

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL

Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 11 June 2025

Held in Council Chambers

5 Market Place Hamilton at 5:30 pm



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The Meeting opened at 5:30pm.

1 Membership

Councillors

Cr Dennis Heslin, Mayor
Cr Afton Barber
Cr Albert Calvano
Cr Adam Campbell
Cr Helen Henry
Cr Jayne Manning
Cr Katrina Rainsford

Officers

Mr Tony Doyle, Chief Executive Officer
Mr Darren Barber, Director People and Performance
Mr Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation
Ms Marg Scanlon, Director Infrastructure and Sustainability
Mrs Karly Herring, Governance Coordinator

2 Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

The Mayor, Cr Heslin will read the acknowledgement of country:

“Our meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the Gunditjmara, Djab Wurrung, Jardwadjali and Buandig people.

I would like to pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.”

Please note: All Council meetings will be audio recorded, and may be livestreamed to Council’s social media platform, with the exception of matters identified as confidential items in the Agenda.

By participating in open Council meetings, individuals consent to the use and disclosure of the information they share at the meeting (including any personal and/or sensitive information).

Other than an official Council recording, no video or audio recording of proceedings of Council Meetings will be allowed without the permission of Council.

3 Prayer

Cr Calvano led the meeting in a prayer.

"Almighty god, we humbly beseech thee to vouchsafe thy blessing upon this council.

Direct and prosper its deliberations to the advancement of thy glory and the true welfare of the people of the Southern Grampians shire."

4 Apologies

Cr Campbell was an apology for this Meeting.

5 Confirmation of Minutes

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting and the Confidential Council Meeting held on 14 May 2025 be confirmed as a correct record of business transacted.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Calvano
SECONDED: Cr Henry

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting and the Confidential Council Meeting held on 14 May 2025 be confirmed as a correct record of business transacted.

CARRIED

6 Declaration of Interest

None Declared

7 Leave of Absence

Nil

8 Questions on Notice

There were no Questions on Notice.

9 Public Deputations

9.1 Andrew Natoli on behalf of Rigby Brothers

A request to speak has been received regarding the proposed section 96A combined planning permit application and planning scheme amendment for the Coleraine Quarry at 26 Templeton Street, Coleraine.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Barber
SECONDED: Cr Rainsford

That Council receive the deputation.

CARRIED

10 Petitions

There were no Petitions listed on the agenda.

11 Informal Meetings of Councillors

The Southern Grampians Shire Council Governance Rules require that records of Informal Meetings of Councillors that meet the following criteria:

If there is a meeting of Councillors that:

- a. took place for the purpose of discussing the business of Council or briefing Councillors;
- b. is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
- c. is not a Council meeting, Delegated Committee meeting or Community Asset Committee meeting;

be tabled at the next convenient Council meeting and recorded in the minutes of that Council meeting.

An Informal Meeting of Councillors record was kept for:

- Briefing Session – 7 May 2025
- Briefing Session – 14 May 2025
- Briefing Session – 21 May 2025
- Briefing Session – 28 May 2025

This agenda was prepared on 4 June 2025. Any Informal Meeting of Councillors between that date and the date of tonight's Meeting will appear in the agenda for the next Council Meeting.

Informal Meeting of Councillors

ASSEMBLY DETAILS	
Title:	Briefing Session - 7 May 2025
Date:	7 May 2025
Location:	MJ Hynes Auditorium
Councillors in Attendance:	Cr Barber Cr Calvano Cr Campbell Cr Henry Cr Heslin Cr Manning Cr Rainsford
Council Staff in Attendance:	Tony Doyle, Chief Executive Officer Darren Barber, Director People and Performance Marg Scanlon, Director Infrastructure and Sustainability Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation Aaron Smith, Manager Assets Rami Sanchez, Asset Planning Engineer

The Informal Meeting commenced at 1:15pm.

MATTERS CONSIDERED		CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED
1	Councillor Only Meeting	Nil
2	Councillor and CEO Meeting	Nil
3	Asset Renewal Program	Nil

The Informal Meeting concluded at 5:00pm

Informal Meeting of Councillors

ASSEMBLY DETAILS	
Title:	Briefing Session - 14 May 2025
Date:	14 May 2025
Location:	MJ Hynes Auditorium
Councillors in Attendance:	Cr Barber Cr Calvano Cr Campbell Cr Henry Cr Heslin Cr Manning Cr Rainsford
Council Staff in Attendance:	Tony Doyle, Chief Executive Officer Darren Barber, Director People and Performance Marg Scanlon, Director Infrastructure and Sustainability Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation Diana Dixon, Coordinator Leisure Services Susannah Milne, Manager Community Wellbeing Aaron Smith, Manager Assets Nick Templeton, Head of Finance Jason Cay, Senior Accountant Strategic

The Informal Meeting commenced at 11:00am.

MATTERS CONSIDERED		CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED
1	Councillor Only Meeting	Nil
2	Council Meeting Items	Nil
3	ARC Independent Member	Nil
4	HILAC User Group Fee and Space Review	Nil
5	Hamilton Moves	Nil
6	Voyager Renewables – Windfarm Establishment – SW Victoria	Nil
7	Capital and Long Term Financial Plan	Nil

The Informal Meeting concluded at 5:00pm.

Informal Meeting of Councillors

ASSEMBLY DETAILS	
Title:	Briefing Session - 21 May 2025
Date:	21 May 2025
Location:	MJ Hynes Auditorium
Councillors in Attendance:	Cr Barber Cr Calvano Cr Campbell Cr Heslin Cr Manning Cr Rainsford
Council Staff in Attendance:	Tony Doyle, Chief Executive Officer Darren Barber, Director People and Performance Marg Scanlon, Director Infrastructure and Sustainability Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation Karly Herring, Governance Coordinator Daryl Adamson, Manager Shire Strategy and Regulation

The Informal Meeting commenced at 2:00pm.

MATTERS CONSIDERED		CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED
1	Councillor Only Meeting	Nil
2	Councillor Gift Policy	Nil
3	Council Plan Quarterly Report – 1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025	Nil
4	School Crossing Program – Sustainable Operation	Nil
5	Response to Notice of Motion #2/25 – Cat Curfew	Nil

The Informal Meeting concluded at 5:00pm.

Informal Meeting of Councillors

ASSEMBLY DETAILS	
Title:	Briefing Session - 28 May 2025
Date:	28 May 2025
Location:	MJ Hynes Auditorium
Councillors in Attendance:	Cr Barber Cr Calvano Cr Henry Cr Heslin Cr Manning Cr Rainsford
Council Staff in Attendance:	Tony Doyle, Chief Executive Officer Marg Scanlon, Director Infrastructure and Sustainability Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation List staff members by name and position

The Informal Meeting commenced at 11:00am.

MATTERS CONSIDERED		CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED
1	Councillor Only Meeting	Nil
2	CEO and Councillor Meeting	Nil
3	New Hamilton Gallery Concept Plans	Nil
4	Hamilton CBD Streetscape Project Advisory Group – Terms of Reference	Nil
5	Coleraine Quarry – Section 96A combined planning scheme amendment and planning permit.	Nil
6	Draft Victoria Transmission Plan, VicGrid Presentation	Nil
7	Hamilton Showgrounds Governance and Management Options	Nil

The Informal Meeting concluded at 5:00pm

12 Management Reports

12.1 Revenue and Rating Plan

Directorate:	People and Performance
Report Approver:	Darren Barber, Director People and Performance
Report Author:	Robyn Ackland, Finance Coordinator - Revenue Nick Templeton, Head of Finance
Attachment(s):	1. 2025-2026 Revenue and Rating Plan [12.1.1 - 27 pages]

Executive Summary

The Local Government Act 2020 requires Council prepare a Revenue and Rating Plan to cover a minimum period of four years incorporating various sources of revenue. It also sets out the principles used in decision making for revenue sources, such as fees and charges.

The Council Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/2026 – 2028/2029 is presented for adoption. The plan may be reviewed and updated as required and has been developed concurrently with the 2025/2026 Budget process. The charges are built upon a pricing policy as outlined in the Revenue & Rating Plan 2025/2026 – 2028/2029. The four-year plan is required to be adopted for each term of Council and will run for the term of the current Council. Amendments can be made where required during the term of Council.

The Plan sets out the principles of revenue recovery from the various services Council provides. It outlines the strategic framework that guide how Council will calculate and collect revenue.

Discussion

This report outlines the following discussion points in more detail:

- Overview of rates and how they are calculated
- Rating Principles
- Determining Valuation Base
- Differential rating & distribution of rates across categories of property by location
- Rate Modelling – striking a balance
- Rate Capping and the Essential Services Commission
- Impact of rate capping on Budget and Long-term financial plan
- Collection and administration of rates
- Collection and remittance of the ESVF Levy

Rates and how they are calculated

Rates are a property tax that allows Council to generate revenue for funding essential public services. They are calculated on the Capital Improved Value (CIV) of a property and generate around 45% of Council's annual revenue and comprise three (3) main elements:

- General Rates
- Municipal Charge
- Service Charges

Councils may use any of these different values to apportion rates. Each has different advantages and disadvantages further discussed in the Revenue and Rating Plan. Southern Grampians Shire Council uses the Capital Improved Value of a property as the basis for rating calculations and different rates in the dollar to according to different property types and their locations.

