

Public Question Time – answers to questions taken on notice*

Questions from James Woollett:

- Q1. Port Phillip Library Service Summary Table – was this the information on which the Councillors based their decision to remove the books from the Middle Park Library?

Response:

The data presented at the public meeting on 13 February was mainly intended for information purposes to help contextualise the Middle Park Branch in terms of the library service as a whole, and was in response to some questions from members of the public. Council did not make their initial decision based on this information alone.

- Q2. Does the library service keep a record of the number of days the Middle Park Library has been forced to close?

Response:

The library keeps track of reasonably recent closures at the Middle park branch.

- Q3. How many days in the last ten years has the Middle Park Library been forced to close due to repairs, flood damage, etc?

Response:

We don't have records going back as far as ten years ago. Closures in recent years for any significant period of time have been mainly in relation to building maintenance or repair work and staff/public safety. The branch was closed for August in 2015 for extensive building repair work. The branch was also closed for the same reason for the month of January 2017.

- Q4. At a time when councils in Victoria are under tight budgetary constraints, why was it considered necessary to hire an external community consultation consultant? Why was a Brisbane-based consultant, with no office in Melbourne, chosen to handle this project for a little library in Middle Park?

Response:

The original engagement process was developed in line with the recommendation adopted in the 15 November Council Meeting, to gather feedback to help revitalise the Middle Park Library. In addition to the questions included in the original survey hosted on our Have Your Say page, there was also provision for respondents to make a general

comment on what they would like to see happen at Middle Park. There was a high level of local and community interest in this project, and at the Council Meeting on 13 December 2017, a Notice of Motion was endorsed to extend this consultation period to mid-February, and to hold a public meeting during this period to complement the survey that closed on 17 December 2018.

Due to the community's high interest in this project, the need for in-depth review and synthesis of all feedback including all submissions, the need to provide an independent analysis of the survey responses, and the need to deliver a public meeting to capture community feedback for incorporation into the final report within a relatively short period of time, officers decided it would be appropriate to engage an independent community engagement firm with expertise and experience in data analysis and reporting.

Council engaged JTA Australia to complete this work after a competitive Request for Quote Process in accordance with our Procurement Policy. The Procurement Policy has been developed in accordance with Section 186A of the Local Government Act 1989. A number of consultancy firms submitted proposals for this engagement work. JTA were selected as the preferred supplier due to cost, their skills, knowledge and experience in complex community engagement exercises, as well as their demonstrated understanding and appreciation of the community's interest in this topic.

Q5. Did the council look at any of the large number of Melbourne-based community engagement consultants?

Response:

In total, six experienced community engagement firms participated in the Request for Quote process, including some Melbourne-based firms.

Q6. When the total budget for this project was \$47,000 including communications, isn't it a profligate use of rate-payer's money to be providing return flights and accommodation for a Brisbane-based consultant, her two assistants for a two hour public meeting about a little library in Middle Park?

Response:

Council did not pay for any flights or accommodation. JTA's cost proposal for this engagement work covered data review and analysis, facilitate and record feedback from the public meeting, and completion of a comprehensive Community Engagement Summary Report for Council to review. Their proposal did not include any expectation that Council would cover cost of flights, accommodation or other incidentals.

***Note: answers to any questions in Councillor Question Time which were answered at the meeting are included in the minutes of that meeting.**