Government announcements.
- Would have expected the State Government to tackle the country before the metropolitan area.
- Solid party platform from the Nationals being "no forced amalgamations", hence the lack of agreement at State level on removal of poll provisions for the country.
- Need to work around this as best as possible.

- Whether this process is successful or not, this Group knows that it is the best prepared in Australia, given its business case modelling and long term outcomes for its communities.
- This has resulted from the work by the Executive Officer and Mr D Long.
- Narrogin confirmed that they did not do anywhere near the depth of study and modelling that this Group has done.
- This Group should take confidence in its work and efforts, as this will form the basis for what happens in the future.
- The "anti amalgamation" group should be continually challenged on the financial plans.
- The community should be challenged on the "anti amalgamation" group running their Council, because that is effectively the alternative.
- It is apparent that the "anti amalgamation" group do not understand the finances of local government.
- If the process is not successful, and financial concerns arise, would like to be in a position to say "told you so".
- There is need for strong leadership within the wheatbelt in the coming years to protect the communities' interests, particularly given the loss of funding and regionally competitive basis at a State and Federal level.
- Individual local governments will not be able to compete.
- The wheatbelt needs to come together for strength.
- Congratulated all Participating Local Governments for their work and efforts to date.
- This Group has "given it their best shot".
- Need to reiterate to the community that if they knock this process there will be consequences.

- Chairman
- Is in concert with Participants.
  - Applauded Cr G Cooper for his comments.
  - Suggested that Cr G Cooper had covered all four points listed for discussion.
  - Concurred with Cr G Cooper's comments in relation to the metropolitan reform, and this Group's position as a result, in particular budget cuts and funding reduction.
  - Go back to the communities and draw their attention to everything this Group has been advising is now out there in the public arena courtesy of the State Government's announcements.
  - This feedback to the community is the Group's strength.
  - Ask that the community to trust the Group and the work that has been done, stating that what is coming is evident with the metro situation.
  - Asked that Participants "throw everything in to it" from this point on.
  - Have until February 2014 to get it over the line, if not back to SEAVROC days or whatever might unfold.
  - Invited Ms C Tuthill to provide comment after having attended the Quairading and York meetings.
- Ms C Tuthill
- Confirmed having attended both the Quairading and York meetings.
  - Prefaced comments by advising attendance at all Advisory Board meetings was as a Departmental Representative.
  - Was anticipating some animosity and hostility to come through.
  - Being a little removed, did not perceive the meetings to be as bad as Participants did.

- A little disappointed that the issues were not specifically about reform but more about ratepayers offloading
- The main messages taken away from both meetings were about people's misunderstanding of the complex issue of reform.
- Even the Department has difficulty in sorting through the plethora of what has to be looked at, how it is going to be implemented, and what the long term implications will be. Further it would be difficult for the lay person who is not even used to the terminology and language, which is a barrier.
- Get key messages out there; keep them short, sharp and simple, and consistent across the four.
- Agreed with Cr G Cooper's comments on the removal of the Country Local Government Fund and the moving political landscape becoming more and more to the fore.
- Agreed that whatever may happen in 2016, in whatever manifestation it comes, forced or otherwise, there is not going to be money available.
- At this moment the Group is sitting on \$2.95M to assist with implementation; this is considered to be the "golden ticket" at this point in time.
- The Group needs to emphasise these funds.
- Need for focus on financials, and query what options others have, if indeed there are any.
- There is a need for a strong Council in the mix to leverage off, particularly in the beginning, this is what York represents.
- Other Local Governments such as Bruce Rock or Corrigin may be considered to be "like minded" and a "community of interest", but they do not have the strengths that York has; services can be shared with these Councils in the future.
- Suggested that these are some key messages to focus on.



- The Department will work internally with public relations people to get some strong messages out there.
  - Urged the Group to keep going.
  - Drew attention to Cr G Cooper's comments on the National Party, urging any influences to be exercised, not disregarding what is happening in the metropolitan area, to obtain some compromise.
  - Only so much can be done as public servants.
- Ms J Burges
- Advised that she would make comment on poll provisions following the conclusion of the meeting.
- Executive Officer
- Considered Tammin to be the target.
  - Easier to get votes at Tammin versus York due to size.
  - Need to disseminate information on financial strengths via a newsletter.
  - Highlight the loss of \$2.95M, with no other opportunity for this, and what this means to the community.
  - Consideration to be given to adjusting the pre release funding to obtain maximum benefit.
  - Information technology seen as the area to focus on for maximum benefit into the future.
  - This would create a commonality across the board and form a basis for shared services whether amalgamation goes ahead or not.
  - Continue to work through SEAVROC.
- Cr G Cooper
- Supported the Executive Officer's comments on information technology, having understood that the Group had agreed on this in principle.

