5.1 PROJECT TO REVIEW VEGETATION ACROSS THE MUNICIPALITY AND IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT CONTROL
(TP121:BG:HM)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the abandonment of Amendment C115 Council determined to investigate the scope and costing of additional work to determine vegetation values (with expert input). This includes a review of planning policies as part of an integrated approach towards vegetation protection and management under the Monash Planning Scheme.

This report outlines the scope and estimated cost of the strategic work that would be required to undertake a comprehensive review.

Reason for Consideration: Strategy policy setting.
Recommendation:- That Council endorses the scope of the work outlined and considers the project as part of the 2014/2015 budget.

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<th>RESPONSIBLE DIRECTOR</th>
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<tr>
<td>RESPONSIBLE MANAGER</td>
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<td>BRIAN GOYEN</td>
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<td>WARDS</td>
<td>MOUNT WAVERLEY, MULGRAVE AND GLEN WAVERLEY WARDS</td>
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<td>EXISTING OVERLAY</td>
<td>VEGETATION PROTECTION OVERLAY</td>
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LOCALITY PLAN OF VPO AREAS

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses the scope of the work outlined and considers the project as part of the 2014/2015 budget.

BACKGROUND

In November 2012, Council resolved to prepare an amendment to the Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO) to modify the exemptions from requiring a planning permit for tree removal.

Following authorisation from the Minister for Planning, Amendment C115 was placed on public exhibition and a total of 391 submissions were received. The Panel that reviewed the amendment and submissions received recommended that Amendment C115 be abandoned. It also advised that Council should consider conducting a new investigation into vegetation across the municipality that is based on expert assessment, and the views of the community, and identifies what the vegetation contributes to the City and how best it should be managed.

On 24 September 2013, Council resolved to abandon Amendment C115 and requested that:

A further report be presented detailing the scope and cost of any new strategic work required to undertake a comprehensive review of vegetation...
Review of Vegetation Management in Monash across the municipality to determine its “value” and to identify the appropriate form and level of management control.

PROPOSAL

The objectives of any strategic review of vegetation management in Monash should:

- Ensure that the garden city character strategy of the City of Monash is enhanced and maintained.
- Provide a greater understanding of the existing vegetation in Monash including its value and significance.
- Review the existing Policy context and make recommendations for changes including identification of a long term vision for vegetation management across Monash.
- Develop criteria to be used to assess the value of vegetation in Monash.
- Make recommendations concerning the application of the various Planning Scheme Overlays to areas in Monash.
- Make recommendations concerning the appropriateness and location of the VPO in either its current or modified form.
- Identify best practice methods for implementation and management of the identified Planning Scheme provisions.

To meet the above objectives the scope of any review would include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. A comprehensive survey and review of the existing vegetation to determine the distribution of vegetation across Monash. This would include landscape changes that have occurred since the implementation of the VPO in 2000. Determination of the value and significance of the existing vegetation. This includes establishing criteria that can be used to value existing vegetation. The values to be considered should include (but are not limited to):
   - biodiversity,
   - tree species,
   - landscape,
   - neighbourhood character,
   - environmental and aesthetic factors. Significance should not just be in terms of height and girth but other factors such as health of the tree, its species and its landscape significance.
2. Development of a significant tree register.

3. Identification of the appropriate form of control/planning scheme provision. This could include, but is not limited, to the following:
   - Consider and review Council’s strategic direction outlined in its Garden City objectives.
   - Consider the wider landscape scale impacts that vegetation has on the garden city character objectives and how these objectives can be maintained/enhanced.
   - Conduct a strategic analysis of the operation and management of all available vegetation controls/provisions and their relationship to achieving policy outcomes within the framework of the Monash Planning Scheme provisions.
   - Develop a local policy based on this data.
   - Identify the appropriate form and level of management control/planning scheme provision that should be applied to areas across the whole municipality including the appropriate form and content of the VPO.

4. Identification of the appropriate form and level of operational management of vegetation controls/provisions.
   - Identify an appropriate approvals procedure and identify the appropriate level of Council intervention in the decision making process. The response should consider the potential of alternative simplified processes and identify the risks/failings of each process.
   - Identify the requirements for an effective program for enforcement and monitoring application for tree removal.
   - Determine how to address the issue of very large trees that are located in very close proximity to existing dwellings.
   - Determine how Council may assist individuals to maintain their trees in case of hardship.
   - Consider what if any incentives could be applied to assist landowners in retaining their trees.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The estimated cost of undertaking the above review by suitable qualified consultants is approximately $170,000. The project is currently unfunded. This would include completion of the survey and study as detailed above and the preparation of the relevant documents and maps to enable amendment of the Monash Planning Scheme.
CONCLUSION

It is recommended that Council endorses the scope of the work outlined and considers the project as part of the 2014/15 budget.