

Relevant Information for Council

FILE: X094861 **DATE:** 16 August 2024

TO: Lord Mayor and Councillors

FROM: Scott McGill, Acting Chief Financial Officer

THROUGH: Monica Barone PSM, Chief Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Information Relevant To Item Item 6.3 - 2023-24 Quarter 4 Review – Delivery Program 2022-2026

For Noting

This memo is for the information of the Lord Mayor and Councillors.

Purpose

At the 12 August 2024 Corporate, Finance, Properties and Tenders Committee, further information was sought on the following:

Planting data

The target of 50,000 new plants planted in City parks and street gardens remains unchanged since 2017/18. There has been no change to the target this year with 78,579 new plants planted in 2023/24.

The target for street tree planting has not decreased and remains at 700 street trees each year. The City achieved the target in 2023/24 with 1,112 street and park trees planted.

Emissions data for 2022/23

There is a 15-month lag on the provision of Local Government Area (LGA)-wide emissions data. Emissions for the LGA to end June 2023 will be reported in the City of Sydney Green Report in November 2024.

Lost time injuries

Covid restrictions during 2021/22 financial year continued to affect City services, with many employees working from home, some services not offered and facilities closed. As a result, we experienced a significant drop in the number of lost time injuries. As expected, post Covid, as all restrictions were lifted and employees returned fully to work, lost time injuries increased. However, the current number of lost time injuries of 43 for 2023/24 is well below the pre-Covid level of 70 lost time injuries in 2018/19 and the annual trend of lost time injuries over the last six years (without the Covid anomaly) continues downwards.

Enforcement income in 2023/24

The increase in enforcement income in 2023/24 is reflective of a higher fine value which is set by the NSW Government through legislation which was not reflected in the budget. For example, parking infringement fines in the CBD increased by approximately 11%.

Legislative changes have also led to significantly higher penalties under various ordinance related activities, including the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, the Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act 2021, as well as regulations concerning heavy vehicles and companion animals.

In addition, there has been an increased number of commercial waste fines issued since the implementation of the commercial waste compliance team.

Agency/contractor costs

The main drivers for the variance of agency worker expenditure to budget in 2023/24 were temporary backfilling of vacant permanent positions (pending recruitment), and an increase in agency worker pay rates adjusting for labour market fluctuations, principally in childcare.

The City of Sydney does not budget for agency workers to backfill vacant City positions. Instead, we budget for a full complement of approved positions. When there is a need to backfill a position with an agency worker, for example due to a resignation, long term leave or parental leave, the salaries and wages already budgeted for the position are used to fund the agency worker.

Community centre lease to John Holland

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) approached the City requesting a licence to provide access to KGV for contractor John Holland to complete essential repairs to the parapet wall of the Cahill Express Way. Based on the Transport for NSW risk assessment, this access was deemed the most viable. The repair works are crucial and pose a public safety risk if not completed. The licence includes safety measures and compliance with the City's third-party access requirements.

Library memberships

During Covid, libraries offered an auto renewal process for members over a three-year period to support and maintain access to library services during lockdown periods. Prior to Covid, renewal of library membership required a visit to a library branch, which wasn't possible during lockdowns. The auto renewal process meant that there was higher than usual membership numbers as there is usually an attrition rate as memberships are not renewed.

2023/24 is expected to be the last year that membership numbers will reflect the higher Covid auto renewal numbers as auto renewals ceased in 2022/23. As of 2023/24, renewals can be completed by contacting the library and we are exploring ways to enable online membership applications. Members receive a reminder message when membership is due to expire.

Prior to Covid, Library membership numbers sat at approximately 55,000, with a surge occurring in 2018/19 due to the opening of Green Square and Darling Square libraries.

We continue our library marketing and promotions campaigns to support awareness of library services and actively encourage membership.

The City's focus is on library visitation numbers as well as membership numbers, as many people use library services without having to join.

Beehive Industries

As advised to Council in June this year, we are working with organisations supported through our grants program regarding our requirements to ensure pay equity and valuing skills, responsibilities and working conditions in a non-discriminatory way. We also advised that we would work with relevant organisations about these requirements to give them time to consider their position and policies in regards to pay equity.

We will not award any new grants where any known concerns exist. Council can also withdraw grant funding should concerns not be appropriately considered.

On 20 November 2023, Council approved a new rental subsidy of 100 per cent for Beehive Industries for their tenancy at 137 Palmer Street, Darlinghurst under the Accommodation Grants Program for the remainder of their current five-year lease, which is due to end on 30 June 2026. The increased subsidy and period was provided to give Beehive an opportunity to implement further strategies to reduce their financial outgoings and source alternative revenue streams through federal and state grants to support their organisational approach. We continue to work with them to achieve this and review their progress through the annual review process.

Memo from Scott McGill, Acting Chief Financial Officer

Prepared by: Various Directors

Approved

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Chief Executive Officer