- Group needs to move to the common operating platform because it still forms an effective basis for doing collaborative works.
  - For long term benefit, information technology would be the best area to expend funds at this point in time.
- Chairman
- Given consensus from the Group on expending pre release funds on information technology, sought input from the Executive Officer on this was at.
- Executive Officer
- Advised that nothing substantial had been undertaken at this point, however a newsletter had been released in relation to this.
  - Clarified that there were four areas of expenditure identified.
  - Policies and Delegations would be beneficial; these can be done quickly, and can be integrated for commonality, with an advantage in these being reviewed.
  - \$130,000 had been earmarked for process mapping, however it is not considered as advantageous to undertake this time consuming work at this point.
  - Far more benefit rests with information technology with earmarked funds of \$130,000 combined with process mapping funds would ensure completion of these works.
  - Believed that information technology works should be undertaken as:
    - Funding is sufficient to complete.
    - Would solve a lot of issues.
    - Would allow communication and delivery potential of services through resource sharing should amalgamation not go through.
    - Enhanced service delivery as a result.
  - Having the technology is important.
  - Potential to have all Participants operating as an amalgamated Group even if amalgamation does not occur.

- Mr I Bodill
- Queried if the Group's Regional Business Plan had been looked at by the metropolitan councils.
- Executive Officer
- Advised that he was unaware if this had occurred.
- Mr I Bodill
- Indicated that the Regional Business Plan was held in high regard and queried if the metropolitan councils would be interested.
- Cr G Cooper
- Suggested that the metropolitan process was somewhat different, with a lot of debate occurring over the last two years.
  - This Group's situation is considerably different to what is happening in the metropolitan area.
  - Supports the Executive Officer's comments.
  - With or without amalgamation, information technology works is an interchangeable benefit.
  - Need to know where LG Systems Inc sit with this, and whether there is capacity to deal with the required works.
- Mr I Bodill
- Queried walking away from this meeting with a strategy on the stance that Tammin should take, seeking input from the Group in this regard.
- Chairman
- Suggested that discussion had moved away from the Agenda.
  - Advised that discussion had concluded on point (a), and drew attention to point (b).
- Executive Officer
- Suggested that discussion had also concluded on point (b).

**(b) Poll Provision Legislation – proposed amendments update.**

Mr R Hooper

- York has written to the National Party, the Minister and the Premier, without receiving acknowledgement.
- Commented on democracy applying to everyone.
- Lack of acknowledgement is disappointing.
- Advised that Mr R Earnshaw rang on 8 August 2013, stating that there was so much detail in this Group's Regional Business Plan, that the Advisory Board would not come out and do an intensive three day financial investigation in each Participating Local Government, unless the Chief Executive Officers saw some benefit in them doing so.
- Mr R Earnshaw advised that he had all the information needed, and that the Advisory Board had never received such in depth information.
- Sell this to the community, that the experts are saying there is nothing else to investigate.

Ms J Burgess

- Referred to Mr I Bodill's query relating to the Regional Business Plan being read by metropolitan local governments.
- The process in how the Executive Officer went about the build of the Regional Business Plan would be very useful and helpful to all other councils.
- A large number of questions raised at the 8 August 2013 session have been answered by Elected Members and Officers within this Group.
- Stated that the document and process were magnificent, but in particular the process.

Mr G Fardon

- Advised that Mr S Silcox had referred to place management and retention of local identity, and as an Advisory Board Member, had been required to read the Group's Regional Business Plan.
- Considered that this information had therefore been read by others.

- Chairman
- Concurred with Ms J Burges' comments.
  - Was present at 8 August 2013 session.
  - Metropolitan councils are starting at the base level where this Group was at more than four years ago.
  - The metropolitan councils are struggling to find information.
  - A large number of basic questions were raised, despite information having been provided on numerous occasions.
  - There are those in the community who believe they understand the process, however they do not.

