

<b>Item No:</b>	13.4
<b>To:</b>	Council
<b>Date:</b>	25 August 2020
<b>General Manager and Division</b>	Barry Cant – General Manager, Urban & Community
<b>Subject:</b>	IMPLEMENTATION OF BURNSIDE CARBON OFFSET SCHEME (B-COS)
<b>Attachments:</b>	Nil
<b>Prev. Resolution:</b>	C12267 - 24/09/19 C12402 - 10/12/19

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### Officer's Recommendation

That Council:

1. Implements the Burnside Carbon Offset Scheme (B-COS) to offset carbon emissions from:
    - 1.1 The George Bolton Swimming Centre;
    - 1.2 The Regal Theatre; and
    - 1.3 Additional waste-to-landfill bins (only the waste-to-landfill bins that are provided in addition to the typical 3-bin system)
  2. Updated the Fees and Charges Register to include amended charges to take effect from mid-September 2020 for the George Bolton Swim Centre, Regal Theatre and additional waste-to-landfill bins issued to enable implementation of the B-COS, resulting in these facilities and service being carbon neutral.
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### Purpose

1. To provide Council with a description of a new innovative Burnside Carbon Offset Scheme (B-COS) that will offset a portion of Council's greenhouse gas emissions through tree planting.

### Strategic Plan

2. The following Strategic Plan provisions are relevant:

*"Respond to the challenges of climate change and reduce our carbon footprint"*

*"Build capacity and raise awareness of individual responsibility to maintain a sustainable environment"*

*"An empowered Council and Administration that is visionary and innovative in meeting community needs"*

### Communications/Consultation

3. The following communications and consultation have been undertaken:

- 3.1. Discussions with internal staff, including facility managers and the Executive team;
- 3.2. Consultation with an external contractor to confirm calculations; and
- 3.3. Discussions with external service providers regarding the costs and the potential for implementation of the scheme.

### **Statutory**

4. There are no statutory implications or requirements associated with this recommendation.

### **Policy**

5. The *Climate Change Policy* is relevant to this matter.

### **Risk Assessment**

6. The following risks have been identified:
  - 6.1. As this initiative involves the planting of trees, there is a risk that some trees will be affected by future bushfires. The risk of fire can be managed in two ways in carbon plantings: first, the quantity of trees planted includes a buffer for losses; second, multiple sites will be utilised over time.

### **CEO Performance Indicators**

7. Activate the community to work in partnership with Council to achieve its environmental goals; and
8. Develop a Roadmap for the City of Burnside with regard to environmental sustainability and climate change

### **Finance**

9. The following financial issues have been identified with respect to this proposal:
  - 9.1. The scheme is designed to be ongoing and cost-neutral, subject to the relevant fees and charges being adjusted accordingly to provide for the offset.
  - 9.2. If Council were **not** to increase fees and charges to incorporate this initiative, it is estimated that it would cost Council an estimated \$15k in 2020/21. In that instance, savings would need to be sought from existing budgets to offset this cost, and the budget adjusted as part of the regular quarterly budget review process as required.
  - 9.3. Alternatively, Council could wait until fees and charges are adjusted for the 2021/22 financial year and commence the initiative in 10 months-time.
  - 9.4. However, given its climate change adaption and mitigation efforts and in order to demonstrate leadership in this area, it is recommended that Council endorses the

scheme for implementation in 2020/21, and adjust the fees and charges accordingly, thus not incurring significant costs.

## Discussion

### *Background*

10. In September 2019, Council declared a Climate Emergency (C12267), which included the statement, *“That Council recognise the need to give climate mitigation and adaptation a greater emphasis in decisions and operations.”*
11. During December 2019, Council endorsed the Environmental Sustainability Strategy (C12402), including a priority for, *“Strategic and cost-effective reduction of Council’s carbon footprint.”*
12. This report proposes an innovative initiative to offset the carbon emissions of three Council services through planting trees.
13. This initiative is one of many (either in progress or planned) that align with Council’s Climate Emergency position and Environmental Sustainability strategy. A summary of Council’s current position, related actions and proposals will be presented in a Report in September, forming the annual reporting required by resolution.