The formula for calculating **General Rates** (excluding other charges, arrears or interest) is:

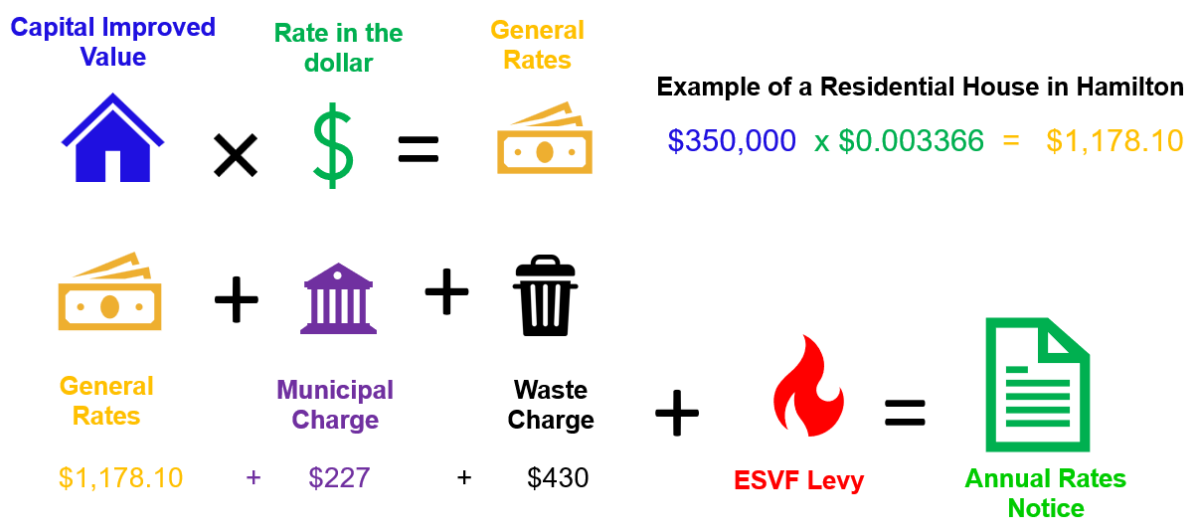


Fig 1: Rates Calculation Formula

Achieving a proper balance between these elements helps Council demonstrate an equitable approach has been taken to the distribution of the revenue collection.

The application of a **Municipal Charge** allows Council to raise a portion of the rates through a flat fee for all residents rather than relying solely on the Capital Improved Value (CIV) method. The Municipal Charge applies equally to all properties based on the recovery of a fixed costs of providing administrative services to all properties regardless of value.

A defined single farm enterprise (multiple properties operating under one enterprise) can apply for an exemption to only pay one Municipal Charge. Council currently generates approximately 10% of the total revenue raised by way of a Municipal Charge.

Council currently applies a **Service Charge** for the kerbside collection and disposal of refuse in urban areas and some rural areas. Council sets a waste service charge to fully recover the costs associated with providing this service including disposal of waste and support costs including the rehabilitation of Council's landfill site.

An additional revenue option is available to Council where a specific need is identified, and it would be deemed appropriate to levy a specific charge or cost. **Special Charges Schemes** allow council to recover the cost of works from property owners who receive a unique benefit from those works. They may be used for the purposes such as road construction, kerb and

channelling, footpath provision, drainage and other capital improvement projects that provide specific benefits to a select number of property owners.

Property rates are reviewed annually by Council and every attempt is made to ensure they do not change dramatically from one year to the next. Council must also consider the level of revenue required to fund the current expenditure commitments and deliverables outlined in the Council Plan, Long-term Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

Rates and charges - Rating Principles

The *Ministerial Guidelines for Differential Rating, April 2013* advises Council should consider the following good practice principles when developing a rating strategy:



Fig 2: Rating Principles

The 'tax' principle implies rates are dependent on the value of a ratepayer's property and has no correlation to their individual consumption of services, perceived benefits or capacity to pay. There is frequent debate around the characteristics of property owners that impinge on the application of a single 'equity' principle. For practical reasons equity considerations generally focus on how the costs of universally available services can and should be shared between ratepayers.

'Efficiency' relates to the cost of administration of rates including issuing assessments, collection of revenue, educating and informing ratepayers, upkeep of property records and changes to assessments and enforcement and debt recovery.

'Simplicity' is the ease of which a rates system can be understood by ratepayers along with the practicality and ease of administration, whilst 'benefit' argues there should be a clear nexus between consumption and rate burden (the opposite of tax principle). Other pricing instruments such as user charges (Pricing Register), special rates and charges and service charges (eg. waste service) better deal with the principle of 'benefit'.

The 'capacity to pay' across different groups of ratepayers is addressed using differential rates. Council have also recently updated the Financial Relief and Hardship Policy to provide additional support to ratepayers experiencing difficulties. There is also considerable 'diversity' in the economic circumstances of households within the municipality which has been factored into the development of the Plan.

Determining the Valuation Base

Under the *Local Government Act 1989* Council has three valuation options available including:

- Capital Improved Value (CIV) - the value of land and improvements
- Site Value (SV) - the value of land only
- Net Annual Value (NAV) - a rental valuation based on CIV (Commercial based)

CIV is the most used valuation base by local government as it equates broadly to the market value of the property and well understood by ratepayers. Approx 90% of Councils currently use CIV as their valuation base.

Each year, hundreds of properties undergo changes that are reflected in their rates and charges. The addition of new dwellings, structural modifications to properties, subdivisions, and the consolidation of assessments all affect the valuation base and the revenue generated. These changes may also influence the 'base' used to calculate rates for the following financial year and are included in the rate cap calculations. These adjustments are commonly referred to as Supplementary Assessments (or Supps).

For example, Farmer A owns a large property comprising multiple parcels of land. A decision is made to divide the farm into two separate assessments, with one portion being sold. Each of the two resulting properties will require an independent valuation, as they will have distinct attributes and need to be rated separately. Two new assessments will be created, and the relevant information will be sent to the Valuer-General to instruct the valuers to conduct two new valuations.

Once the information is returned to the Council, new rates notices can be issued, and the original property will be marked as 'defunct.' This is necessary to retain historical information in the event of a dispute or for land tax purposes.

The result may lead to either an increase or decrease in overall valuations, which in turn affects Council revenue. Subdivisions, property improvements, and new properties generate increased revenue, while consolidations, demolitions, and changes to non-rateable status can reduce revenue. These factors all influence the ongoing and actual revenue generated from rates.

Property owners may lodge an objection to the valuation of a property or the Australian Valuation Property Classification Code (AVPCC) within two months of the issue of the original or amended (Supplementary) Rates and Valuation Charges Notice. Objections are forwarded to the panel valuer appointed by the Valuer-General Victoria, and Council does not participate in this process to ensure impartiality.

Distribution of rates across categories (Differential Rating)

Council believes differential rates will contribute to the equitable and efficient delivery of its functions. The purpose of levying differential general rates is to recognise the different and inherent characteristics of services to residents and ratepayers across different areas of the Shire including:

- The **Standard** of municipal services provided varies by location
- The **Range** of municipal services available according to location and
- **Accessibility** to municipal services by residents and ratepayers by location

Southern Grampians Shire Council currently uses location as the lever for determining the application of the current differential rate model. Floating differential multiples are then used to levy rates before applying the municipal charge. The overarching principle used ensures the total rate revenue maintains a 40% allocation in differential rate 1 with the remaining 60% allocated across differential rates 2 and 3 combined.

Differential General Rate 1	Differential General Rate 2	Differential General Rate 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishes North & South Hamilton (excluding farm land >40 ha) • 5,793 properties • Total CIV of \$2.354B • Differential rate \$0.003366 x CIV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishes North & South Hamilton (farm land / hobby farms) • 158 properties • Total CIV of \$189M • Differential rate \$0.001889 x CIV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other rural land & properties outside N/S Hamilton • 5,304 properties • Total CIV of \$6.095B • Differential rate \$0.001889 x CIV

Fig 3: Differential Rate Categories

It should be noted the rate for Differential Rates 2 and 3 will always be lower than that for Differential General Rate No.1.

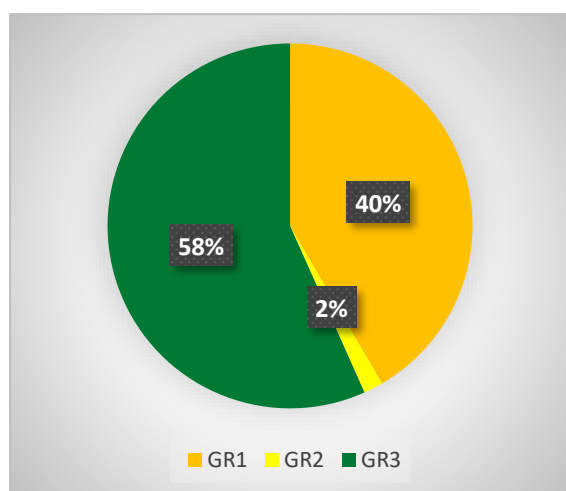


Fig 4: Differential Rates and the Revenue Pie

"Location drives the current rate model with floating differential rates used to balance the pools of revenue generated by each of the categories."

"This approach is intended to mitigate the effects of fluctuations in valuations from year to year."

"By establishing a fixed ratio of revenue generated per sector, the likelihood of experiencing significant fluctuations in rates is minimised".