**(c) Strategies and direction.**

- Chairman
- Drew attention to this item of business.
  - Suggested that Participants keep in mind poll provision timing of February 2014.
  - Time will move quickly.
- Mr G Fardon
- Queried if February 2014 was the correct timing.
- Ms C Tuthill
- Understood that February 2014 was correct, however would confirm and advise accordingly.
- Chairman
- Discussed timing, detailing the following:
    - January lost with holidays.
    - December lost with Christmas period.
    - Limited time remaining to work with.
    - Time is of the essence.
    - Need to "get the ball rolling", with current momentum working for the Group given Ministerial announcements.
- Cr B Caporn
- Drew attention to Cr G Cooper's strategy, and would like to see all leaving this meeting with the same.

- Need for economics to be listed so that all are on the same page.
  - Take economics list back to Participating Local Governments and relate to respective finances.
  - Query alternatives from the naysayers.
  - Suggested that some people harbour the belief that there is an endless bucket of money in each Council.
  - Would like agreement on a number of points to take back to Participating Local Governments.
- Mr G Fardon
- Queried if suggested consultation is to be with each Participating Local Government's main players, or cross border Council meetings, or each Participating Local Government's own community.
  - Need game plan to assist Tammin.
  - Ratepayers have contacted Mr G Fardon and Mr R Hooper hungry for information, and with valid questions and concerns.
- Mr I Bodill
- After stating that the Regional Business Plan is fine, Mr G Charlton asked the question "what will happen to Tammin's football field in six years time when there is a water shortage, will it be the first field not to be watered because Tammin is the smallest?".
- Cr G Cooper
- History tells us that the exact opposite will happen.
  - This Group needs to "make more noise" about the total budget against the smallest budget.
  - Capacity to handle Tammin's issues from a united budget rather than the existing \$3-4M budget is far greater.
  - Provided example of the Cunderdin sports upgrade staged over two years, however if united could be undertaken in one go when it was Cunderdin's turn.

- Mr I Bodill
- Suggested he was not quick enough to respond in this manner.
- Cr G Cooper
- Queried studies undertaken by Mr G Charlton and Mr E Charlton's in comparison to this Group.
  - Reform investigations in other State's where amalgamation has occurred, indicates that money is generally spent on the smaller Councils where it is felt they may be disadvantaged in the process.
  - Following a full cycle of expenditure, this concern disappears.
  - Need to detail objection, and answer to the objection.
  - This is the only way that the issues will be addressed.
- Executive Officer
- Provided an example of a project in the vicinity of \$1M being outside of Tammin's scope, however as a united Group, such a project becomes reasonable and possible.
  - United, this Group could realistically fund projects in the region of \$5M - \$7.5M.
  - This cannot be done individually.
- Mr G Fardon
- This is a capability issue.
- Cr G Cooper
- The Group's economy of scale is financial.
- Mr R Hooper
- At the York meeting, Mr S Silcox advised people to read the 10 Year Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan before asking their questions.
  - This is the Tammin case, questions before reading the supplied information.
  - If Tammin cannot afford water in six years time as a single entity, they will be able to if part of a united group.

- Ask Mr E Charlton how he will pay for water in six years time without a 40% rate increase if Tammin runs out of money.
  - There will be consequences if the status quo remains.
  - Every Shire President should write to the Labor Party, the Greens, the Nationals, the Premier, Upper House Members, stating the Group's disappointment that democratic rights are not being extended to a voluntary group going through an independent assessment process.
  - In two years time when rural reform starts, the ground work will have been done.
  - Suggested that lobbying the Labor Party on not treating the metropolitan and rural reform separately, could turn this situation around.
  - The Opposition Leader could hold up legislation or amend it in parliament.
- Executive Officer
- Advised that on lobbying the Labor Party, indications were that they were not opposed to amalgamation.
  - Considered that if the Labor Party were in power, they would be undertaking the same process as the Liberal Party.
- Mr R Hooper
- Suggested that if the Premier could be embarrassed by the Labor Party, the current metropolitan reform process would be extended to the country.
- Chairman
- Suggested that discussions had been diverted, then drew attention back to Item (c) --Strategies and Direction.
  - Sought input on Cr B Caporn's and Cr G Cooper's suggestions on the development of information sheets detailing:
    - Why the Group believe in the reform process and proposed amalgamation.
    - The position of the Participating Local Governments at this point.



