N O R T H S Y D N E Y C O U N C I L R E P O R T S

Report to General Manager

Attachments:
Nil

SUBJECT:	Free Public Wi-Fi for North Sydney CBD
AUTHORS:	Toto Liong, Manager Information Technology and Jenny Gleeson, Manager Integrated Planning and Special Projects
ENDORSED BY:	Sandra Moore, Acting Director Corporate Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council at its meeting of 26 March 2018 (Min. No. 49) resolved:

> *1. THAT a report be prepared on a proposal for Council to introduce a free high speed Wi-Fi network in North Sydney CBD. The report should address the feasibility and extent of such a network, cost, sponsorship/government assistance and security.*
> *2. THAT Council seek the input of the North Sydney Innovation Network into this proposal.*
> *3. THAT representations be made to our local Federal MP, Trent Zimmerman and State MP, Felicity Wilson for any government support and assistance that may be available for this proposal.*

This report responds to parts in the first two items; requests for support from local members will be pursued at a later stage should Council resolve to introduce Public Wi-Fi in the North Sydney CBD.

Council currently provides free Wi-Fi to customers in Stanton Library via Shorelink and provides the Wi-Fi network within Council Chambers for staff and guests. Council does not currently have the in-house expertise or capacity to deliver its own public Wi-Fi network on the scale required for the CBD.

It is therefore recommended that Council engage a suitably experienced consultant or technology advisory firm to identify the core requirements and specifications and options for external partnerships and that this information be provided to the Council via a further report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There is no funding in the adopted *Delivery Program 2018/19-2020/21* for the establishment of public Wi-Fi in the North Sydney CBD. The estimated cost of the proposed consultant is $20,000. Should Council wish to proceed with the engagement of a consultant, funding is available from the 2018/19 IT Reserve Budget.

Comment by Responsible Accounting Officer:
Funding for the project is appropriate.

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council engages a consultant (or technology advisory firm) to develop the core requirements and specifications as detailed in the report.

2. THAT once fundamental core requirements and specifications have been determined, Council market test, by way of a formal public tender or Expression of Interest process, for Public Wi-Fi in the North Sydney CBD.

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LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN:

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

Direction:	3. Our Future Planning
Outcome:	3.2 North Sydney CBD is one of NSW's pre-eminent commercial centres
	3.3 North Sydney is smart and innovative
Direction:	5. Our Civic Leadership
Outcome:	5.4 Council's service delivery is well supported

BACKGROUND:

Council at its meeting of 26 March 2018 considered a Mayoral Minute regarding free Wi-Fi in the North Sydney CBD, and resolved (Min. No. 49):

> *1. THAT a report be prepared on a proposal for Council to introduce a free high speed Wi-Fi network in North Sydney CBD. The report should address the feasibility and extent of such a network, cost, sponsorship/government assistance and security.*
> *2. THAT Council seek the input of the North Sydney Innovation Network into this proposal.*
> *3. THAT representations be made to our local Federal MP, Trent Zimmerman and State MP, Felicity Wilson for any government support and assistance that may be available for this proposal.*

This report responds to parts of the first two items.

This project was included in the *Delivery Program 2018/19-2020/21* adopted on 25 June 2018 (Min. No. 183) *3.3.3.1 - Investigate provision of free Wi-Fi in North Sydney CBD.*

And a related resolution of Council from its meeting of 24 September 2018 (Min No. 350), regarding advertising on infrastructure resolved was:

> *5. THAT Council monitor the outcome obtained by City of Sydney under their current Expression of Interest (EOI) process and, subject to their results, consider following a similar model for the rollout of a combined advertising and "Smart City" initiatives contract on its entire portfolio of streetscape infrastructure.*

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The sustainability implications are of a minor nature and did not warrant a detailed assessment.

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DETAIL:

1. Other Council Area Examples

Free Wi-Fi is currently being provided by a number of State and Local Government authorities:

- *AdelaideFree* provides free wireless coverage in outdoor areas across the CBD and North Adelaide. The Wi-Fi network is jointly funded by *City of Adelaide* and the Government of South Australia. The service is built and operated by Internode, a South Australian based Internet Service Provider part of the iiNet group. It is considered the largest and most performing City Wi-Fi network in Australia and is on par with the best in the world in terms of coverage and services offering.

- The *City of Perth* offers free Wi-Fi to people in the City. Perth was the first city within Australia to offer free blanket coverage Wi-Fi across its CBD areas.

