



Hon David Templeman MLA
Minister for Local Government; Heritage; Culture and the Arts

Our Ref: 66-03709

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Mr Swinbourn

Thank you for your correspondence dated 30 November 2017 requesting my comments on Petition No 026 – Proposed inquiry into Town of Victoria Park (the Town).

The petitioners have provided limited detail of specific issues and decisions of the Town to justify their request for an inquiry; however, the petition raises five areas of concern:

- For the three years 2015-16 to 2017-18, the Town's budgeted rate revenue increased by 12.8 per cent; an average of 4.3 per cent per year. Comprehensive information related to each budget, including details of expenditure, is available on the Town's website. Current legislation does not place a limit on rate increases that can be levied by local governments.
- Planning processes around development applications, including consultation requirements, come under the *Planning and Development Act 2005*, the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Planning.
- The petitioners express the view that Town decisions are made that are not based on an accurate reporting of community views; however, no examples are provided.
- Section 5.42 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) provides for a local government council to delegate a broad range of its powers to the Chief Executive Officer.
- The petitioners express the view that the decision-making processes of the Town lack transparency; however, no examples are provided.

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (the Department) advises that a small number of concerns were raised early in 2017 by residents of Lathlain regarding the development of Lathlain Park by the Town and the West Coast Eagles, claiming that the Town had not followed prescribed processes. It was determined, however, that the Town had fulfilled its obligations and was not in breach of the Act.

Again, a small number of concerns were raised by residents concerning the rate increases; however, the Town had not breached any legislation by increasing the rates.

A number of proforma complaints were received by the Department in relation to election donations from the Mayor, Trevor Vaughan. These complaints were a result of promotion via social media and not an individual lodging a complaint. As all complaints were identical, the Department is investigating these as a single complaint.

No other issues related to the Town's processes or decisions have recently been raised with the Department.

The Act creates local governments as autonomous bodies, able to make decisions believed to be in the best interests of the community. Not all such council decisions are supported by all members of the community. As the Minister for Local Government, I do not have the authority to intervene in lawful council processes or decisions.

The Town's website provides comprehensive information related to consultation and engagement with the residents and ratepayers of the Town, including the process culminating in the recent adoption of a new Strategic Community Plan 2017–2032.

I thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter and trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



HON DAVID TEMPLEMAN MLA
**MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT;
HERITAGE; CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

- 4 JAN 2018