- What may happen in the future.
  - Strategies for obtaining community understanding.
- There is good information out there.
  - Small amount of people out there who have good knowledge.
  - A lot people who have very little understanding.
- Ms J Burges
- Seek to get a repeated message through to the community.
  - Queried the key message to be repeated over and over.
  - Economies of scale; sustainability.
  - Strong message to be repeated.
- Cr T Boyle
- Drew attention to Cr G Cooper's comments.
  - Question Mr G Charlton and Mr E Charlton on what they have, draw attention to what this Group has, make a comparison, people will make a decision there and then.
- Cr R Carter
- Drew attention to Cr B Caporn's comments; suggesting that points be detailed which detail the alternative plan.
- Mr P Naylor
- Advised that Mr G Fardon had received letters from community members stating "where is the letter saying that we are going to lose this; who is the author".
  - There is a need to "read between the lines".
  - The community sees this as a voluntary process, and don't take it on board.
  - If this is not embraced, the \$2.95M will be lost, and if the process is forced in the future, the community will pay.

- Desire to have written statements to provide to the community detailing funding losses if the process does not go ahead.
- Ms C Tuthill
- Correspondence from the Minister confirms the \$2.95M funding, along with grant agreement which also confirms the \$2.95M.
- Mr P Naylor
- This correspondence does not state that "if you don't embrace this process, the funding is lost".
- Executive Officer
- The Group has entered into an agreement with the Government for \$2.95M on the basis that the community votes for amalgamation, those funds are assured.
  - If the amalgamation does not go ahead, that money is lost.
  - Recent Government announcements draw the conclusion that if you don't go to amalgamation, there won't be any money.
  - Local government reform – metropolitan versus country, argue the point that reform is going to happen.
  - There won't be any money in 2016 to allow country or regional local governments to come together.
  - Opinions may differ, but this Group can base their opinion on factual information.
- Cr G Cooper
- Suggested that the argument needs to be simple.
  - We have had the wordy information that people don't read.
  - Statements need to be "if you want 20% rate increase, vote no for the amalgamation".
  - Need to provide these "punch lines".

- If debate follows, hit back with the facts, here's our Asset Management Plan, here is our 20% gap, where is your proof.
  - Key messages need to be listed and be based on finance.
  - State Budget details that we will be losing funding.
  - \$2.95M is on the table, what is the alternative.
  - A no vote will cost us \$2.95M, what is the alternative.
  - List must contain a strong statement in relation to rates.
  - Detail the five year guarantee as part of the process.
  - This Group's no rate increase versus the potential high rate increase.
  - Must target the swing voters.
  - Strong "in the pocket" messages.
- Chairman
- Indicated that the Executive Officer will write the proposed list.
- Executive Officer
- Suggested a recommendation for the Group's consideration:  
  
"The Executive Officer and Chief Executive Officers of each Participating Local Government meet on Monday, 12 August 2013, to develop the proposed information list, with the assistance of Ms C Tuthill, Ms J Burges, and Mr K Kay as required."
  - Time is against the Group.
- Chairman
- Concurred with this suggestion, advising there was urgent need to disseminate the information as it was critical to the future.

- Cr B Caporn
- Keep it simple, with "one liners".
  - Question has been asked "what do you need \$2.95M to amalgamate for".
  - Brief explanation on the need for \$2.95M funding should be incorporated in the information.
- Executive Officer
- Need for funding is very clear, itemised in the Transitional Costs, with the greatest expense being information technology.
  - Current information technology is not functional for future needs on an individual basis, let alone as a collective.
  - New technology will permit Council business and viewing of Council meetings to be undertaken from individual homes without the need to go into town.
- Cr G Cooper
- Supporting evidence being that both the Northam and Geraldton amalgamations cost a considerable amount as they did not have their information technology and operations aligned.
  - Eastern States Councils provided the same message; non alignment costs a lot of money.
  - Starting point being alignment of chart of accounts, fees and charges, reports, etc, for compliance.
  - There is considerable cost in such alignment.
  - This has been identified as a key issue, with associated costings being completed.
- Mr G Fardon
- Following general comment on the information technology factors, advised that there was an opportunity to seek additional funding to fine tune completion.
  - Revised budget shown on the SEARTG website detailing \$3.2M, of which the Group has a guarantee for \$2.95M.

