

9.1. Future Direction on Customs House

C148/05/25

Moved Cr Lou Nicholson seconded Cr Sue Miller

That Council receive and note the contents of this report.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

C149/05/25

Moved Cr Bill Coomans seconded Cr Craig Maidment

That Council resolve not to consider the sale or future use of Customs House until Council has undertaken a refreshed review of future opportunities for the site.

The outcome being TIED, the Presiding Member exercised his casting vote FOR the motion and declared the motion **CARRIED**.

C150/05/25

Moved Cr Bill Coomans seconded Cr Craig Maidment

That Council withhold progressing any activation or service change to the Customs House, Old Police Station (South Coast Regional Arts Centre) and Old Post Office (Goolwa Visitor Information Centre) buildings until a Service Review Framework (the Framework) has been adopted by Council.

The mover, Cr Bill Coomans, with the consent of the seconder, Cr Craig Maidment sought and was granted leave of the meeting to vary the motion.

(Motion as varied)

That Council withhold progressing any activation or service change to the Customs House, Old Police Station (South Coast Regional Arts Centre) and Old Post Office (Goolwa Visitor Information Centre) buildings until a Service Review Framework (the Framework) has been presented to Council at the July 2025 Council meeting.

CARRIED

C151/05/25

Moved Cr Milli Livingston seconded Cr Margaret Gardner

That Council:

1. Following the adoption of the Framework, in close collaboration with key community stakeholders including but not limited to Cittaslow, The Friends of Little Scotland and all parties who submitted an Expression of Interest in the last two (2) years to lease Customs House, undertake a review of the Goolwa Wharf Precinct in line with the Framework, considering the precinct holistically - inclusive of the Customs House, Old Post Office and Old Police Station buildings (and their current tenancies/services).
2. The review includes but is not limited to the clarification of the past and current community land status and future options available in this regard of each Council owned land parcel in the Wharf Precinct.

The mover, Cr Milli Livingston, with the consent of the seconder, Cr Margaret Gardner, sought and was granted leave of the meeting to vary the motion.

(Motion as varied)

That Council:

1. Following the adoption of the Framework, in close collaboration with key community stakeholders including but not limited to Cittaslow, The Friends of Little Scotland and all parties who submitted an Expression of Interest in the last two (2) years to lease Customs House, undertake a review of the Goolwa Wharf Precinct in line with the Framework, considering the precinct holistically - inclusive of the Customs House, Old Post Office and Old Police Station buildings (and their current tenancies/services), to be completed by December 2025.
2. The review includes but is not limited to the clarification of the past and current community land status and future options available in this regard of each Council owned land parcel in the Wharf Precinct.

CARRIED

C152/05/25

Moved Cr Margaret Gardner seconded Cr Sue Miller

That Council note a further report will be presented at the next available Council Meeting, to consider short term leases for the Chart Room, The Superintendents Cottage and the Morgue, until the holistic review has been completed.

Cr Sue Miller with consent of the mover, Cr Margaret Gardner sought and was granted leave of the meeting to vary the motion.

(Motion as varied)

That Council note a further report will be presented at the next Council Meeting, to consider short term leases for the Chart Room, The Superintendents Cottage and the Morgue, until the holistic review has been completed.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

9. Administration Reports

9.1. Future Direction on Customs House

Decision Report

Responsible Officer: Stacey Bateson (General Manager Community)

Report Author: Sarah Longden (Acting Manager Economic Development)

Previous Decisions: March 25 - C075/03/25, C076/03/25 & C078/03/25, October 24 - C24549, November 2023 - C23487 & C23483, October 2023 - C23382, June 2023 - C23227, April 2023 - C23112, July 2022 - ACM221592

Report Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide background information on Customs House and to propose an approach for determining the future activation of the Customs House, Old Police Station and Old Post Office buildings.