### *B-COS: how it would work*

14. The carbon emissions of three Council services have been calculated. For example, the Swimming Centre was responsible for around 500 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in 2019/20 through energy use.
15. With an average charge of ten cents per visit by swimming centre users, the greenhouse gas emissions from the pool facility could be offset through tree planting. The contribution per pool visitor is negligible, while the overall benefits are great.
16. Similarly, an average charge of ten cents per visit by users of the Regal Theatre could offset the greenhouse gas emissions of the theatre through tree planting.
17. Additional waste-to-landfill bins are another Council service that leads to greenhouse gas emissions. These bins are provided to some households upon request in addition to the typical 3-bin system (applications for additional waste bins must be approved by Council in line with the Kerbside Waste Management Policy).
18. An additional annual charge of \$13 per additional waste-to-landfill bin could offset the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the waste collected in the bin. This charge is higher than the contributions proposed for the theatre and pool users, reflecting the emissions associated with the bins and that the costs are not shared across many users (as is the case for the pool and the theatre). The charge on additional bins is also a disincentive to purchase an additional bin (i.e. residents may prefer to reduce waste production instead of paying for an additional bin, which would be a positive outcome). It is not recommended to backdate any additional charges – any new bins ordered from September 2020 will attract the new charge. There is also no ability to opt out when visiting the Regal or Pool.
19. A summary of the proposed charges, the number of trees that would be planted, and the greenhouse gas emissions that could be offset is provided in the table below.

**Indicative contributions from the Burnside Carbon Offset Scheme**

Council Service	Contribution to the offset scheme	Annual funds raised	Number of trees planted	Tonnes of carbon offset	Calculation notes
George Bolton Swimming Centre	10 cents /visit	\$11,100	2,498	500	Based on 111,000 pool visits per annum.
Regal Theatre	10 cents /ticket	\$4,110	925	185	Based on 41,100 Regal visits per annum.
Additional bins	\$13 /bin	\$390	88	18	Based on 30 additional landfill bins.
<b>ANNUAL TOTALS</b>		<b>\$15,600</b>	<b>3,510</b>	<b>702</b>	

20. NB – The proposed 10 cents per visit is an average charge each time a customer visits the Centre. The cost of entry, when updated, will need to reflect this. For example a single entry price at the Regal will increase by a minimum of 10 cents to incorporate this offset, whereas a large group booking may increase by \$100 to reflect the nature of the booking. This will be similar at the Swimming Centre for season passes and swim classes etc.
21. When updated, the fees and charges will be raised at a minimum by the amounts required to offset this initiative, however, will be rounded up, where necessary, to ensure that entry fees increase by appropriate amounts for customers and staff, as small incremental changes can make cash transactions problematic.
22. This initiative will provide a substantial offset of greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, with trees planted to make the swimming centre and theatre carbon neutral, visitors will know and appreciate that they are having a positive environmental impact.
23. The Burnside Carbon Offset Scheme is important and timely for several reasons, including:
- 23.1. Increasing community concerns about climate change; and
- 23.2. Current community concerns about tree and habitat loss during recent bushfires.
24. This initiative is a responsible and positive way for the City of Burnside to offset carbon emissions and contribute to habitat creation in South Australia.
25. The implementation of B-COS will signal to the community that Council is acting on climate change and making positive contributions to the planting of trees and creation of habitat in South Australia.
26. The tonnes of carbon offset are calculated over the life of the trees that would be planted under this scheme. Thus, the planting would occur at sites where an agreement (e.g. a Heritage Agreement) is in place to ensure long-term protection of the trees.
27. The scheme would fund a new batch of trees to be planted each year (e.g. 3,500 trees per year). The number of trees planted each year would change over time, based on greenhouse gas emissions (further described below).