- This information has been provided to the "anti amalgamation" group.
  - Optic fibre costs, and Commissioner's costs.
- Executive Officer
- What is important, is that the Group does not have to fund the process, there is an assurance of \$2.95M.
  - This is an advantage over other Councils.
- Mr G Fardon
- Cuballing offered advice on "lost opportunities" in relation to funding.
  - Transitional funding will never be offered again.
- Chairman
- For the ill informed, the biggest hurdle is the most recent amalgamation of the City of Greater Geraldton.
  - There is a perception that the rates increase in this City was a direct result of amalgamation.
  - The community will not listen to comment which states otherwise.
  - This perception needs to be addressed in the information to be provided.
- Cr T Boyle
- Requested that facts on the Eastern States de-amalgamation be included.
- General discussion followed, with community concerns in relation to football team name changes, etc.
- Ms J Burges
- There is information available to assist the Group with de-amalgamation statements.
  - Queensland reduced from 19 local governments to 4.
  - There is only one that is choosing to de-amalgamate.
  - Comes back to financials, there is money to amalgamate; there is no money to de-amalgamate.

- Councils must fund de-amalgamation themselves.
  - Substantial cost to transition to amalgamation, relate this to examples of purchasing another business entity or next door's farm, and the associated costs such as stamp duty.
  - Costs expended initially will provide a more profitable entity.
- Mr R Carter
- Advised that he and Mr P Naylor had drawn up a few points on key issues to address with each community, and sought consensus on these.
  - Financial decline in current state is unacceptable.
  - Unacceptable to increase rates to cover the decline.
  - Recent political changes confirm that forced amalgamations for country areas will occur in 2016.
  - Recent State abolition of the Country Local Government Fund is accelerating financial decline.
  - Strong Business Plan accepted by the Advisory Board without further question, which indicates the quality of this document.
- Mr G Fardon
- \$2.95M funding is guaranteed.
  - Current governance cost of \$1.3M for the four Participating Local Governments, which does not include cost of the required Integrated Planning Framework, services, and asset funding gap.
- Cr R Carter
- Brief summary of the financial benefits of going with the current Regional Business Plan.
- Cr G Cooper
- Finish with "what is the alternative, where is the plan".
- Cr S Uppill
- Also important is the eight year cycle for Councillors.

- Perception that the Plan is for eight years only, with explanation provided that the Act requires every local government to review wards regardless.
- Chairman
- Funding is being directed to regional funding.
- Cr R Carter
- "Opportunity" is the key word, and attracting grant funding on a regional basis.
- Executive Officer
- Country Local Government Fund; and that larger entities have a better chance to secure funding.
- Cr G Cooper
- List the projects that this Group has financed out of the Country Local Government Fund.
  - Evidence from State Government Budget is that this funding is no longer available.
  - The alternative now is regionally competitive.
- Executive Officer
- Aspirations detailed in the community accepted Strategic Community Plan, have been lost.
  - The only way to provide the aspirations and initiatives is by amalgamating.
- Chairman
- Key point is the "political squeeze" by everything becoming regionally based.
  - Royalties for Regions is cleverly orchestrated in this regard.
- Cr G Cooper
- Drew attention to the Geraldton scenario.
  - Advised that the rates increase in this instance was based on the Asset Management Gap.
  - This Group would phase in the Asset Management Gap over a period of time, however Geraldton chose to do this in one hit.

- Geraldton's amalgamation partner was not affected by the rate increase, only the Geraldton population.
  - These points cannot be disproved.
- Cr C Tuthill
- Additional dot point in relation to representation.
  - Evident from Quairading meeting that people think everything is going to be consolidated to York.
  - Need to demonstrate the old structure versus the new, with advice on what services will remain in each location.
  - Apply local examples so that the information becomes tangible for the community.
- Chairman
- Confirmed agreement that the Executive Officer and Chief Executive Officers of each Participating Local Government meet on Monday, 12 August 2013, to develop the proposed information list, with the assistance of Ms C Tuthill, Ms J Burges, and Mr K Kay as required.
  - Provided comment on the position of each Participating Local Government, namely that York is not an issue on numbers, Cunderdin is fine, Quairading is 50/50, with Tammin of concern given numbers and targeting by the "anti amalgamation" group.
  - If Mr E Charlton can be convinced, this will then feed back to other community members.
  - Queried meeting with Mr E Charlton to provide information.
- Cr S Uppill
- Suggested that such a meeting would be beneficial for others including Mr I Bodill.
- Mr I Bodill
- Does not have the strength to put over information, given the short period of his tenure.