The early payment incentive discount (currently a 2% reduction in General Rates) should be reviewed annually to assess whether the Council should continue to offer this or potentially be discontinued. A comprehensive discussion should consider the impact on the budget, the long-term financial plan, and the availability of liquid cash reserves.

Rate Modelling – Current model and alternative options

In 2021, a comprehensive review of rate models was conducted, examining eleven different options. The findings were presented to the previous Council, which decided to transition from fixed differential rates to the current ‘floating’ differential model, based on location.

The change was implemented to reduce “rate shock” caused by volatile valuation fluctuations across different property sectors. A floating differential model was introduced to allocate revenue based on a percentage division among property types. Under the current model, the income is split 40/60 between the rural and urban communities.

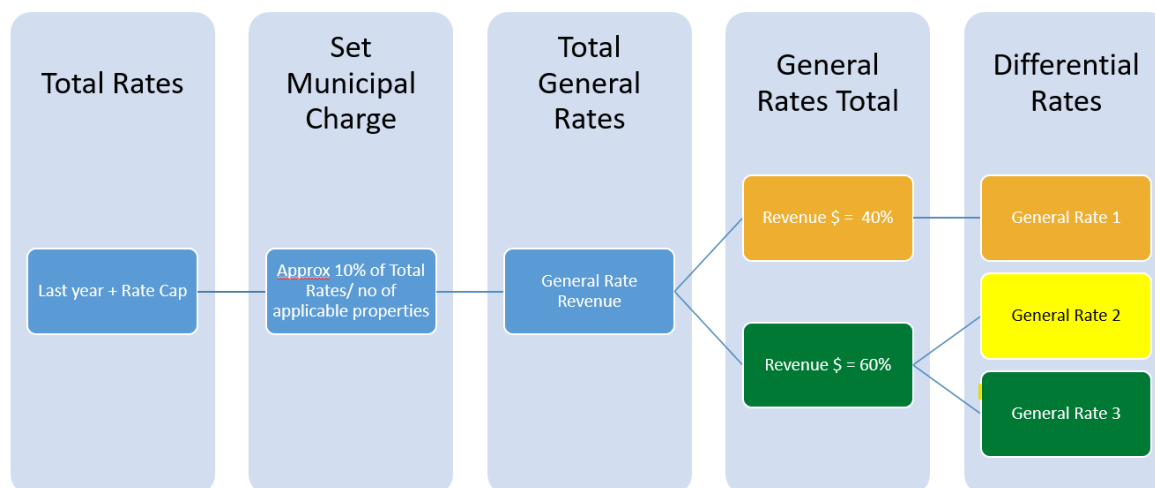


Fig 5: Rate Setting Diagram

The model acknowledges that properties located outside North and South Hamilton do not have access (benefit principle) to the same range and standard of services as their urban counterparts, while still adhering to the principles of a valuation-driven tax.

For example, North and South Hamilton benefit from a variety of services at the Hamilton Indoor Leisure and Aquatic Centre (HILAC) and the newly refurbished Melville Oval and Pedrina Park complexes. In contrast, Cavendish has access only to a second-tier local sporting ground and lacks a pool complex.

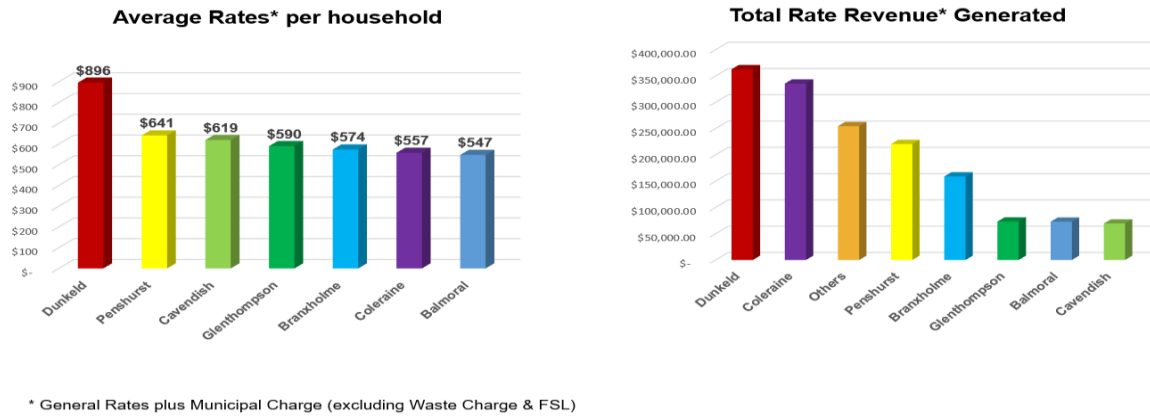


Fig 6: Rates Revenue Generated by Rural Township

Whilst location is the primary driver of differential rates, the category of property type is also taken into consideration. Assessments are also broken down into Residential, Rural, Commercial and Industrial to consider the individual impact of the overall differential rate.

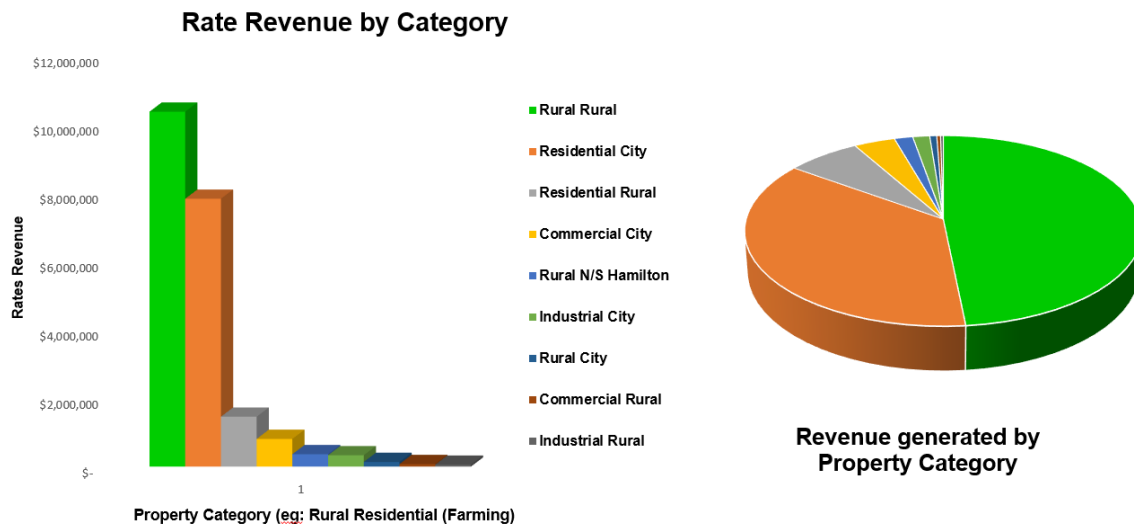


Fig 7: Rate Revenue by Property Category

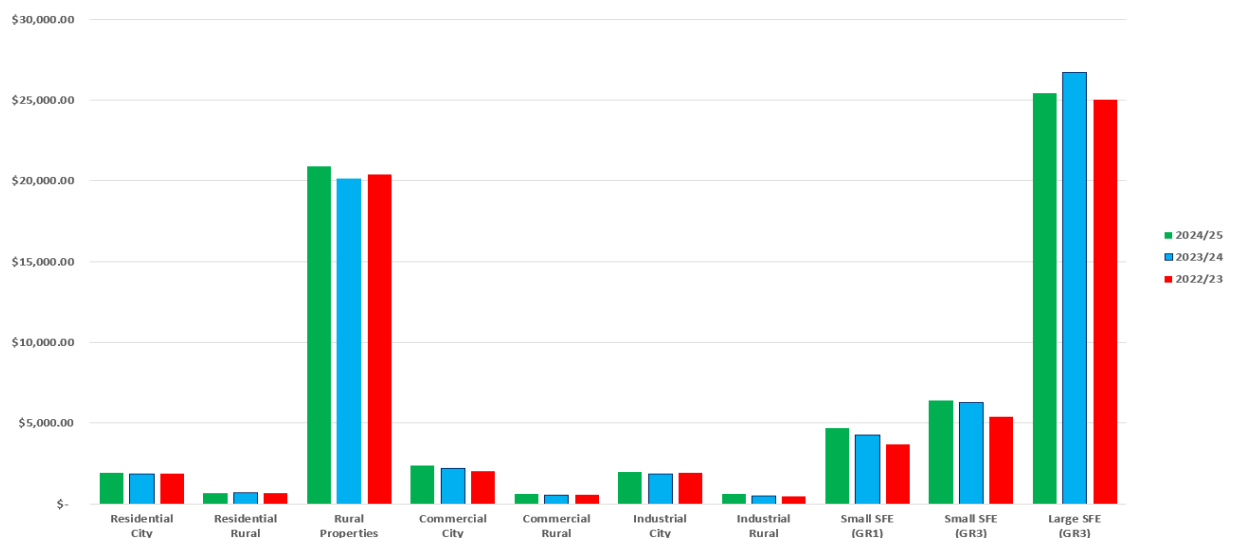


Fig 8: Three (3) year Rate movement by Category demonstrating a good balance has been achieved

Rate modelling is a complex process that requires balancing a range of variables. While the approach to generating income may evolve, the total pool of funds will always be constrained by the rate cap set annually by the Essential Services Commissioner in December each year.