- The *Victorian State Government* provides free outdoor public Wi-Fi in central Melbourne, Ballarat and Bendigo. The free Wi-Fi pilot has been running successfully in Bendigo and Ballarat since December 2015 and during the first nine months it's been operational recorded one million sessions in the two regional cities. With the inclusion of the Melbourne network it covers an area of 600,000 square metres across the three cities.

- The *Tasmania Government's* free Wi-Fi network *TasGov_Free* had almost 150,000 users logging on for more than 300,000 sessions in the first year of operation. The 30 minutes free Wi-Fi per user, per device, per day is available at the identified tourism hotspots 24-7. The first year saw more than 115,000 one-off users, as well as 31,358 repeat users access the service. They downloaded almost 20,000 gigabytes (20 terabytes) of data and uploaded more than 6,600 gigabytes. As at June 2017 the network had grown to 60 sites with 153 access points at key tourism locations around the state. The networks are delivered in partnership with Telstra for an initial four-year period.

- *Waverley Council* launched free Wi-Fi at Bondi Beach, and had over 85,000 registered users as at 2017. They have since installed free public Wi-Fi at Waverley Library, Waverley Park, Bondi Junction (Spring Street and Oxford Street Mall), Tamarama Beach and Bronte Beach. The new public Wi-Fi service has 90 Wi-Fi access points.

- *City of Sydney* has included free Wi-Fi in its tender for Smart City infrastructure. The City is currently assessing the tender outcomes and will deliver the Wi-Fi in partnership with the successful tenderer/s.

To deliver free Wi-Fi Council will need to partner with telecommunications companies. If Council were to seek Expressions of Interest with potential partners we would need to provide parameters around factors such as the set up and maintenance costs, access rights to existing Council infrastructure, ownership and use of data through the establishment of a licence agreement.

Council does not currently have the in-house expertise or resources to develop an Expressions of Interest or Tender document to take the project forward. External expertise would be required to ensure that Council understood the options and parameters for the project.

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2. North Sydney Innovation Network (NSIN) Input

The North Sydney Innovation Network (NSIN) seeks "to advocate for technology and innovations that improve the inclusivity, sustainability and liveability of our LGAs. In our submissions to local, state and national government planning and strategies".

NSIN advocates across seven priority "advocacy platforms". The following is an extract of the three of the Network's seven platforms that relate to Wi-Fi provision:

Platform No. 3 - **The need for free, accessible and good quality public Wi-Fi:** A recent Sensis survey of 800 consumers and 1100 businesses indicated most people used the Internet, and more than half (56%) accessed it more than five times per day. The average respondent also indicated they owned three Internet-enabled devices. Accordingly, Internet and wireless communication is now a fundamental feature of the social, economic and cultural life of modern cities and it should be included in all urban infrastructure planning. The ability to conduct business, study, connect with family and friends or just carry out daily activities such as banking and ordering groceries, regardless of our location, is now a rudimentary community expectation. Providing free Wi-Fi is also of central importance to financially disadvantaged segments of our population and should be one of the ways of promoting inclusivity and equity in any community. While the NSIN recognises the costs involved in the provision of public Wi-Fi, we would argue it is a public good that government should provide along with sound roadways, well maintained parks and community spaces and a healthy and safe community environment. Free Wi-Fi should be treated as fundamental infrastructure in a progressive, inclusive community.

Platform No. 4 - **The integration of the Internet of Things (IoT) into public infrastructure to create "smart" cities:** Smart Cities focus on the outcomes of economic development, sustainability, and operational efficiencies using innovation, community engagement, and a connected ecosystem of partners dedicated to improving the quality of life for all community members. Building managers throughout the world are increasingly seeking to incorporate IoT devices and solutions into their infrastructures to reduce costs and improve the quality of their buildings. This includes everything from smart, energy efficient lighting systems to smart elevators that aim to reduce wait times, smart bins that notify local governments when they are full and community safety and policing innovations. Financial and other efficiencies are possible if local, state and federal governments work in collaboration to introduce these innovations, but this requires an early and coordinated approach to preparing for the integration of the IoT.

Platform No. 5 - **Open data across community services and utilities:** The NSIN suggests that a policy of open data be applied to all aspects of community operation including information about transportation, roadworks, waste collection, development applications, support services and facilities. Transparency and harnessing the power of data sharing are key innovations of the smart cities of the future. In order to fuel the innovation economy, governments at all levels need to shift the paradigm of data restriction to making their data sources available to the innovative enterprises and individuals seeking to solve both local and global infrastructure and planning issues. The NSIN respects that open data initiatives must go hand in hand with a strict adherence to privacy principles.

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This information was provided by the NSIN via its submission to Council in response to the first phase of the preparation of the *North Sydney Public Domain Strategy*.