28. While the primary purpose of the tree planting would be to offset greenhouse gas emissions, many additional benefits would be realised, including the creation of habitat for wildlife, increase in canopy and the generation of jobs in South Australia.

*B-COS: Where could the trees be planted?*

29. Trees funded by B-COS will be planted in South Australia and will benefit residents by removing carbon from the atmosphere. Once planted, a map of the tree planting locations will be made available. There is limited public space available in the City of Burnside, and Council already has a program to ensure that these locations are filled through its annual tree planting program and Canopy Action Plan. Therefore, this initiative will be in addition to this program providing greater overall benefit.
30. The tree planting should be outsourced to a local contractor. This approach will ensure that internal staff capacity is not challenged and that tree plantings are managed appropriately (Council staff do not have the capacity to plant these additional trees). There are limited contractors operating in this space, however, Council already has a working relationship with some of these groups and there is confidence that a suitable community partner can be sourced through the procurement process to get an excellent environmental outcome.
31. Direct seeding is the most cost-effective way to plant the quantity of trees required to offset the greenhouse gas emissions of Council services. The trees cannot be planted on Council land because there is not any space for the direct seeding of thousands of trees per annum within the Council.
32. While no specific location has been sourced, preliminary investigations indicate that locations close to Adelaide, such as in the Adelaide Hills are available. Once identified and agreed with the contracted partner, the locations can be advertised to ensure the plantings are tangible.
33. If implemented, a site will be sourced in time for the 2020/21 planting season (or 2021-22 if the initiative is endorsed for implementation in that year through a suitable motion).

*B-COS: How can the funds be raised?*

34. The funds for the B-COS can be raised through charges to users of the associated venues and services. This method to raise the funds was conceived so that there would be no ongoing financial burden on Council.
35. If Council proceed in accordance with the Officer's Recommendation, the ongoing cost of the scheme can be managed through an initial revision of Council fees and charges and then ongoing through the typical annual review and budget process.
36. The swimming centre and theatre charges are complex for two reasons:
  - 36.1. Ticket prices are not typically raised every year, as small incremental changes can make cash transactions problematic. However, the pool and theatre charges can be revised from mid-September (estimated time of the Swimming Centre season commencing) with the increase set at a minimum to offset the cost of this initiative (rounded up to avoid awkward transaction amounts where required).
  - 36.2. Further, both venues have a range of tickets (e.g. multi-visit passes, swimming classes and event bookings). All ticket prices can be considered as part of the upcoming reviews to ensure that the funds required for B-COS are raised and adequately covered.

37. If implemented, the B-COS scheme would be reviewed and adjusted annually for two reasons:
- 37.1. The greenhouse gas emissions of the venues and services will change over time. For example, if Council invests in solar power generation at the swimming centre or the theatre, the emissions will reduce. If emissions are reduced, the contribution to tree planting can also be reduced.
- 37.2. New opportunities may become apparent once further work on Council's carbon footprint has been completed. For example, a case may be made in the future to include additional Council facilities or services within the scheme.

*B-COS: high-level overview of the proposal*

38. The City of Burnside could fund the planting of over 3,500 trees per annum to offset carbon emissions, in addition to its existing tree planting and canopy efforts.
39. The trees planted each year would offset around 700 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, enabling the George Bolton Swimming Centre and Regal Theatre to become carbon neutral.
40. The scheme can be funded through negligible increases of user charges at the pool and theatre, plus a charge on additional bin services.

*Conclusion*

41. The B-COS has been developed as an innovative low-cost, high-impact action following Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and the release of Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
42. It is recommended that B-COS be implemented immediately to demonstrate leadership and take action to mitigate against climate change.
43. The proposal is designed to be cost neutral and does not require the allocation of additional Council resources, on the basis that fees and charges are adjusted accordingly.
44. The B-COS will have additional benefits, including creation of habitat for wildlife and the generation of jobs in South Australia.