Rate Capping and the Essential Services Commission

The impact of annual rate increases is significant to the Council's revenue. In 2015, a cap on rate increases was introduced in Victoria to limit the growth of rate revenue. Each year, the Minister for Local Government determines the rate cap. For the 2025-26 financial year, the rate cap has been set at 3.0 percent.

The rate cap applies only to the Council's total rate revenue, not to individual properties. As a result, individual rate bills may increase or decrease by more (or less) than the capped amount due to changes in property valuations. The cap applies solely to the general rate and municipal charges portion of a rates bill. Other components, such as waste charges and user fees and levies, are not subject to the cap.

The Essential Services Commission (ESC) monitors Council compliance with the rate cap under the *Essential Services Commission Act 2001*. Each year the ESC produces a compliance report outlining whether councils have complied with the rate cap when setting their rates for each financial year. Last year all councils were compliant with the rate cap with an average rate increase of 2.73% for 2024-25.

Impact of rate capping on Budget and Long-term financial plan

The annual rate increase is a key factor in determining the revenue that can be raised by the Council. A 1% variance in the rate cap, even over the long term, can have a significant impact.

The example below illustrates this impact, showing a comparison between a 0%, 1%, 2% increase in year one and a 3% increase in year one.

	Rate Increase			
	0%	1%	2%	3%
Rates and Charges Income	217.6m	252.5m	255.0m	257.5m
Income Foregone (without interest)	7.5m	5.0m	2.5m	\$0

Fig 9: Impact of variation to the Annual Rate Cap on Long-term revenue projections

The impact each year of the 1% variance is almost \$250k however over the full ten years the difference in revenue is more than \$2.5m. If the increase was 0% rather than 3% in year one the 10 difference is \$7.5m.

The implementation of rate capping has created a number of challenges for councils in maintaining their financial sustainability. While the policy ensures that ratepayers are shielded from steep rate hikes, it limits the ability of councils to increase revenue in line with inflation and rising costs, which are often beyond their control.

As the costs of essential services, infrastructure maintenance, and materials continue to rise, the restricted revenue growth has made it more difficult for councils to meet these demands. This creates a situation where councils must either reduce services, delay capital works projects, or find alternative sources of funding.

Collection and Administration of Rates and Charges

The *Local Government Act 1989* (LGA), Section 167 (1) and (2A) determines ratepayers have the option of paying rates by way of four instalments or in full. Payments are due by the prescribed dates below, or alternatively in full by 30 September:

- 1st instalment: 30 September
- 2nd instalment: 30 November
- 3rd instalment; 28 February
- 4th instalment: 31 May

Council have decided to continue the prompt payment incentive (2%) for the 2025/2026 year and also encourage ratepayers under financial strain to apply for hardship provisions. In the current climate and with such significant change to the Emergency Services Volunteer Fund Levy, the focus for Council is assisting ratepayers that are experiencing financial duress.

Interest is charged on all overdue rates in accordance with Section 172 of the LGA and fixed under Section 2 of the *Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983* determined by the Minister and published by notice in the Government Gazette annually.

Council offers various payment plans, deferrals, and assistance options based on individual circumstances, as outlined in the **Financial Assistance and Hardship Policy 2024**. Additionally, holders of a Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Pension Concession Card, or a DVA Gold Card indicating Total Permanent Incapacity (TPI) or War Widow status, may be eligible to claim a rebate on their sole or principal place of residence.

Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Levy

The Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Levy (ESVL) replaces the Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) from 1 July 2025. In 2012 the Victorian Government legislated the levy be collected from ratepayers via the Annual Rates and Valuation Notices.

The levy is based on two components, a fixed charge and a variable charged linked to the Capital Improved Value of a property. The levy is not included in the rate cap and increases to the levy are at the discretion of the State Government.

The levy is collected by the Council and remitted quarterly to the State Government.

Eligible CFA and VICSES volunteers and life members may be entitled to a rebate on the ESVF on their principal place of residence (PPR) or farm, which will be administered by the State Government through the Department of Government Services.

The rebate amount will be proportionately applied based on property value and capped in accordance with the new legislation. The maximum rebate in 2025/26 will be based on a maximum CIV of the eligible property of \$5M.

Financial and Resource Implications

Council is required to implement the principles of sound financial management detailed in Section 101 of the Local Government Act 2020.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

The Revenue and Rating Plan compliments the preparation of the 2025/26 Annual Budget and details how revenue will be raised to support the key activities and initiatives to be funded that will contribute to achieving the strategic objectives specified in the Council Plan 2021-2025. A new Council Plan for the 2025/26 – 2028/29 period will be set by Council in the near future with key priorities yet to be determined.

The key priorities for the existing 2021 – 25 Council plan are:

- Support our Community
- Grow our Regional Economy
- Maintain and Renew our Infrastructure
- Protect our Natural Environment, and
- Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

Support Our Community

1.1 An empowered and connected community

1.1.4 Ensure communication and engagement methods use inclusive practices and processes.

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.2 Effective advocacy

5.2.2 Advocate on behalf of the community in line with identified and agreed priorities.

5.2.3 Support and partner with service providers, State and Federal Government departments to improve inclusive opportunities for the Southern Grampians community.

Legislation

The legislative framework outlined in the *Local Government Act 1989* defines Council's authority to develop a rating system. This framework offers considerable flexibility, allowing Council to tailor a system that best meets its needs.

Section 155 of the *Local Government Act 1989* provides that a council may declare the following rates and charges on rateable land:

- General rates under section 158
- Municipal charges under section 159
- Service rates and charges under section 162
- Special rates and charges under section 163

Gender Equality Act 2020

There are no direct implications to the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in preparing the Revenue and Rating Plan, however, Council casts a strong gender lens across all of its operations, programs and projects throughout the year and the budget allows for provisions that support gender equality initiatives.

Risk Management

In developing the Revenue and Rating Plan, Council considers relevant financial risks to ensure it can achieve its Council Plan objectives within a longer term prudent financial framework.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

The annual budget addresses climate change, environmental and sustainability considerations with the setting of fees charges.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

This Revenue and Rating Plan has been prepared in consultation with Councillors through the analysis of assorted options to arrive at the document presented here.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Robyn Ackland, Finance Coordinator - Revenue
Nick Templeton, Head of Finance
Darren Barber, Director People and Performance

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the Revenue & Rating Plan as presented to Council for the next four-year cycle beginning 2025/26 until 2028/29.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Barber
SECONDED: Cr Manning

That Council adopt the Revenue & Rating Plan as presented to Council for the next four-year cycle beginning 2025/26 until 2028/29.

CARRIED

12.2 Final Budget 2025-2026

Directorate:	People and Performance
Report Approver:	Darren Barber, Director People and Performance
Report Author:	Nick Templeton, Head of Finance
Attachment(s):	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 2025-26 Model Budget FINAL DRAFT [12.2.1 - 56 pages]2. 2025-2035 LTFP - Final Draft [12.2.2 - 41 pages]3. 2025-2026 Pricing Register Draft [12.2.3 - 52 pages]

Executive Summary

This report tables for adoption Council's 2025/2026 Annual Budget, Council's 2025-2035 Long Term Financial Plan and Council's 2025/2026 Pricing Register. The purpose of each of these documents is:

- 2025/2026 Annual Budget – Details the financial resource requirements to deliver our objectives, strategies, initiatives, and activities for the 2025/2026 year.
- 2025-2035 Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) – Details the financial resource requirements to deliver our objectives, strategies, initiatives and activities for the 10-year period to 2035.
- 2025/2026 Pricing Register – Details the basis upon which the fees and charges will be applied for services in the 2025/2026 year.

The documents are presented for adoption at the 11 June Council Meeting, thereby complying with the legislative requirement to have the annual budget adopted by 30 June each year.

The draft 2025/2026 Budget has been developed within the overall planning framework, which guides Council in identifying community needs, aspirations and projects over the medium to long term. The key document for the future direction is the Council Plan, which informs the LTFP.

LTFP highlights include:

- Operating surplus in nine of the 10 years of the LTFP.
- \$131m investment in renewal of community assets which ensures assets such as our roads and footpaths are fit for purpose.
- Strong financial stewardship over the 10 years.
- Strong cash balances across the 10 years.
- Peak debt of \$16.5m over the 10 years.
- Borrowings will be largely repaid within the 10 years.
- Delivery of three major and intergenerational projects being new Hamilton CBD Streetscape, a new Community Hub (Library, Digital Hub and Government Services) and a new Hamilton Gallery planned to be delivered over the 10 years.

The short term objectives, strategies, initiatives, activities and resource requirements are identified in the Annual Budget. The Long-Term Financial Plan aligns with the 2025/2026 Budget and includes information and modelling in line with Council's longer term aspirations.

The Pricing Register complements the Budget and provides the basis upon which the fees and charges revenue has been developed.

Council has completed significant work in reducing operational costs over the last four budget years. This attack on cost reduction and commitment to efficiency ensures that Council is in a strong financial position with a surplus forecast for nine of the 10 years in the Long Term Financial Plan and allows for the delivery of the key major projects.

Council has an ongoing commitment to asset renewal and with an average annual renewal expenditure of \$13m throughout the 10 year Long Term Financial Plan.

Discussion

The Draft Budget for 2025/2026 has been prepared under the provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Local Government Victoria Model Budget, associated Regulations and relevant International and Australian Accounting Standards.

The Budget attached to this report has been developed through a process of consultation and review with Council and Council officers and has taken into consideration feedback following community engagement.

Setting the Council Budget continues to be a challenging task, aligning community expectations, rising construction and operating costs and constrained revenue raising ability.

