

# Minutes



Sustainability Advisory Committee

Tuesday, 12 December 2023  
4:00-5:30pm

<b>Location:</b>	Coachwood Meeting Room, Willoughby City Council, Level 6
<b>Chair:</b>	Councillor John Moratelli
<b>Attendees:</b>	Andrew Assaee (via Teams) – Member Eva Coulam – Member Rena Czaplinska-Archer – Member Gay Spies – Member Janet France (via Teams) – New Member Elisha Mangassarian (via Teams) – New Member  Peter Lisle – Sustainability Team Leader (WCC) Bushra Salam – Governance (WCC)
<b>Apologies/absent:</b>	John Le Couteur – Member
<b>Guests</b>	Councillor Anna Greco Councillor John Moratelli Nick Chapman – Resilience Specialist (WCC)

## Agenda items

Item	Topic / Discussion	Action
1	<b>Welcome</b> The meeting was opened at 4:04 pm	
	<b>Declarations of interest</b> A link to the Disclosure of interest by Committee Members form was circulated with the Agenda. <a href="https://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Council/Forms/Disclosure-of-interest-by-Committee-Members">https://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Council/Forms/Disclosure-of-interest-by-Committee-Members</a> There were no disclosures of interest submitted.	
	<b>Acknowledgement of Country</b> <i>Willoughby City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we meet today, the Gamaragal People, and their connections to land, waters, and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including those who may</i>	

*be in attendance today.*

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## 2 **Committee Governance**

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### **Appointment of Chair**

Pursuant to clauses 5.4 of the Committee's Terms of Reference, the Committee unanimously appointed Councillor John Moratelli, as the Chair for the meeting and noted that appointment of an ongoing Chairperson be reconsidered at the next meeting of the Committee.

### **Nominations for Chair of the meeting:**

- Gay Spies nominated Councillor John Moratelli
- Seconded by Janet France
- No other nominations were received

The Committee voted the Chair of today's meeting to be Councillor Moratelli. The Committee unanimously approved.

### **Committee Member- Resignation**

Governance advised John Le Couteur had communicated to Council prior to the meeting to advise he could no longer participate due to work commitments and was resigning his position.

### **Welcome New Members**

The Chair welcomed new members Janet France & Elisha Mangassarian.

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## 3 **Acceptance of Previous Minutes**

Draft minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2023 were circulated electronically to the Committee for comments and no comments were received. The Committee confirmed and adopted the minutes of the previous meeting.

Moved by Gay Spies and seconded by Rena Czaplinska-Archer. Carried unanimously.

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## 4 **Actions arising from previous minutes**

There was no business arising from the previous minutes.

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## 5 **Strategic Activities**

- **Standing Item – Update on carbon targets for Council and Community.**

There were no updates to share with the Committee.

- **Use of Artificial Turf on WCC (Willoughby City Council) sports fields**

The Committee decided to set up a Working Party to investigate the use of artificial turf at council sportsgrounds and passed the following motion.

**Motion:** *That the SAC establish an Artificial Turf Working Party to review the adequacy of Council's existing policies regarding artificial turf and advise as to any necessary changes to achieve Council's strategic goals, with the following members - Meredith Foley, Gay Spies, Eva Coulam and Janet France.*

Moved by Gay Spies and Seconded by Eva Coulam. (Carried)

Andrew Assaee noted his interest to join the informal working party/group as an observer. The Chair asked the four members of that working group to work between themselves who will be the chair and to notify other members when & where the meeting will happen.

- **Presentation by Nick Chapman on tree canopy projects and strategy and related issues:**

Nick Chapman– Resilience Specialist, gave a presentation on Council's urban forest activities (see attachment). Topics covered included the State Government's Green Grid, the need for urban forest coordination, the importance of tree canopy in combatting the urban heat island effect, Council tree planting programs, biodiversity considerations and tree vandalism.

**Deck of slides to be shared with the Committee along with these minutes.**

Committee members made a number of observations:-

- The removal of trees on private land is an on-going challenge.
- We need to educate people about the importance of trees.
- Soil management is a very important consideration for tree planting.
- Household pesticide and herbicide use is a problem.
- The tree removal application process is an important mechanism to manage tree loss on private land.

In his presentation Nick Chapman highlighted some of the major issues which Council is dealing with in its urban forest work.

- Currently our urban forest extends across 35% of the LGA. Council has a target of achieving 40% by 2036.
- It is important to protect and where possible extend our urban forest because it helps protect the community from urban heat.
- Extreme heat kills more people than all other natural disasters combined.
- The urban heat island effect is most problematic at night.