3. Strategic Context

This resolution has been considered in the following context:

a) ***Link to (pending) North Sydney Smart City Strategy -*** Council is currently preparing a Smart City Strategy as per a project *3.3.1.1 - Develop Smart City Strategy* in the adopted *Delivery Program 2018/19-2020/21*.

b) ***Identify Potential Revenue Streams for Council*** - there are opportunities for potential revenue generation for Council in the delivery of "Smart City Services or Infrastructure".

c) ***Links to (pending) Data Sharing Policy -*** as per project *3.3.4.2 - Prepare a Data Sharing Policy* in the adopted *Delivery Program 2018/19-2020/21* is the preparation of a policy to set the corporate framework for the collection, administration (including governance and storage) and potentially usage of data by Council. This links to "cyber security" as noted in the Mayoral Minute.

d) ***Bus Shelters, Street Furniture and Way Finding -*** Council at its meeting of 24 September 208 resolved (Min. No. 352) that its amended Telecommunications and Electrical Network Infrastructure Policy be exhibited for 28 days during October 2018; no submissions were received. The purpose of the proposed changes to policy are to enable Council to effectively manage the installation of any new telecommunication facilities proposed by a carrier or third party over land or infrastructure owned or under the care and management of Council, including private structures located within public space controlled by Council. Additionally, the Policy has been amended to enable Council to embrace new emerging technologies, while at the same time also establishing a robust framework around the management of the roll out of "Low Impact Telecommunication Facilities" (LIFs) to address community and Council concerns. It also establishes clear parameters around the requirement to enter into commercial and or non-commercial agreements with Council that may arise as a result of the installation of telecommunication facilities in the North Sydney Council LGA. The amended policy will provide potential lease revenue for Council for each telecommunication installation.

As previously mentioned, Council resolved at its meeting of 24 September 2018, to monitor the outcome obtained by City of Sydney under its current Expression of Interest (EOI) process and, subject to their results, consider following a similar model for the rollout of a combined advertising and "Smart City" initiatives contract on its entire portfolio of streetscape infrastructure".

e) ***Link to the North District Plan -*** related key objectives specific to North Sydney:

- Strengthen North Sydney's reputation as an education centre to grow jobs and add diversity.
- Encourage growth in business tourism as a conference location that take advantage of North Sydney's identity as a business hub, its location and views.

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4. Proposed Public Wi-Fi Drivers for North Sydney Council

The key objectives of providing Public Wi-Fi services would be (not in any priority order):

a) **Social Inclusion -** encouraging civic participation and social connectedness.

b) **Strengthening the Education Precinct -** free Wi-Fi access outside tertiary institutions would help keep students in the North Sydney CBD, adding to the vibrancy of the area.

c) **Boost Business Activity -** as noted in the Mayoral Minute, a free Wi-Fi network could "provide assistance for budding local entrepreneurs and create a springboard for successful businesses that would otherwise never get off the ground".

d) **Discovery and Innovation -** Internet access is a key driver in technology innovation and it could be expected that supporting a technology culture would attract and drive innovation within the area

e) **Encourage Tourism -** access to free Wi-Fi is a significant factor in a tourist's decision making. Providing access to reliable internet connectivity for visitors enables them to make the most their local experience, it also encourages them to share their experiences, with their networks, which in turn provides promotion of the local area. This relates to another project *(3.1.5.1 - Prepare Visitor Economy Strategy)* in the adopted Delivery Program, the preparation of a Visitor Economy Strategy.

5. Discussion

Public Wi-Fi is no longer perceived as a point of difference, but rather an expectation. At the same time, the increased use of mobile devices and the wide range of cost-favourable mobile data plans available mean that many people no longer need or look to free Wi-Fi.

Council may find that locating Wi-Fi within existing infrastructure, rather than providing it on a stand-alone basis, is the best path to pursue because it will not only meet public expectations for a free public Wi-Fi network but also be a more cost effective way to establish the network. In addition, utilising existing infrastructure in the Public Domain such as Council's Multi-Function Poles will reduce visual clutter and be easier to maintain rather that introducing new infrastructure.

With these factors in mind, there are two stages Council should work through in order to gain traction on understanding the costs and benefits of this project.

1. **Technical and Social Requirements Development** - whereby it is recommended an independent consultant or technology advisory partner be engaged in order to conduct development work defining the area to be covered, the capacity required, the legal obligations for data collection and liability, support requirements and any infrastructure needs in order to provide a free Public Wi-Fi service that exceeds user's expectations.

2. **Expressions of Interest** - to be sought to meet or exceed the defined requirements, informing ongoing costs as well as identifying possible revenue generation opportunities.