Despite these difficulties, the Budget demonstrates the ability to fund major projects of regional significance, the renewal of existing assets and the continued delivery of services to the community.

Council will continue to focus on partnerships and collaboration both with providers locally and regionally with our neighboring Councils to review service models, increase efficiencies and drive down costs whilst continuing to explore other revenue streams.

To fund the extensive program of both operational and capital works, Council has proposed rates to increase by 3.00% (rate cap has been set by the Minister for Local Government at 3.00%).

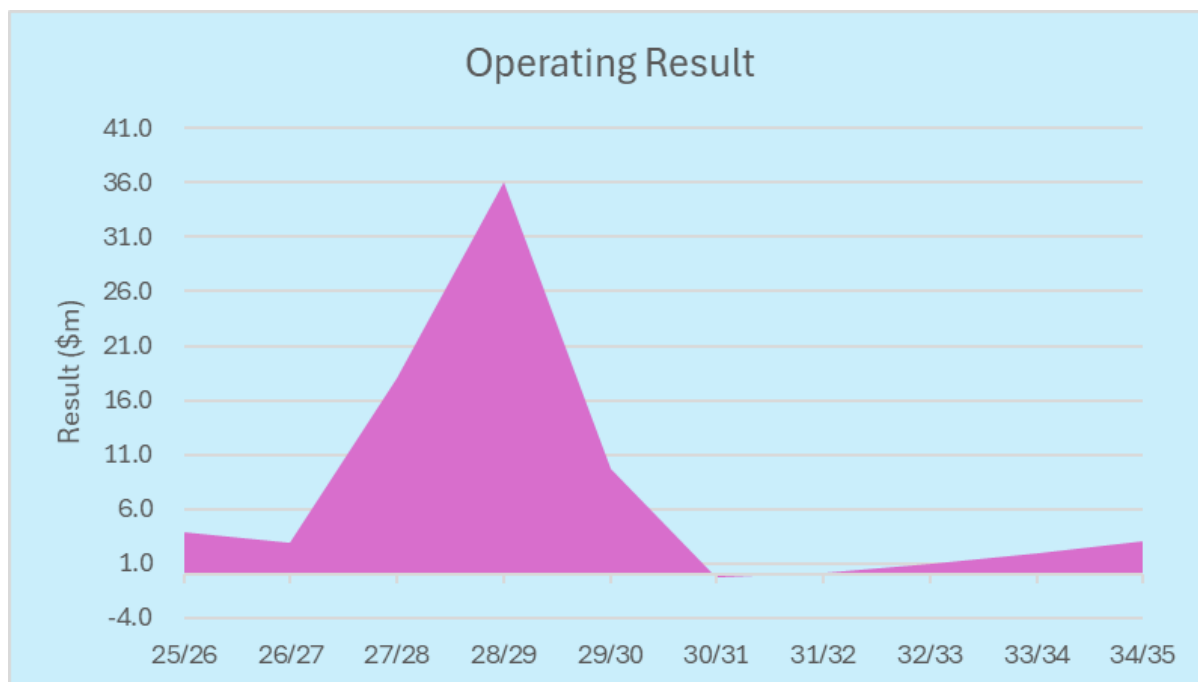
Operational Efficiencies

Each year Council prepares the annual Budget and Long Term Financial Plan with the key goal of enabling the Council Vision while maintaining fiscal responsibility. The focus on financial sustainability has resulted in the underlying result becoming a surplus from 2032/2033 onwards.

The underlying result removes the non-recurrent (once-off) capital revenue items from the comprehensive operating result to provide the result stemming only from ongoing operating activities. The underlying result can vary significantly from the comprehensive operating result and shows improvement through the 10 years of the LTFP, with the final three years being an underlying operating surplus.

The operating expenditure for the 10 years of the Long-term Financial Plan shows a well contained increase in costs of below 10%. The concentration on limiting expenditure growth is vital to the ongoing sustainability and results on an average annual increase in expenditure of 1%. The improvement in the underlying operating result over the 10 years is a direct result of the restriction in expenditure over the longer term.

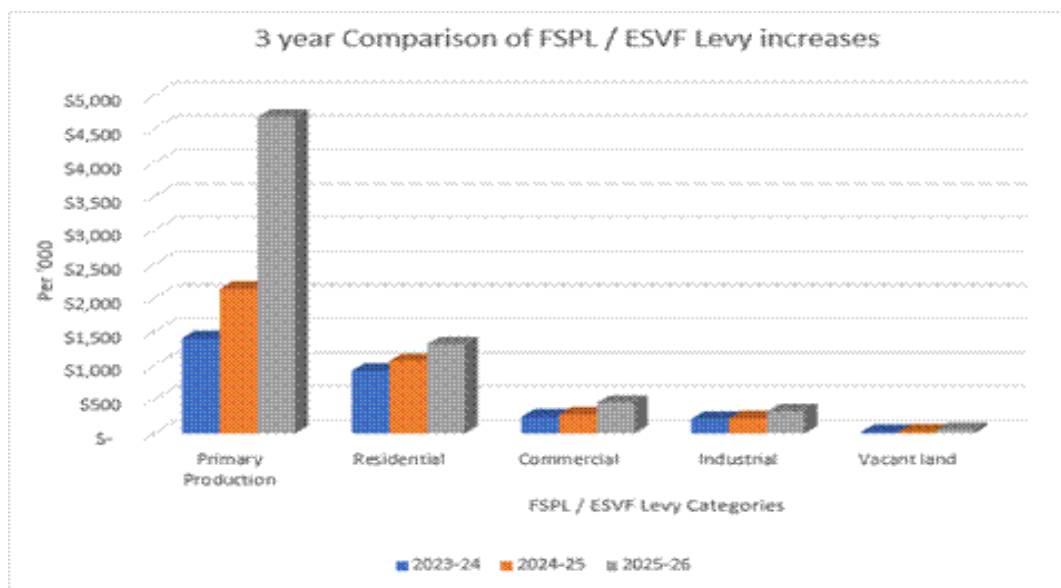
The below graph illustrates the operating result across the 10 years of the Long-term Financial Plan resulting from the containment of operating expenditure. Clearly indicated in the graph is the funding anticipated for the major projects from 2027/2028 until 2029/2030 which is improving the result during this period along with the surplus position in nine of the 10 years.



Rates and charges make up 45% of total revenue for 2025/2026 and the projected increase is 2.0% from 2027/2028 onwards. Rate capping is the maximum amount Victorian Councils may increase rates in a year and for 2025/2026 this is 3.00%, which is below the expected indexation rate for expenditure such as salary costs and materials and services.

Included on rates notices is the Emergency Services Volunteer Fund Levy which is a charge imposed by State Government that requires Council to collect and pass on. The increase and subsequent impact of the increase in the state levy has been well publicised and will have a significant financial impost on our ratepayers, particularly farmers. Council is strongly advocating for the abolition of the new Emergency Services Volunteer Fund Levy.

Below is a graph that provides an indication of the level of the increase in the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Levy (formerly Fire Services Property Levy) based on the initial levy figures and the financial impact this will have on ratepayers annually, particularly for farming properties. Farming properties have been granted a 12 month pause on the increased levy.



2025/2026 Draft Budget

Operating Budget

The Operating Budget forecasts an operating surplus of \$3.857 million. This includes \$25.103m from Rates and charges (see further details below), \$18.462m from government grants, \$6.873m in fees and charges, \$499k in statutory fees, \$3.965m in gains on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment and \$1.387m in other revenue.

A high proportion of operational expenditure is employee costs of \$20.670m. Council continues to be a major employer in the region, employing effective fulltime equivalent of 232 people to deliver Council services which is a minor decrease compared to 235 for the 2024/2025 Budget.

Other expenses include materials and services, \$15.729m, borrowing costs (interest) of \$341k and other of \$843k. Depreciation of \$14.846m is not a cash expense but is the utilisation of previously acquired assets and has increased from the 2024/2025 budget due to increased asset values.

Capital Works Budget

Capital works of \$16.255m are proposed for 2025/2026 noting this does not include any prior year projects that will carry forward into this year. These works are being funded by grants of \$7.637m, sale of assets \$3.965m and loans of \$5m.

Much of this work is the renewal of existing assets (\$11.209m). Detailed design works for the upgrade of the Library / Community Hub are proposed (\$1m) with a further \$4.045m of work on new or replacement assets.

In 2025/2026, Council has allocated funding towards its major projects to deliver on the vision for the Hamilton CBD. The redevelopment of the Hamilton CBD streetscape will progress, with funding of \$400k allocated for design. Detailed design of the new Hamilton Art Gallery and

Community and Government Hub (library, digital Hub, Cinema and Office) with \$1m allocated each of the two projects.

New proposed projects have been subject to a business case process that was presented to Council Briefing on 30 April 2024. These projects are made up of capital and operational with some of the projects shown below.

In addition to the annual infrastructure works across the shire, there are capital works projects scheduled in various towns and incorporated into the Capital Budget, including:

- Footpaths links added in Cavendish, Coleraine, Dunkeld, Hamilton and Penshurst,
- Renewal of public convenience fixtures, fittings and painting,
- Renewal of outdoor swimming pools,
- Penshurst Botanic Gardens Shelter Renewal,
- Wannon Scenic Reserve purchase and installation of BBQ's,
- HILAC fans for multipurpose court, and
- Stormwater drainage in Hamilton and Dunkeld.