- Cr S Uppill
- Indication from discussions after the Advisory Board Meeting was that locals were tiring of Mr E Charlton's rhetoric.
  - Has put back to the community that they do not contact the Participants and communicate in relation to the reform process.
  - Suggested that a meeting with Mr E Charlton, Mr G Charlton and pro amalgamation people, to go over the information list and seek their alternatives.
- Mr I Bodill
- Suggested that this discussion include Kellerberrin and York matters.
- Cr G Cooper
- Advised that the meeting should be scheduled with the inclusion of relevant parties.
  - Meeting should include at least two "influential no's" and their supporters, and a number of this Group.
- Executive Officer
- Thought that the Kellerberrin issue would have been settled.
- Cr S Uppill
- Advised that a "splinter" group had formed in Kellerberrin.
  - Provided comment on 2009 submissions by Tammin and Kellerberrin.
  - Kellerberrin did not wish to join with Tammin, without discussions in this regard.
  - Happy to openly provide a copy of the current Tammin submission, whilst seeking what alternatives others have.
  - This process takes years of work.
- Mr G Fardon
- Same issue occurred with Bruce Rock, Corrigin and Quairading, with questions on why the formation was not to the east.

- These local governments did not wish to join with Quairading.
  - Meeting was held with Bruce Rock on Thursday, 8 August 2013.
- Cr T Boyle
- Advised that Brookton recently sought to hold discussions with York.
- Chairman
- Advised that Participants were happy to support Tammin with their needs.
  - Support offered by this Group to all Participating Local Governments.
  - Passion remains evident amongst the Group.
  - Has been a pleasure working with everyone.
  - Talks were held with Bruce Rock at the request of Cr S Strange, who some years previously had advised the community that amalgamation was not the way to go.
  - Cr S Strange now has the task of turning his Council around to acknowledge the need for reform.
- Mr R Carter returned discussion to Item (b) Poll Provision Legislation – proposed amendments update.
- Cr R Carter
- Queried the possibility of changes to the poll provision and making a political representation for this Group to be considered as a special case given the work undertaken over the years.
- Ms C Tuthill
- Advised that the time frame was against the Group.
  - Yet to be debated by Parliament, with or without amendment.
  - Minister is keen to get this Bill before the Houses as soon as possible.

- Doubts the ability for an exemption to be granted to one group, would need to be across all.
- Mr G Fardon
- This is not possible in the middle of the process.
- Cr G Cooper
- Decision would come back to the Nationals who are against, and this remains their party platform.
- Ms J Burges
- Understood Cr R Carter's query to be "is it worth making a stand no matter what?".
  - Possibility of writing to the Premier.
  - Too late for changes to the poll provision, but not too late to make a stand.
- Cr R Carter
- Don't give up without a fight.
- Chairman
- Requested a strongly worded letter to be forwarded to the Minister and the Premier detailing work undertaken, and requesting an exemption for this Group.
- Cr T Boyle
- Advised that such correspondence needs to clearly state a vote for four, or no poll provisions.
- Cr R Carter
- Suggested that the request be for a change in poll provision, not abolishing of the poll provision as this would not be acceptable to the community.
- Cr G Cooper
- Suggested that such correspondence would not be successful; advising that efforts would be better spent converting swinging votes.
  - Mr E Charlton is mindful of talk on the change to poll provisions, and has pushed for this not to occur.
- Executive Officer
- Suggested the forwarding of correspondence detailing the Group's disappointment.

- Chairman
- Suggested there was nothing to lose by forwarding correspondence and making the point.
  - Concurs with Cr R Carter's comment that the removal of poll provisions would not be acceptable by the community.
  - Poll provisions should be across all four localities.
- Cr R Carter
- Advised that he was happy to move a motion in this regard.
- Mr R Hooper
- Suggested that the correspondence also be forwarded to the Labor Party.

It was then:

***MOVED Cr R Carter, Seconded Cr T Boyle, that correspondence be forwarded to the Premier, copied to the Minister for Local Government and the Labor Party, detailing the Group's preference for poll provisions to apply across the four Participating Local Governments, not to one individual municipality.***

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**(d) Other business.**

Nil.