Recommendation

That Council:

- 1. Receive and note the contents of this report.**
- 2. Resolves to not progress with the sale of Customs House for the purpose of a hotel development, as consulted on, retaining it as a Council asset.**
- 3. Withhold progressing any activation or service change to the Customs House, Old Police Station (South Coast Regional Arts Centre) and Old Post Office (Goolwa Visitor Information Centre) buildings until a Service Review Framework (the Framework) has been adopted by Council.**
- 4. Following the adoption of the Framework, in close collaboration with key community stakeholders, undertake a review of the Goolwa Wharf Precinct in line with the Framework, considering the precinct holistically - inclusive of the Customs House, Old Post Office and Old Police Station buildings (and their current tenancies/services).**
- 5. Note a further report will be presented at the next available Council Meeting, to consider short term leases for the Chart Room, The Superintendents Cottage and the Morgue, until the holistic review has been completed.**

Background

In May 2021, Council received a *Roadmap to Revitalisation Goolwa Wharf Placemaking Strategy*, which was developed specifically for the Precinct (ACM21997) and approved a vision for the revitalised Goolwa Wharf Precinct to be a place to experience a vibrant riverfront township enriched with culture and history (ACM21998).

Goolwa Wharf Precinct Activation Phases 1 and 2:

The Goolwa Wharf Precinct Activation project began with Phase 1 in July 2023, when an 11-week Registration of Interest (ROI) process was undertaken from 17 July 2023 to 29 September 2023, presenting twelve opportunities to the market, including the Customs House site. Phase 1 uncovered those businesses and community groups interested in 'doing business on the Wharf' (stakeholders). An 'open' approach was then progressed providing opportunity for all stakeholders and innovators to be involved.

At its meeting in November 2023, Council resolved the following tenancies as a result of Phase 1:

- Cittaslow Goolwa - Lot 1 Cadell Street
- Wharf Wine Bar - Signal Point Building 1
- Goolwa Visual Arts - Chart Room

At the same meeting, Council resolved to include Customs House in Phase 2 (C23487).

Phase 2 of the activation process ran through the first half of 2024 with a focus on attracting new leads and Registrations of Interests (ROI) for both the Wharf Shed (commercial portion) and the Customs House site.

It considered the connectivity of a tenancy mix that will contribute to the vibrancy and experiences of the Wharf, while supporting local interest, business and customer loyalty. This 'direct' approach drove a campaign to obtain further submissions of interest or solicit the type of operators and experiences required to 'fill the gaps' following the initial ROI. It was executed by external agent Savills Australia and was a targeted campaign for the business and investment community.

Following the Phase 2 campaign closure, the results were presented by Rob Williamson from Savills to Council in a workshop 9 September 2024. This workshop was then followed by a report to Council at its meeting 28 October 2024 which recommended proceeding with the sale of Customs House for the purpose of a hotel development.

At the October 2024 meeting, Council resolved to undertake community consultation, on the proposed sale of Customs House for the purpose of a hotel development (C24549).

It should be noted that as a result of Phase 2 ROI's, Council resolved at its meeting 16 December 2024 to endorse a 15 year lease to Imbiss on the Elbow in the northern portion of the Goolwa Wharf Shed,

Community Consultation - Customs House:

A community engagement campaign was subsequently developed, and consultation occurred between Thursday, 09 January 2025 and Friday, 14 February 2025. During the consultation period 585 responses were received. The outcomes of the community engagement were presented to Council in a workshop 10 March 2025 and subsequently received and noted at their meeting 17 March 2025 (C078/03/25), where the resolution also required a subsequent workshop be held by the end of April and a report presented to Council in May.

Service Reviews:

Concurrently during 2024 two (2) service reviews were commissioned to assess the functions and futures of the:

- Old Police Station - located on Goolwa Terrace, and provides a gallery / exhibition space known as the South Coast Regional Arts Centre (SCRAC)
- Old Post Office - located on Cadell Street, which currently houses the Goolwa Visitor Information Centre (GVIC)
- Signal Point Experience Centre (SPEC) - located on the Goolwa Wharf, features a gallery/exhibition space (1st floor) and the Yuntulun Ku:li-war permanent exhibition (Ground floor)

The service review, undertaken by an independent consultant, recommended the consolidation and rationalisation of the Council services in these buildings, which would lead to a one-business model approach and to co-locate into the Signal Point Experience Centre. A report recommending this was presented to Council at their meeting 16 September 2024, where it was resolved, for the purposes of community consultation, to relocate the Goolwa Visitor Information Centre and the South Coast Regional Arts Centre to the Signal Point Experience Centre (C24479).