The budget document also includes projections of capital expenses, calculated by asset type, for the following three years of the financial Plan and a full list of the 88 specific capital works items for 2025/2026 can be found in the Budget.

Included in the Budget and Long Term Financial Plan are three multiyear projects:

- CBD Revitalisation – Upgrade of the CBD streetscape planned to be completed over four years and funded partially by loans and potential grant funds.
- Community Hub – New building construction to be undertaken over three years incorporating Library, Cinema, digital Hub, municipal offices and office space for local organisations. Total project cost of \$36m with grant funding expected of \$19m with \$8m funded through loan funding and \$9m through Council contribution have focused on financial sustainability.
- Art Gallery – Construction of new Hamilton Gallery planned for completion in 2032 with Council contribution of \$10m to the \$50m construction cost and external contributions and grants of \$40m.

A Summary of the capital works schedule contained within the 2025/2026 Budget is shown below table:

2025/2026 Proposed Capital Works			
Asset Category	Title	Program Type	\$
Buildings	HILAC annual indoor court surface recoating	Annual Renewal	20,000
Buildings	Buildings Renewal: - Dunkeld Pre-School - Hamilton Botanic Gardens Rotunda - Hamilton and Coleraine Outdoor Swimming Pools Changerooms - Cavendish Memorial Hall structural repairs (design) - Hamilton Senior Citizens Centre asbestos removal	Annual Renewal	200,000
Buildings	Hamilton Mechanics Institute roof renewal	Renewal	90,000
Buildings	Public Convenience renewal of fixtures, fittings, painting and surfaces.	Annual Renewal	250,000
Recreation	Outdoor Swimming Pools	Annual Renewal	1,800,000
Artworks	Artwork purchases	New	15,000
Library Books	Library book purchases	Annual Renewal	70,000
Recreation	Playground Renewal 2025/2026 addressing priority compliance requirements	Annual Renewal	350,000
Waste	Coleraine Landfill Remediation	Renewal	200,000
Open Space	Penshurst Botanic Gardens Shelter Renewal (adjacent BBQ's)	Renewal	20,000
Computers	Hamilton Livestock Exchange IT Network Infrastructure upgrade	Renewal	25,000
Open Space	Wannon Scenic Reserve purchase and installation of BBQ's	Renewal	15,000
Bridge	HIRL Pedestrian Bridges	Renewal	40,000
Waste	Hamilton Transfer Station Bunkers: New retaining wall on the loading ramp.	Renewal	117,300
Drainage	Stormwater Program 2025/2026: - Chamberlain Street - contribution to works Investigation and designs at: - George Street Hamilton - Lonsdale Street Hamilton - Thompson/French/Rippon Road, Hamilton - Coleraine Road and Smith Street, Hamilton	Annual Renewal	90,000
Drainage	Dunkeld Drainage investigate and design	New	30,000
Footpath	Footpath Renewal Program 2025/2026	Annual Renewal	80,000
Roads	Gravel Road Resheet Program 2025/2026	Annual Renewal	500,000
Roads	Final Seal 2025/2026	Annual Renewal	1,080,000
Roads	Roads Design 2025/2026	Annual Renewal	130,000
Roads	Reseal Program 2025/2026	Annual Renewal	1,100,000
Roads	Road Rehabilitation Program 2025/2026	Annual Renewal	2,033,000
Roads	Road Safety Improvement program	New	2,300,000
Furniture	PAC Stage Monitors Replacement	Renewal	19,358
Other Assets	Hamilton Depot Site Security and Parking Upgrade	New	70,000
Footpath	Footpath Program Missing Links 2025/2026 - Laidlow Street, Coleraine - Skene Street, Hamilton - Scott Street Cavendish - Riley Street, Cavendish - Bell Street, Penshurst - Ritchie Street, Penshurst - Cobb Street, Penshurst - Templeton Street, Dunkeld	New	380,000

Waste	Onsite Organics Processing Facility - Hardstand Requirements	New	280,000
Furniture	HILAC Fans for Multipurpose Courts*	Renewal	25,000
Open	Penshurst Botanical Gardens Masterplan Implementation	Renewal	30,000
Recreation	Hamilton Lakes Edge Accessible Playground parametre fencing	Renewal	30,000
Bridges	Bridges and Culverts Program 2025/2026 - Rockbank Road, coating protection and safety barriers - McCutcheons Rd Major Culvert	Annual Renewal	365,000
Plant	Light Fleet Renewal Program 2025/2026	Annual Renewal	500,000
Plant	Heavy Fleet Renewal Program 2025/2026	Annual Renewal	1,400,000
Open	Major Projects Partnership Agreement and Business Case	Renewal	200,000
Open	CBD Streetscape	Renewal	400,000
Buildings	Art Gallery - Design	Upgrade	1,000,000
Buildings	Lonsdale Street Hub - Design	New	1,000,000

TOTAL

16,254,658

* Plus contribution from Hamilton Basketball Association

Community submissions

This year, Council undertook community engagement between November and January to determine where the community felt Council should prioritise its spending within the context of the Council Plan 2021-2025. Council is currently preparing a new Council Plan for 2025-2029, however this work is still in progress and therefore prioritisation was on the basis of the existing 2021-2025 Council Plan.

Business cases were prepared for the new projects that were both capital or operational in nature and assessed by Council officers before being presented to Council in April.

A number of the proposed Community submissions and the allocation for 2025/2026 is shown in the following table:

Project Name	Estimated Cost 25/26
Penshurst Botanic Garden Masterplan and Shelter Renewal	\$50,000
HILAC fans for multipurpose courts	\$25,000
Enclosed Playground for Hamilton Lakes Edge	\$30,000
Cavendish Pedestrian Path Linking in CBD	\$144,350
Southern Grampians Shire mobile app	\$20,000
Glenelg Southern Grampians Local Learning & Employment Network – Young Leaders Program	\$3,000
Live4Life Southern Grampians	\$7,000

Cash Management

The Statement of Cash Flows demonstrates how Council will fund its operations, capital investment and financing activities.

Council will generate a cash surplus of \$14.426m from operations which will go towards funding the \$16.255m of capital works. Council also proposes to sell assets which are no longer required for service delivery \$3.965m.

There are new borrowings proposed for 2025/2026 of \$5m to fund significant intergenerational capital works projects, most notably the commencement of the Community Hub building detailed design and the detailed design of the new Hamilton Art Gallery. Council will repay \$1.524m of principal and \$341k of interest against prior years borrowing. The Long Term Financial Plan identifies that throughout the duration of the plan, the peak (highest) debt level is \$16.576m in 2031/32 which is funding sourced for intergenerational projects. Importantly over the ten years the debt at the end of the Long Term Financial Plan is \$3.062m with this amount expected to be fully repaid in the following year, showing the ability of Council to repay debt.

Council anticipates holding \$6.749m million cash at 30 June 2026.

Rates, Charges and Valuations information

General rates and municipal charges are levied in accordance with Council's Revenue and Rating Plan.

The municipal charge will increase from \$220 to \$227 (this is a 3.18% increase). There are 9,704 properties bringing the total collected to be \$2,202,808 which is approximately 10% of rate revenue.

Council accepts applications for exemptions from the requirements to pay the Municipal Charge under the provisions of Section 159 of the *Local Government Act 1989* throughout the year.

The municipal waste charge will increase from \$415 to \$430 (3.6%) for all improved residential properties in the Hamilton, Balmoral, Branxholme, Byaduk, Byaduk North, Cavendish, Coleraine, Dunkeld, Glenthompson, Penshurst and Tarrington urban areas and "refuse collection areas" for the collection and disposal of refuse, recycling and FOGO.

The increase on 2024/2025 service charge reflects the rising costs to Council to dispose of waste and highlights the importance of recycling. Council charges are below the charges imposed by the majority of neighboring Councils including Moyne, Northern Grampians and Warrnambool.

The kerbside collection services will again only be provided to commercial and industrial properties within the Shire on request.

Council's Rating Policy is as below:

