

Question time for the council meeting of 10 December 2018

Six questions were submitted. The questions and answers are detailed below:

Question one

At the time of voting on the tender for the 5-year pool management contract, was this council aware that lane-hire fees had not being charged to regular user groups under previous pool management?

Was it also aware, at the time of awarding the new contract, that Aligned Leisure was under the impression - as it has stated on record - that lane-hire fees had always been enforced, when in actual fact they had not?

Answer one

Thank you for your question to the council meeting of 10 December regarding the Aligned Leisure contract.

The council understood at the time of the awarding the contract to Aligned Leisure that pool lane hire fees were being charged at the Wodonga facilities.

A schedule of fees and charges were part of the tender documents.

The council has a role in ensuring the community's interest and maintaining the use of community facilities for the benefit of all users. It remains the council's position that any user group that requires exclusive use of part or all of any community facility enter into an agreement with financial terms that grants them that dedicated space.

Question two

The management of the public pools in Albury and Wodonga was awarded to Aligned Leisure as a joint decision under the Two Cities One Community banner. At their last meeting Albury Council agreed to enter discussions with Aligned Leisure regarding the removal of lane hire fees for regular pool user groups. In the interest of consistency across all the public pools on the border will the Wodonga Council also commit to following Albury Councils lead on this issue?

Answer two

Thank you for your question to the council meeting of 10 December regarding Albury Council's resolution on November 26, 2018, regarding investigations into pool lane hire fees.

While the management of the public pools in Albury and Wodonga was awarded as a joint tender, the two cities each hold their own contract with Aligned Leisure.

Under the Wodonga Council contract, any variation to fees and charges needs to be presented to the council through the contract manager, who is the council officer with the delegated authority.

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Question three

Did Wodonga Council know and did Wodonga City Councillors realize when they awarded the contract to Aligned Leisure that fees and charges which had not been previously levied on the main user groups of the pools (swimming and water polo clubs) were to be implemented?

What steps and modelling or the hiring of professional consultants was carried out by Wodonga Council to ensure any changes to pricing regimes would not have a detrimental impact on the participation levels of the swimming pool users?

Answer three

Thank you for your question to the council meeting of 10 December regarding the Aligned Leisure contract.

The council understood at the time of the awarding of the contract to Aligned Leisure that pool lane hire fees were being charged to all user groups.

The council has a role in ensuring the community's interest and maintaining the use of community facilities for the benefit of all users. It remains the council's position that any user group that requires exclusive use of part or all of any community facility enter into an agreement with financial terms that grants them that dedicated space.

Wodonga Council did not undertake modelling or hire professional consultants regarding pricing regimes and impact on participation levels, as it was understood by council that these charges were already in place.

Question four

Given the issues raised to the Albury City Council, has the council satisfied themselves as to the contractor of the pool facilities (Aligned Leisure) compliance with Royal Life Saving guidelines when establishing life saver numbers?

Does the Council endorse Aligned Leisure invoicing clubs (as it has for the Albury Swim Club) for life saving services and as such potentially transferring liability for any injury / death onto unpaid volunteer club officials for life saving services they have no ability to control, monitor, supervise or set?

Answer four

Thank you for your question to the council meeting of 10 December regarding pool management and life saving services.

The council is satisfied with Aligned Leisure's approach to the provision of lifeguards at its facilities.

Aligned Leisure have determined lifeguard numbers per facility for up to 1000 swimmers/spectators based on:

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- The minimum requirements of the Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations which points to a 1:100 ratio but importantly ensures the operator has completed a risk assessment to determine all risks associated within an individual facility including, but not limited to, supervision line of sight, glare, water clarity and age demographic; and,
- The number of staff required to evacuate a facility based on the number of patrons within the facility.

Lifeguards are employed, rostered and fall under the responsibility of the contractor.

The contract mandates that agreements be in place for any user group hiring the facility and these set out the obligations of all parties in regards to insurance, safety and facility use.

Question five

What procedures are being carried out by Wodonga Council to monitor the performance of contractor Aligned Leisure?

What time frame is in place for Aligned Leisure to commence their "comprehensive suite of innovative initiatives which will provide unique programming solutions" as per their tender submission?

Answer five

Thank you for your question to the council meeting of 10 December regarding Aligned Leisure.

As set out in the contract, the council conducts regular management meetings with Aligned Leisure to review operations and receives regular reports on set KPIs, business and marketing plan outcomes, incident and maintenance reporting.

Aligned Leisure have presented to the council regarding a suite of community programs and initiatives they will undertake in Albury-Wodonga over the five years of the contract. These programs include leadership, education, health initiatives in schools and the supported access program. The programs were at the instigation of Aligned Leisure. Some of the programs are already under way with further programs to kick off in the new year. The roll out is not part of the contract or facility management.

Question six

Why is it that Wodonga Council wants Pool User Groups to pay twice (once to enter the facility and again for lane-hire) when it does not happen to any other user groups in the Twin Cities?

Did this Council research the implementation of the lane hire charges in other regions, like Wangaratta and Wagga (who do not charge the regular users twice), before making its decision to do so in Albury-Wodonga?

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Answer six

Thank you for your question to the council meeting of 10 December regarding lane hire fees.

Sport clubs and community groups across the city pay for the use of the community's facilities whether it be through leases, licence agreements or hiring fees.

Everyone who comes to the aquatic facilities pays an entry fee. However, user groups that require exclusive use of part of the facility pay a fee to grant them that private use. Such usage excludes community members of the public using parts of the pool who have also paid an entry fee.

The council understood at the time of the awarding of the contract to Aligned Leisure that pool lane hire fees were being charged to all user groups.