

**MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING OF NEW ENGLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
HELD IN COUNCIL'S RUSDEN STREET OFFICE ON 15th AUGUST 2024**



NEW ENGLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
ABN 35 514 070 354

**MINUTES OF THE
ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL**

Held on

Thursday 15th August 2024

at 3pm

in

NEWA Meeting Room 2/129 Rusden Street Armidale

**Present:- Interim Administrator John Rayner (Chair)
Renee Irvine – Acting General Manager**

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MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL

PRESENT: Interim Administrator – John Rayner
Renee Irvine – Acting General Manager

APOLOGIES: None

DECLARATION OF INTEREST: None

MATTERS OF URGENCY: None

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE NEW ENGLAND
COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON FRIDAY 31 MAY 2024**

RESOLVED 31/24

The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the New England County Council held on the 31st May 2024 are taken as a true and accurate report.

Moved – Administrator John Rayner

Carried

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE
NEW ENGLAND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON 31 MAY 2024**

None

**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE NEW ENGLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
HELD ON TUESDAY 21 JUNE 2024**

RESOLVED 32/24

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the New England County Council held on the 21 June 2024 are taken as a true and accurate report.

Moved – Administrator John Rayner

Carried

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**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE NEW
ENGLAND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON 21 JUNE 2024**

None

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE NEW ENGLAND
COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY, 25 JULY 2024**

RESOLVED 33/24

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the New England County Council held on the 25 July 2024 are taken as a true and accurate report.

Moved – Administrator John Rayner

Carried

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE
NEW ENGLAND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON 25 JULY 2024**

None

INTERIM ADMINISTRATORS MINUTE – AUGUST

This is the final Minute of the three-month term following the suspension of the Councillors of the New England County Council.

Report to Minister for Local Government

A requirement of the Interim Administrator is to report to the Minister for Local Government so that the Minister can take a decision on the immediate future of the New England County Council.

The Executive Summary of that report follows.

“The Minister for Local Government suspended the Board of the New England County Council (NECC) for a period of three months from 17th May 2024 and appointed John Rayner as Interim Administrator.

Discussions with various parties and viewing the Council Meetings held in February, April and May confirmed the Minister's concerns outlined in the Notice of Intention to Suspend.

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Overall, the Council was dysfunctional and lacked the required governance and financial management standards.

On top of the many other serious failures in governance and financial management, it was the pursuit of the \$2million Office/Depot project that led to the financial collapse of NECC.

Constituent Councils have been extremely supportive and have committed further funds in their 2024/25 Budgets to meet NECC's financial obligations.

The four Councils, Glen Innes Severn, Armidale Regional, Uralla and Walcha Councils have each unanimously resolved that NECC be dissolved and a new service delivery model be developed. The Councils support the extension of the Interim Administrator's term for a further three months from 17th August 2024. The Council's target date to dissolve NECC and commence a new service delivery model is November 2023.

The Interim Administrator agrees with the decisions of the Councils and will support the endeavours to move to a new service delivery model.

It is recognised that a number of organisations and individuals will need to consider and support the proposal put forward including

- Constituent Councils,
- Department of Primary Industries
- Office of Local Government
- Minister for Agriculture
- United Services Union
- Minister for Local Government.

and the process under Local Government Act will be followed.

As the NECC operation is now substantially funded by the Constituent Councils and considering the timing of the Council elections the November deadline for dissolving NECC is supported. It is appreciated that achieving the deadline is ambitious but necessary.”

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Constituent Councils

As reported earlier the four constituent Councils have each unanimously resolved that NECC be dissolved and a new service model be developed, to be in place by November 2024.

A representative from the Office of Local Government has advised that there is a three-month lead time from receipt of a proposal to dissolve until proclamation.

Councils will also need to decide on the preferred model so it is expected that NECC could be in place until February 2025.

Financial

The ongoing financial support being provided by the constituent Councils is very much appreciated.

It is anticipated that the value and potential sale of the new Depot/Office facility will repay the additional contributions made by the four Councils.

The majority of NECC outstanding debts will be settled this month.

The additional contributions will enable all NECC outstanding debts to be settled this month and enables this Council to manage its cash flows and properly account for expenditure from grants.

An updated cash flow analysis, to November 2024, will be discussed with member Councils in the coming days. That analysis shows that the financial position goes negative in mid-September and remains that way until the end of November 2024

Work is underway to finalise the 2023/24 Financial Statements. An external contractor has been engaged to prepare the Statements for Audit.

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee

The first meeting of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee was held on 25th July 2024.

The independent members of the committee addressed each issue raised in the Management letter from the Audit Office NSW enabling a response to be made to the auditor.

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Review of Operations and consideration of future operating models.

The member Councils are seeking an understanding of the way NECC operates, financial arrangements and whether they are getting value for money.

The Councils are also seeking an independent opinion on the best operating model for the future.

Mr Paul Quealey, Lambourne partners has been engaged by the Councils to undertake the review with a completion date mid-September 2024.

Depot/Office Facility

The recently completed Depot/Office facility at 21 Waller Avenue Armidale is the NECC asset which provides security for the additional contributions being made by constituent Councils.

It is proposed to put the property on the market but not sold without consultation with the constituent Councils.

RESOLVED 34/24

1. That the Minute be received and noted.
2. That the property 21 Waller Avenue Armidale be listed for sale with First National Real Estate Armidale but not sold until consultation with constituent Councils occurs and this council makes a further decision.
3. The Acting General Manager be authorized to execute any documentation associated with the listing.

Note: The building is only being listed at this time and won't be sold without further consultation with the 4 Constituent Councils

Moved – John Rayner Interim Manager

Carried

GENERAL MANAGERS REPORT

RESOLVED 35/24

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Motion: - The Acting General Manager will be delegated authority under the document that is attached to the Meeting Agenda – Delegation of Authority

Moved:- John Rayner Interim Administrator

Carried

WEEDS ACTION PROGRAM REPORT

RESOLVED 36/24

That the Weeds Action Plan (WAP) Report, summarising activities and outcomes to date, including the 2023-2024 Weeds Action Program, be received and noted.

Moved:- John Rayner Interim Administrator

Carried

INVESTMENT REPORT

At the time of this report, NEWA has no funds invested.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other Business

NEXT MEETING – To be Advised

MEETING CLOSE: 3.13pm