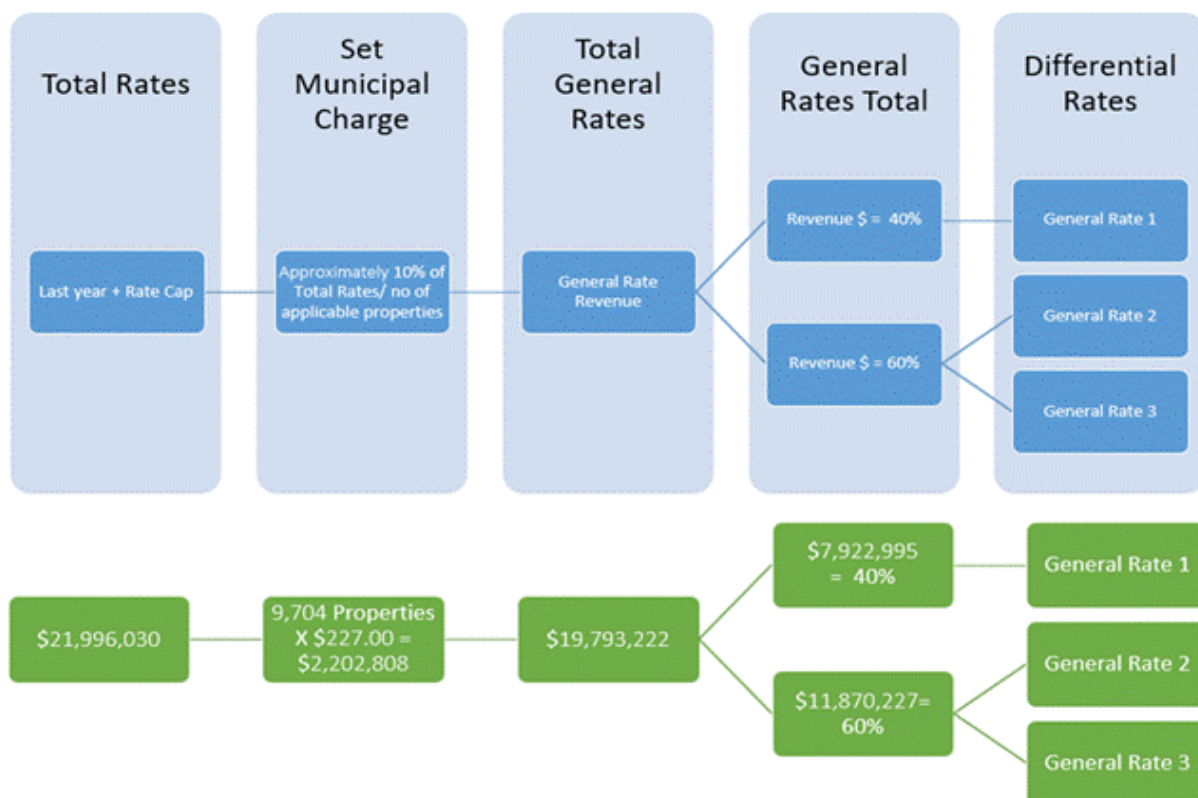


Table 1 - The Rate in the \$ for each type of class of Land is as below:

Type or class of land	2024/25 cents/\$CIV*	2025/26 cents/\$CIV*	Change
General rate 1 for rateable residential properties	0.00328	0.003366	2.62%
General rate 1 for rateable rural properties	0.00328	0.003366	2.62%
General rate 1 for rateable industrial properties	0.00328	0.003366	2.62%
General rate 1 for rateable commercial properties	0.00328	0.003366	2.62%
General rate 2 for rateable rural N/S properties	0.001755	0.001889	7.64%
General rate 3 for residential rural properties	0.001755	0.001889	7.64%
General rate 3 for rural properties	0.001755	0.001889	7.64%
General rate 3 for industrial rural properties	0.001755	0.001889	7.64%
General rate 3 for commercial rural properties	0.001755	0.001889	7.64%

Table 2 - The Valuations for each type of class of land:

Type or class of land	2024/25 \$'000	2025/26 \$'000	Change \$'000	%
Residential	2,614,977	2,623,198	8,221	0.31%
Rural	5,905,554	5,660,629	(244,925)	-4.15%
Industrial	109,320	103,164	(6,156)	-5.63%
Commercial	252,029	250,708	(1,321)	-0.52%
Total value of land	8,881,880	8,637,699	(244,181)	-2.75%

Table 3 - The result of multiplying the valuation by the rate in the \$:

Type or class of land	2024/25	2025/26	Change	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%
General Rate 1	7,817	7,923	106	1.35%
General Rate 2	341	356	16	4.59%
General Rate 3	11,064	11,514	450	4.06%
Total amount to be raised by general rates	19,222	19,793	571	2.97%

Table 4 - Total amount of Rates and Charges to be levied.

	2024/25	2025/26	Change	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%
General Rates	19,222	19,793	571	2.97%
Municipal Charges	2,135	2,203	68	3.18%
Waste Charges	2,892	2,910	18	0.62%
Total Rates and charges	24,249	24,906	657	2.71%

There are 6,444 properties in the Southern Grampians Shire where municipal waste charge is applicable creating a total rate revenue of \$2,770,916.

Council has previously offered an incentive for prompt payment, a discount of two per cent where all four instalments of rates and charges declared for the current year (less the discount) are paid on or before the first instalment date, excluding any arrears of rates and charges outstanding from previous years.

Council have decided to continue the prompt payment incentive (2%) for the 2025/2026 year and also encourage ratepayers under financial strain to apply for hardship provisions. In the current climate and with such significant change to the Emergency Services Volunteer Fund Levy, the focus for Council is assisting ratepayers that are experiencing financial duress.

Payment of rates can be by four instalments made on or before the due dates, which are anticipated to be as per below, however dates are subject to change:

Instalment 1 – 30 September 2025

Instalment 2 – 30 November 2025

Instalment 3 – 28 February 2026 and

Instalment 4 – 31 May 2026.

Interest at the rate prescribed by Section 172(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* be payable in respect of any rates and charges which are not paid by the dates fixed pursuant to Section 167(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Ratepayers can apply for hardship provisions under the Financial Relief and Hardship Policy including:

- Alternative Payment Arrangements / Payment Plan
- Deferral of rates and charges
- Waiver of interest and legal charges or
- Waiver of rates and charges.

Long Term Financial Plan

The 2025/2026 Budget (or Financial Plan) contains projections for the 2025/2026 year and the following three years.

The Long Term Financial Plan projects a further seven years, after the Financial Plan, taking the total projected figures to a 10 year timeframe.

Council has decided that as it prepares each annual iteration of the Financial Plan (Annual Budget), it will also amend the Long Term Financial Plan.

This means that the two documents will mirror one another for the first four years, however the Long Term Financial Plan will also incorporate any new information regarding longer term matters such as forward capital works, outcomes of masterplans or strategies and the latest inflation or escalation data.

The LTFP has been drafted with the following assumptions:

Revenue

- The Rate Cap is anticipated to be 2.5% for the 2026/2027 year and then indexed at 2% for the remainder of the 10 year plan.
- Fees & Charges are indexed at 3.5% for 2026/2027 onwards.
- Statutory Fees are indexed at 2.5% for 2026/2027 onwards.
- Operating Grants:
 - R2R increasing in line with Federal Governments commitment.
 - Financial Assistant Grants indexing at 2%.
 - Conservative outlook on capital grants with no non-recurrent grants included with the exception of major projects.

Costs

- Employee Costs: Capped at 1% rise p.a.
- Materials Costs: Capped at 1% rise p.a.
- Other Expenses: Capped at 1% rise p.a.

Other Highlights

- New Hamilton Gallery design and construction funded.
- Design and construction for the Community Hub funded.
- Accumulated cash surpluses over the 10 years.
- Low level of debt at the end of the 10 year period.

The Draft Capital Works programs have also been loaded into the Plan, including Asset Renewals, Major Projects and Business Cases.

Pricing Register

The \$6.873m of fees and charges is supported by the 2025/2026 Pricing Register. This document provides a comprehensive list of all fees and charges levied by Council. It also includes a classification system and pricing principle for each of these charges. These charges have increased by an average of 4%, however the pricing basis and principle are taken into consideration for each individual fee and charge. (It should be noted that some of these fees and charges are set by other levels of government and simply passed on by Council).

Financial and Resource Implications

Council is required to implement the principles of sound financial management detailed in Section 136 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Support Our Community

- 1.1 An empowered and connected community
- 1.1.3 Provide opportunities for increased community engagement and participation in Council decision making and activities.
- 1.1.4 Ensure communication and engagement methods use inclusive practices and processes.

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

- 5.1 Transparent and accountable governance
- 5.1.2 Ensure flexible and transparent decision making through open and accountable governance.

Legislation

The 2025/2026 Budget includes the key activities and initiatives to be funded that will contribute to achieving the strategic objectives specified in the Council Plan 2021-2025.

The Council Plan identifies that we will:

- Support our Community
- Grow our Regional Economy
- Maintain and renew our Infrastructure
- Protect our Natural Environment
- Provide strong Governance and Leadership

It is anticipated that the 2025/2026 Budget will align closely with the strategic objectives of the new Council Plan 2025-2029, once completed.

Gender Equality Act 2020

There are no direct implications to the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in preparing the 2025/2026 Capital Budget and LTFP, however, Council casts a strong gender lens across all its operations, programs and projects throughout the year and the budget allows for provisions that support gender equality initiatives.

Risk Management

There are no direct implications to the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in preparing the 2025/2026 Capital Budget and LTFP, however, Council casts a strong gender lens across all its operations, programs and projects throughout the year and the budget allows for provisions that support gender equality initiatives.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

The Annual Budget provides the funding for the Council to undertake its social, economic, and environmental initiatives outlined in the Council Plan 2021-2025.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

Council engaged with the community in relation to the preparation of the 2025/2026 Annual Budget and associated documents in October 2024. We shifted to a single engagement period prior to the preparation of the budget and began seeking submissions from the community in November 2024.

This upfront engagement reflects the intent of earlier and more effective community involvement before the draft budget is prepared, as is the intent of the *Local Government Act 2020* and is in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

This earlier engagement process has allowed Council to be better informed of residents' priorities within the context of the Council Plan 2021-2025 and prior to the development of the budget.

We conducted a short survey about the Budget and Long-Term Financial Plan which aligned with the community providing their submissions regarding the budget. Feedback for both closed on 10 January 2025 and twenty-five community submissions were received. Councillors provided twenty-three submissions and Council staff submitted 132 business cases.

