

Councillor Question Time

Question from Councillor Sirakoff:

A resident has pointed out that the Fountain in the O'Donnell Gardens, St Kilda is in a poor state, with no running water and stagnant water within. Can Council provide information on the maintenance of this fountain, and when will it be brought back to life for the community to enjoy? Is there a program in which funds can be found to reactivate this fountain?

Response:

The current maintenance program for the O'Donnell Memorial Fountain comprises regular inspections of the ponds and draining/rubbish removal as needed, and a biannual inspection of the monument to undertake general conservation cleaning of the stone surface and removal of weeds. With increased rainfall, there is a need to undertake more frequent action to clear the ponds.

In 2017-18 Council undertook significant capital conservation treatment to the fountain. The main focus of this work was to address repairs needed to the central monument, and re-waterproof the ponds at the fountain's base. The original scope of works for the hydraulics was limited to replacing a few minor components that had reached the end of their useful life. These works enabled the fountain to operate, but only briefly. The age and construction of the fountain, the pump system, litter and bird droppings continue to present challenges keeping the fountain operational.

Following on from those initial works, Council commissioned a specialist fountain design engineer to identify components that needed replacing for the fountain to operate again. During the course of the investigation works, it was discovered that the entire hydraulic system no longer meets modern standards including filtration, maintenance access and electrics. In 2019 the cost to replace the entire hydraulic system was valued at \$240k. This was considered as part of the build of the 2019/20 project portfolio but was not supported.

Officers have continued to explore alternate options, this included seeking advice from Council's Cultural Heritage Reference Committee and St Kilda Historical Society members. Options explored included planting out the ponds of the fountain, however there were ongoing maintenance and irrigation issues associated with this; installing water plants in the fountain pond to improve water quality and reduce litter, and seeking further advice on how to improve water quality, flow and circulation, and water treatment without replacing the whole system. There is no funding allocated in the 2021/22 Council Budget for works to the fountain so officers are focusing on the current maintenance activities.

If Council wished to reconsider this approach, a Councillor could bring a notice of motion for consideration that directs the CEO to bring back a report to Council on different options.

**Please note: answers to any questions in Public Question Time and Councillor Question Time which were answered at the meeting are included in the minutes of that meeting.*