**7. BOARD MEMBERS' MOTIONS OF WHICH PREVIOUS NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN**

Nil.

**8. NEW BUSINESS OF AN URGENT NATURE**

Nil.

**GENERAL BUSINESS****1. Meeting with Mr D Fairclough – Wheatbelt Aged Care**

- Mr G Fardon
- Cunderdin had received a request that the Group meet with Mr D Fairclough.
  - A number of meetings will be occurring on Tuesday, 13 August 2013.
  - Meeting can be held with Mr D Fairclough at the end of the SEAVROC Wheatbelt Aged Care meeting.
  - Mr D Fairclough is able to meet at 4:00pm onwards at the Brookton Shire Office in relation to SEARTG aged care issues, should the Group wish to do so.
  - Quairading representatives will be in attendance.
- Mr P Naylor
- Advised that Cr R Carter, Cr C Gibsone and Mr P Naylor will attend.
- G Fardon
- Sought a York representative for this meeting.
- Mr R Hooper
- Advised that Cr T Boyle and Mr R Hooper can attend up to 4:30pm, however need to be back in York for 6:00pm meeting.
- Mr G Fardon
- Given agreement and comment by the Group, advised that a 3:30pm meeting would be requested.
- Cr G Cooper
- Concern has been expressed about things not moving quicker in relation to wheatbelt aged care matters.
  - Regional zone groupings need to put a strong challenge to local government to remain engaged and deal with agency issues to make this happen.
  - Caution on fragmenting, and not dealing with aged care on a united front.
  - Some recognition happening in relation to planning, and the work being undertaken together.

- Possibility of working with a newly appointed Minister in the near future.
- Chief Executive Officers to keep local government focus on working with agencies, whilst liaising with the SEARTG Board to assist where possible.

Mr G Fardon

- Arrangements will be finalised for this meeting today.

## **2. Meeting with Ms M Hemsley – Work Force Plan**

Mr R Hooper

- Sought input from the Group on meeting with Ms M Hemsley to finalise Workforce Plans.
- Basic outlines are complete, with a need to finalise detail by Christmas.
- Preference to have this completed before the local government election process.

Mr G Fardon

- Currently finalising wording.
- Agreed with the suggestion of finalising the Work Force Plan prior to elections.

Mr I Bodill

- Tammin has adopted their Work Force Plan.
- What follows will be arranged separately.

Mr R Hooper

- Confirmed that a meeting will be arranged with Ms M Hemsley with invitations extended to everyone, those that need or want to attend can do so.

## **3. Request to Meet – Consultant Mr Trevor Seymour Jones**

Chairman

- Advised having received an email from consultant Trevor Seymour Jones wanting to meet.
- This consultant had completed some work for Merredin on asset management planning, etc, of which the Executive Officer and Mr D Long had undertaken for this Group already.

- Raised the contact as a point of attention and transparency.
- With agreement of the Group, confirmed that the Chairman would thank the consultant for his contact, and respectfully decline at this point in time.

#### **4. Transitional Funding – Budget Amendment**

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Executive Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Queried if the Group would like the Executive Officer and Ms C Tuthill to look at amending the Transitional Fund Budget.</li></ul>  |
| Chairman          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sought confirmation from the Group in this regard.</li></ul>  |
| Mr R Hooper       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasised the need to do something "concrete" with the initial Transition Funds.</li><li>• There is no "Plan B" with amalgamation; if there is no amalgamation, it is the end of the story.</li><li>• This Group has \$295,000 to spend on the most important items for the best advantage for all.</li><li>• Drew attention to the City of Armadale's visit to undertake a Cloud demonstration and modelling.</li></ul> |
| Chairman          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confirmed that the Group move forward with information technology, utilising initial Transition Funds for this purpose.</li></ul>   |

#### **9. NEXT SOUTH EAST AVON REGIONAL TRANSITION BOARD MEETING**

As agreed at the SEARTG Board Meeting of 5 April 2013, meetings will be held on the first Thursday of each month, unless there is insufficient business to address.

**10. CLOSURE OF MEETING**

The Chairman took the opportunity of thanking all for their attendance, and input, stating that it was a worthwhile meeting which had provided direction on "where to from here" and beneficial discussion. Further, advising the Group to stay together, support each other, and help Tammin get over the line. In addition, thanks were extended to the Executive Officer for making suitable arrangements for the meeting.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the Meeting closed at 12:14pm.

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