A community engagement campaign was designed, and consultation occurred between Thursday, 09 January and Friday, 31 January 2025. During the consultation period 200 responses were received. The outcomes of the community engagement were presented to Council in a workshop 10 March 2025 and report presented to the 17 March 2025 meeting of Council, where Council resolved to hold a further workshop, with a subsequent report to be presented to Council which explored further opportunities for these buildings (C076/03/25).

Also within the Precinct are the Superintendent's Cottage and The Chart Room, both of which are currently leased to Alex FM and The Goolwa Visual Arts Group respectively. The Morgue is not currently the subject of a lease but has had an expression of interest submitted to occupy the building.

Discussion

Customs House

The outcomes of the community engagement on Customs House were received and noted by Council at its meeting held 17 March 2025 (C078/03/25), where a subsequent resolution called for a workshop in April 2025 and report in May 2025 to re-visit Council's objectives for Customs House.

Given the strong community feedback on the sale of Customs House and the Council resolution to further investigate its future, it is recommended that Council resolves not progress with the sale of Customs House and that Council retain it as a Council asset.

Wharf Precinct

In order to determine the most effective activation of the newly launched and revitalised Goolwa Wharf Precinct (the Precinct), it is essential that a holistic review of the Precinct is undertaken. Whilst it is acknowledged that this was done when the Goolwa Wharf Precinct Activation Campaign was conceived in 2023, the landscape of the Precinct has evolved since this time, therefore requiring a refreshed, holistic review capturing the current state and opportunities for the precinct.

Administration is currently developing a Service Review Framework (the Framework) to ensure a considered and consistent approach to reviewing Council's services and determining future direction/changes; the Framework is expected to be considered by Council at its July 2025 meeting. Recommendation 3 proposes withholding any decision for Customs House, the Old Police Station and the Old Post Office, until the Framework has been considered and adopted by Council.

It is recommended to pause and ensure Council progresses strategically on opportunities for this historic and significant Precinct. Critically, the Wharf Precinct's future success will depend on strong collaboration with key stakeholders (leveraging local talent and knowledge), and with the broader community.

By adopting this approach, it will ensure adequate time to move progressively, yet thoroughly, through a review process, ultimately determining how to bring each of the elements and opportunities of the Precinct together.

A holistic approach was discussed at a Council Member workshop on 28 April (C078/03/25), where key stakeholders from the community were invited to listen into the discussion. Several people attended who shared their views and spoke favourably towards Council taking a holistic approach in the Wharf Precinct moving forward.

It must be noted that should the recommendations be adopted, they will supersede all outstanding components of both C078/03/25 and C076/03/25 which relate to holding potential future workshops on specific buildings.

It is important to consider other existing tenancies and vacancies within the Precinct, to ensure stability during the review process. As it is expected that the current leases for both the Chart Room and the Superintendent's Cottage will expire prior to this holistic review being undertaken or completed, Administration intends to bring a report to a future meeting for Council to consider short term leases for the Chart Room and The Superintendents Cottage. A recent expression of interest has also been received to lease the currently vacant Morgue building, so it is timely and appropriate to consider this proposal within the same future report.

Financial Implications

In accordance with the Alexandrina Council's Adopted Budget / Long Term Financial Plan, the financial implications of adopting this recommendation are considered low as there is no allocation being requested.

Risk Implications

In accordance with Alexandrina Council's Risk Assessment Matrix, the risk of adopting this recommendation is considered low, as it is not at variance with the community sentiment captured during consultation, nor does it involve change to current services.

It is worth noting that there would be a medium to high reputational risk should Council not take the time to consider a holistic approach as well as not having a strong involvement from community stakeholders.

Attachments

Nil