
**MM46/24 1 DEVLIN STREET, RYDE - MOVING FORWARD WITH
RYDE'S CIVIC CENTRE - Mayor, Councillor Trenton Brown**
File Number: CLM/24/1/1/8 - BP24/994

BACKGROUND

After over a decade of inaction, mismanagement, and missed opportunities by previous Councils, it is time to deliver on the long-overdue vision for a civic centre at 1 Devlin Street. This project is crucial for our community, and I am committed to ensuring it finally moves forward.

Throughout 2024, I engaged with the community through various channels, including a series in the *TWT* column, outlining the historical decisions and challenges that led to the “hole in the ground” at 1 Devlin Street. As Mayor, I also initiated a robust community conversation about the future of our Civic Centre, presenting a vision that reflects the aspirations of Ryde residents.

In the September Local Government elections, the community expressed its trust in my leadership and the Liberal team, giving us a strong mandate to deliver this essential project. Our commitment to economic discipline and capability to see projects through resonated with the people of Ryde.

However, I am saddened that a minority within this Council appears more focused on political gamesmanship than on delivering what is best for our community. Some Councillors have sought to block, delay, and frustrate progress on this matter prioritising personal agendas over the clear mandate given to this Council by our community.

Despite these challenges, I am pleased to report that at last Tuesday’s meeting, the Council resolved to proceed with an Expression of Interest (EOI) campaign. This campaign will invite suitably qualified companies to propose long-term leasehold arrangements for the 1 Devlin Street site while retaining the option of Council ownership. The process will also allow us to test other innovative ideas from the market. This approach balances fiscal responsibility, community consultation, and the need to move forward decisively.

Unfortunately, some Councillors continue to undermine progress by lodging a rescission motion to delay this decision by several months. Such tactics are a disservice to the residents of Ryde, who have made it clear they want action, not delay. Deliberate stalling like this sends the wrong message to our community and staff, undermining confidence in the Council’s ability to lead effectively.

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Alarming, during discussions on this matter, one Councillor proposed amendments that could expose Council to significant legal and financial risks. Their suggestion to present papers with extensive redactions on commercial-in-confidence matters shows a lack of understanding of governance principles. This is a stark reminder of why Councillors must engage in proper financial management training to avoid such amateur mistakes.

I am also concerned by the disengagement of some Councillors who fail to attend workshops and site familiarisation tours, yet later claim they lack sufficient information. This behaviour not only hampers their ability to make informed decisions but also delays progress on critical issues like the Civic Centre.

The time for political games is over. The community expects and deserves a Civic Centre they can be proud of, and I am committed to delivering it. I call on all Councillors to work collaboratively, put politics aside, and honour the mandate given to this Council. Let us focus on building a Civic Centre that will serve Ryde for generations to come.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:-

- Notes the Mayor was elected with an overwhelming mandate from the community to deliver on the commitments made during the election campaign, particularly resolving the future of the 1 Devlin Street site in the best interests of the community.
- Continues to ensure maximum transparency and engagement by sharing detailed information about the 1 Devlin Street proposal through all available media channels and committing to keeping local residents fully informed. This will include inclusion of a Mayor's message in the community newsletter in April and investigating either a letter with the rates notice or a letterbox drop to all properties, providing comprehensive details of the proposal. The associated costs will be funded as part of the 1 Devlin Street communications project.
- Calls upon all Councillors to collaborate constructively, setting aside political differences to prioritise the community's interests and achieve the shared goal of delivering a Ryde Town Hall during this term of office.
- Notes with disappointment that some Councillors who sought to overturn the resolution regarding 1 Devlin Street failed to attend the Councillor workshop briefing session or the on-site inspection of the Devlin Street/Blaxland Road complex during the Councillors' induction program, demonstrating a lack of engagement in this critical project.

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ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments for this report.

Report Prepared By:

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Mayor