

4.3 GARDINERS CREEK REGIONAL COLLABORATION FUNDING REQUEST

Responsible Director: Jarrod Doake

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. *Acknowledges the strategic role for Council as member of the Gardiners Creek Regional Collaboration in the improvement of the local amenity of the Gardiners Creek Catchment for the benefit of community and the environment.*
2. *Notes the requirement for the continuation of a Lead role to facilitate and coordinate functions of the Collaboration over the next two years.*
3. *Authorises the Manager Sustainable Monash to contribute to the host Council up to \$20,000 in each of the 2023-24 and 2024-25 years towards the costs of the Lead role and minor projects as appropriate.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Council for Monash to contribute funds towards the operational costs of the Gardiners Creek Regional Collaboration. Monash signed a MOU in January this year to become an official member of the Collaboration.

That Council:

1. *Acknowledges the strategic role for Council as a member of the Gardiners Creek Regional Collaboration in the improvement of the local amenity of the Gardiners Creek Catchment for the benefit of community and the environment.*
2. *Endorses Council's role in the Gardiners Creek Regional Collaboration by executing the Memorandum of Understanding and noting the Terms of Reference.*
3. *Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer to sign the Memorandum of Understanding to formalise the membership over its' three-year term.*

BACKGROUND

The Gardiners Creek (Kooyongkoot) Regional Collaboration (Collaboration) includes up to 23 participating organisations which have come together to create a vision for Kooyongkoot Catchment and its future.

Gardiners Creek (Kooyongkoot) is an urban waterway originating near Blackburn and flowing through Burwood and Malvern East before following the Monash Freeway to

the Yarra River (Birrarrung). It plays an important role in providing open space, offering highly valued active and passive recreational opportunities as well as water and biodiversity values.

Current membership to the Collaboration includes City of Boroondara, City of Monash, City of Stonnington and City of Whitehorse Councils, along with Traditional Owners, Yarra Valley Water, Melbourne Water, and the Kooyongkoot Alliance. It also includes various sporting associations and community organisations, representing users (football, golf, cyclists, etc) of the catchment and those interested in its preservation and protection.

In areas where Gardiners Creek flows through Monash, much of the creek is fenced, concrete lined and limited to a bike trail, but there are a few linked reserves (such as Ashwood-Jingella and North Gardiners Reserve), bushland reserves and a wetland. However, the wider catchment includes Scotchmans Creek and Damper Creek Conservation reserves and surrounding areas.

The formation of the Collaboration was initiated by City of Stonnington, who adopted their masterplan for Gardiners Creek in September 2020, with the intention to develop a shared vision for the wider catchment.

[www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/About/Corporate-documents/Strategies-and-plans/Gardiners-Creek\[1\]KooyongKoot-Masterplan](http://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/About/Corporate-documents/Strategies-and-plans/Gardiners-Creek[1]KooyongKoot-Masterplan)

The Collaboration's Vision for Gardiners' Creek KooyongKoot is:

"KooyongKoot and its catchment is protected, valued and loved, supporting diverse uses and thriving biodiversity. As custodians of our natural environment, Traditional Owners play a key role in its management. Community and all stakeholders are working together to heal, strengthen and ensure the resilience of KooyongKoot and its catchment."

DISCUSSION

After the signing of the MOU by partners, an official launch of the Collaboration was held in April 2023 at Bennettswood Reserve in Whitehorse. It was attended by representatives from all partners, including many Councillors and MPs.

Over the last 12-14 months, five forums have been undertaken by the Collaboration members to codesign the vision; determine the preferred governance approach and clarify priorities and projects. The facilitator for the program (Collaboration Lead) was originally hosted at Stonnington to coordinate the forums and the Collaboration but is now being hosted by Boroondara from July 2022 until 30 June 2023.

The steering group have recently determined that to continue the good work of the Collaboration and commence strategic planning and project development it is vital that the Collaboration Lead role is continued for at least another two years. Stonnington, again will host the Lead from 1 July 2023. Up until now, the costs incurred to pay for the Lead, along with incidentals has been met by the host Council. It is considered appropriate that contributions are sought from other Councils, Melbourne Water and other partners for this purpose. To that effect, a letter has been sent from Boroondara

(current host) seeking contributions for the 2023-24 year. It is expected that costs for the Lead role, once shared will amount to approximately \$13,000 per year. Further contributions throughout the year for minor project work (briefs, scoping etc) is also sought. This work will assist to prepare briefs for strategic planning which is hoped will attract significant grant funding for the Collaboration.

Whilst Monash is not bound to contribute funds towards the Collaboration, a request has been made by the host Council for contributions for the 2023-24 year. A similar amount is expected for 2024-25. It is considered appropriate for Monash to contribute a modest amount, up to \$20,000, towards the Collaboration. Other Councils and Melbourne Water have indicated a similar contribution.

POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Membership to the Collaboration aligns with the following priorities of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-2026:

- Priority 2 Urban Ecology
- Priority 5 Integrated water Management
- Priority 6 Partnership and Leadership

The MOU does not bind Monash to any financial contributions.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Working with the members of the Collaboration may provide opportunities to improve the Gardiners Creek catchment that would not be achieved by working independently. The focus is improving this asset for the benefit of the community and the environment across the whole catchment and to collaborate with other municipalities and key user stakeholders.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

Improvement of a local shared open space for the benefit of the community would be in line with the broad principles of the International Human Rights and Social Justice Charter.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no formal commitment to provide funds to the Collaboration or lead body as a result of entering the MOU and the MOU is non-binding.

This report recommends a contribution of up to \$20,000 per year in 2023-24 and 2024-25, which can be sourced from the Sustainability Strategy operating budget.

CONCLUSION

That Council acknowledges Monash Council's role in the Gardiners Creek Collaboration and authorises a contribution of up to \$20,000 per year over the next two years towards the operating costs of the Collaboration, to be paid to the host Council as appropriate.