- It's challenging trying to educate the community about the dangers of urban heat as people are resistant to the message.
- Victor Street is one of the hottest parts of the LGA.
- The need to intensify residential development in places like Willoughby is in direct conflict with the need to protect and, where possible, extend the urban tree canopy across the LGA.
- We have a big education job on our hands to raise awareness in the community of the great value of urban trees and the importance of protecting them.
- We need to conserve our urban forest and continue to increase tree canopy on land that Council owns e.g. local streets, parks etc.
- We have implemented an annual \$150,000 rolling tree planting program to increase tree canopy on Council-owned land e.g. local streets, 'hard-edged' urban areas and at heavily pedestrianised locations
- Our Bushland Team is doing excellent work protecting and managing our urban bushland areas.
- Seven community gardens have been established and are looked after mostly by volunteers

Elisha Mangassarian, asked whether the council should consider setting a higher canopy target compared to the State government's target of 40%. This is because the council has already achieved a current canopy percentage level of 35%, and given the strategy is to be implemented till 2032, there is sufficient amount of time to achieve a canopy level above the State's target.

Janet France noted that, the canopy target is until 2032 so she would like to see a much more ambitious target than from 35-40% given that the heat island effect is the most serious issue and is one issue the council can control with tree shade. It can be up to 5-10 degrees cooler under the right tree. She asked whether the council tree officers advise what a realistic target would be.

**Motion:** *That the Committee recommends that council consider setting a higher tree canopy target than 40% by 2032.*

Moved by Gay Spies and seconded by Rena Czaplinska-Archer (Carried)

Following are the various comments made by the Committee:

Elisha Mangassarian asked if Council has an urban heat target. Nick Chapman advised this would be difficult because there's so much variation in heat during any given time e.g. over a week, or a month. Having a Tree canopy target is more accurate and doable.

Andrew Assaee enquired which genome of plant will grow best. Nick Chapman replied that matching the right tree with the right soil in the right place is important. Also, everybody in the community has a different view of what type of tree species they would like to see in their street. Council's Street Trees Team provides expert guidance about species selection.

Peter Lisle noted that on the WCC website there is a lot of information on trees, including some comprehensive guidance about species selection for verge and nature strip planting. See <https://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Residents/Trees/Nature-strips-and-verge-plantings>

Rena Czaplinska-Archer noted that tall trees are more effective at providing shade and helping reduce heat compared to shrubs etc.

Elisha Mangassarian asked about which types of land were most vulnerable to tree loss. Maybe in areas where tree canopy is <50% we can offer private landowners incentives to plant more trees? This could potentially include a system whereby residents who plant trees qualify for a rate reduction? Nick agreed that the development of (preferably financial) incentives to protect existing trees on private land and encourage more trees to be planted is an important consideration.

Andrew Assaee suggested that Australian Carbon Credit Units may be available in relation to aspects of council's attempts to increase tree canopy. Peter Lisle said he'd check.

Janet France noted that planting trees should be top of the list in mitigating the effects of climate change. Cr Moratelli agreed and noted that he has moved a motion regarding that in a recent Council meeting which was lost but he will move it again.

Cr Greco asked about the major tree vandalism site on Willowie Rd, Castle Cove. Nick advised that staff in Council's Safe Cities Unit are still actively investigating and are optimistic that Council will have gathered enough evidence to justify taking the issue to the Court in the next few weeks. .

Rena Czaplinska-Archer suggested that the state government's Green Grid could be a mechanism to help increase the urban tree canopy in Willoughby. She referred committee members to an interview about the Green Grid with Barbara Schaffer, the Principal Landscape Architect for the Government Architect's Office NSW <https://swelteringcities.org/2023/07/27/interview-with-barbara-schaffer-gansw-principal-landscape-architect/> and noted that it may also be useful to have a conversation with Barbara Schaffer directly.

Janet France noted that in San Francisco, California there was a scheme whereby new residents could select a tree to plant in

their street. Relevant staff made sure that residents of the same street were given consistent tree species.

Eva Coulam asked if benefit to wildlife is a consideration when staff are identifying tree planting sties. Nick Chapman confirmed that council staff are very conscious of opportunities for tree planting to enhance and/or connect biodiversity and wildlife corridors across the LGA.

Cr Moratelli noted that Mosman Council often installs covert surveillance cameras in proximity to DAs which relate to properties with water/foreshore views, to help counter tree vandalism. Tree permits are another issue, as they are not required if a tree is on the exempt list.

In Willoughby it is easy for residents to secure approval to remove a tree if it is not on Council's list of desirable tree species. This can impact on tree canopy.

**The Committee requested the Council officer to report back about the outcome of the heat study.**

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## 6 Other Business

Possible agenda items will be emailed by the Committee members.

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### Next Meeting

**Date:** Wednesday, 31 January 2024 (4:00-5:30pm)

**Agenda Items:** To be decided

**Meeting Closed:** 6:05 pm

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