7.2 REPORT ON SUBMISSIONS FOR DRAFT BUDGET 2012/13, COUNCIL PLAN (2012 UPDATE) AND THE ELECTRONIC GAMING MACHINE (EGM) LAND DIFFERENTIAL RATE (FIN18: DW)

Responsible Committee: Section 223 Committee of Council

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. Having considered the verbal submissions in support of written submissions received on the Draft Budget 2012/13, Draft Council Plan (2012 Update) and the Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) Land Differential Rate, as required under Section 223 of the Act, the committee recommends that Council does not make any amendments to the:
- Draft Budget 2012/13,
- Draft Council Plan (2012 Update) or
- Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) Land Differential Rate; and

2. Further recommends that following the Council’s adoption of the Draft Budget, EGM Land Differential and Draft Council Plan (2012 Update) that each submitter thanked for their submission to the Budget and Council Plan development process, and be advised of the outcome of the adopted Budget and Council Plan in writing.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with Section 129 of the Local Government Act (the Act) Council has a statutory requirement to prepare and give public notice of the proposed budget. The Draft 2012/13 Budget also includes the introduction of an Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) Land Differential Rate. Section 223 of the Act allows written verbal submissions on any proposal contained in the Draft Council Plan (2012 Update) and Draft Budget 2012/13. Council’s public notice outlined the requirement that written submissions must reach the Council by close of business on Monday, 28 May 2012.

DISCUSSION

Council appointed a Committee of Council, comprising all Councillors to consider submissions received under Section 223 of the Act for the Draft Budget 2012/13 and Council Plan 2009-13 (2012 update). Council received five (5) written submissions in response to the Draft Budget and Council Plan. The details of the submissions are listed in the attachment.

The summarised issues highlighted in the submissions included:

- Request for removal of library book reservation fees,
- Request for increased Street Sweeping,
- Request for Capital funding of the Waverley Gymnastics Centre,
The S.223 submission hearing was held on Tuesday 12 June. Representatives from Ratepayers Victoria including Mr Jack Davis, President, Ratepayers Victoria, Mr Des Olin and Ms Chan Cheah made verbal presentations to Council in support of the written submission (questionnaire). The key points raised by Ratepayers Victoria as identified in their submission included the following issues:

- Ongoing excessive rates,
- Lack of transparency of rate increases and cost drivers,
- Clarity of decision criteria used for rate increases and budget forecasts,
- Lacking social responsibility considerations regarding impacts on pensioners and ratepayers in difficult economic times, and
- Concerns over current debt levels.

The Committee heard and gave consideration to the comprehensive questions raised by Ratepayers Victoria as part of their deliberations.

The Committee of Council received copies of each written submission and officer responses to each of the written submissions, prior to the conduct of the meeting for information.

The Mayor thanked the representatives of Ratepayers Victoria for their submission and attendance at the meeting. Of the other four submissions received each provided an apology or advised of their non attendance prior to the meeting commencement.

The committee considered the submissions for each of the matters raised and believe these issues have been adequately addressed through the extensive process undertaken by Councillors and officers in preparing the draft Budget and Council Plan update. Including the introduction of the Electronic Gaming Machine Differential rate, to address research and community expectations in regard to this issue. Council also considered in depth, service delivery requirements, the level of fees and charges, including a comprehensive review of library fees and charges specifically and the transparency between the Strategic Resource Plan and budget as it relates to rate increases, debt levels and meeting its statutory obligations for community consultation. The committee is mindful of the significant economic challenges facing the community and is pleased to have been able to maintain its continued commitments to the Strategic Resource Plan projection of no more than a 6% annual rate increase despite increasing pressures for levies and tax from other levels of Government.

**CONCLUSION**

Following consideration of the written and verbal submissions as described above received regarding the Draft Budget 2012/13, Draft Council Plan (2012 Update) and the Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) Land Differential Rate, the Section 223
Committee of Council has resolved to recommend no change to these documents as they related to the submissions made.