This process provided us with valuable information prior to the budget cycle. Those community members who wanted to speak to their submissions, which was nine in total, presented to Council on 26 February 2025.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Tony Doyle, Chief Executive Officer
Darren Barber, Director People and Performance
Nick Templeton, Head of Finance

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

Budget recommendations:

1. Adopts the Budget attached to this recommendation in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and relevant regulations.
2. Acknowledges the community's contribution to the Budget consultation process and acknowledges the people and organisations who provided written feedback by thanking them in writing individually.

Declaring rates and charges recommendations:

3. Declares an amount of \$24.897M which Council intends to raise by General Rates and Annual Service Charges for the period 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026 calculated as follows:
 - a) General Rates \$21.996M; and
 - b) Annual Service charges \$2.910M.
4. Declares the Rates and Charges as detailed in Council's Revenue and Rating Plan 2021-2025 as required under section 94(2)(i) of the Act and section 161(2) of the *Local Government Act 1989* in line with Tables 1 to 4 of this Report.
5. Grants an early full rate payment discount of 2% on current year rates and charges, if full payment (including any arrears and interest) is received on or before the first instalment due date.
6. Notes that the Budget utilises final valuations from the Valuer-General.

Other recommendations:

7. Adopts the 2025/2026 Pricing Register
8. Adopts the 2025/2035 Long-Term Financial Plan.

MOTION

MOVED: Cr Rainsford

That items 1 - 8 be put out as draft documents for community consultation which includes the long term financial plan.

The motion LAPSED for want of a **SECONDER**

MOTION

MOVED: Cr Henry
SECONDED: Cr Manning

That Council:

Budget recommendations:

1. Adopts the Budget attached to this recommendation in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and relevant regulations.
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6. Notes that the Budget utilises final valuations from the Valuer-General.

Other recommendations:

7. Adopts the 2025/2026 Pricing Register
8. Adopts the 2025/2035 Long-Term Financial Plan.

AMENDMENT

MOVED: Cr Rainsford

That Council instruct the Chief Executive Officer not to sign off on any Civic Hub or New Hamilton Gallery designs until we have had 400mls of rain across the Shire by 1 November to refill our water supplies and get us out of this drought situation.

The AMENDMENT lapsed for want of a **SECONDER**

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Henry
SECONDED: Cr Manning

That Council:

Budget recommendations:

1. Adopts the Budget attached to this recommendation in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and relevant regulations.
2. Acknowledges the community's contribution to the Budget consultation process and acknowledges the people and organisations who provided written feedback by thanking them in writing individually.

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6. Notes that the Budget utilises final valuations from the Valuer-General.

Other recommendations:

7. Adopts the 2025/2026 Pricing Register

8. Adopts the 2025/2035 Long-Term Financial Plan.

CARRIED

12.3

Community Partnership Grants Policy

Directorate: Chief Executive Office
Report Approver: Alison Quade (Manager Communication and Engagement), Tony
Report Author: Doyle (Chief Executive Officer)
Melanie Russell, Grants Officer
Attachment(s): 1. Community Partnership Grants Policy July 2025 (1) [12.3.1 - 6 pages]

Executive Summary

This report provides Council with information on the policy review of the Community Partnership Grants Program. The purpose of the review is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, compliance and ensure continuous improvement of the grants program.

Discussion

The Community Partnership Grants Policy was last revised in December 2022, feedback from community and Council officers promoted a review of the current program and policy. Timely reviews ensure Council policies remain current, relevant, and effective, aligning with evolving laws, industry best practices, and organisational needs.

Over the past 12 months the Community Development team have conducted ongoing evaluation sessions with community, the Grants Assessment Team and Council officers on the policy review.

Feedback from past acquittal reports has also been used to support the review. Acquittal reports are used to capture the correct expenditure of grant funds and allow the applicant to provide feedback on the grants process, highlighting areas for improvement.

Please see below the five areas identified for update in the policy:

1. Increasing threshold to \$3,000 (no matching funding required)

With the increasing costs of trades and services, community groups have indicated it is challenging to deliver projects for \$2,500. Many community groups do not have additional funds to contribute and have conveyed that this is a barrier when applying through the grants program. It is recommended to increase the threshold to \$3,000 to provide support to community groups in the current economic climate.

2. Eligibility

Items to be added to the **not eligible** list within the policy:

- The purchase of alcohol, tobacco, and vaping goods.
- Projects, activities, or items related to gambling.
- Inflatables on Council-owned land or facilities.
- Applicant's public liability insurance or any other insurance policies.

- Lower priority will be given to activities that have previously been awarded a Council grant, that are ongoing without an adequate sustainability plan.
- Applications where the applicant's organisation/s promote and/or benefit directly from electronic gaming machines or activities at a business where these machines operate.

3. Funding for Council owned facilities managed by community

Community groups and clubs managing Council owned facilities will now be eligible to apply through the Community Partnership Grants program.

The policy update will allow applicants to apply for fixed assets, works or improvements to facilities or equipment that is owned or managed by Council.

4. Level of Public Liability Insurance

The community expressed concerns over the \$20 million Public Liability Insurance requirement for the Community Partnership Program. For smaller low risk events, this cost is a barrier when applying through the grants program.

The Risk Team has confirmed this amount may be assessed on a case-by-case basis for the Community Partnership Grant Program, determined by level of risk.

The Risk Team has advised Public Liability Insurance may remain at the value of \$10 million for the Community Partnership Grant Program Policy. Community events and projects may be assessed on a case-by-case basis using a risk management plan to protect themselves against legal liability for third party's injury, death and/or damage to property caused by an occurrence in connection with the applicant's activities.

5. Inclusion of Council's Fair Access Policy

Inclusion of Southern Grampians Shire Council's Fair Access Policy and Action Plan into the grants assessment process to reflect the following:

- to support the integration of Fair Access Policies and Principles the State Government has introduced in new legislation,
- to convey Council's ongoing commitment to ensure the facilities we provide are inclusive and welcoming to women and girls.

Financial and Resource Implications

The collaborative approach across Council provides opportunities for Council to work with the community to broaden the scope of ideas identified within applications to position these projects and or events to leverage external funding.

The Community Partnership Program has a budget of \$300,000 for the 2025 – 2026 financial year.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Support Our Community

- 1.1 An empowered and connected community
 - 1.1.1 Facilitate opportunities for people to participate in community life, through volunteering, civic leadership, social programs, to enable inclusion, social connection and wellbeing.
 - 1.1.3 Provide opportunities for increased community engagement and participation in Council decision making and activities.

Support Our Community

- 1.2 Support and promote a healthy community
 - 1.2.1 Provide and advocate for accessible, inclusive and equitable Council services, facilities, activities and participation practices.
 - 1.2.2 Support and encourage participation in arts and culture, education, leisure, recreation and sporting opportunities.

Support Our Community

- 1.3 Grow a diverse and inclusive community
 - 1.3.2 Encourage, support and celebrate a diverse, multicultural community, including celebrating, recognising and respecting our cultural heritage and engaging our Indigenous communities.
 - 1.3.3 Support the increase of social, economic and digital connectedness.

Grow Our Regional Economy

- 2.2 Increase our regional profile
 - 2.2.2 Invest in and advocate to the responsible agencies for the improvement and maintenance of the Shire's natural and cultural attractions to improve the visitor experience.
 - 2.2.4 Develop strategies that not only attract visitors but encourage them to consider living, learning or investing in the Shire and grow the Visitor Economy.

Maintain and Renew Our Infrastructure

- 3.2 Safe and well-maintained transport routes and infrastructure for all modes of travel
 - 3.2.3 Provide infrastructure that supports a connected and active community.

Maintain and Renew Our Infrastructure

- 3.3 Attractive Council-owned and managed community and open spaces
 - 3.3.1 Continue to invest in and activate open spaces within Southern Grampians.
 - 3.3.3 Improve and provide opportunities for shared community spaces.

Legislation

The Community Partnership Grants Program Policy was adopted in December 2022.

Gender Equality Act 2020

Inclusion of Council's Fair Access Policy will enable effective and efficient integration of the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020, the Local Government Act 2020 and the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 and other legislative frameworks into the grants program.

Risk Management

The Community Partnership Grants Policy outlines the process by which all grant submissions will be considered by Council.

There is a predetermined eligibility and assessment criteria with a set weighting, to identify and assess the risk exposure within each application. The policy ensures projects and events have adequate control measures in place to ensure their successful and safe delivery.

Each grant applicant must also demonstrate that they comply with any legal or statutory regulations relevant to the project for which they are seeking Community Partnership Grants funding. This includes (where relevant) appropriate insurances, food handling permits, liquor licences etc.

The policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure it remains valid with potential change in legislation and government priorities.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

No Environmental and Sustainability Considerations identified.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

Council staff have engaged with community to gain feedback for the policy review, engagement methods include one-on-one interviews, working groups and an evaluation survey.

The policy review was developed in close consultation with Council's Senior Leadership Team, Community Partnership Assessment Team, and relevant Council Officers

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Melanie Russell, Grants Officer

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the revised Community Partnership Grants policy.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Rainsford

SECONDED: Cr Barber

That Council adopt the revised Community Partnership Grants policy.

CARRIED

12.4 Hamilton CBD Streetscape Project Advisory Group - Terms of Reference

Directorate:	Chief Executive Office
Report Approver:	Rory Neeson (Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation)
Report Author:	Alison Quade, Manager Communication and Engagement
Presenter(s):	Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation Alison Quade, Manager Communications and Engagement
Attachment(s):	1. Terms of Reference CBD Revitalisation Project Advisory Group [12.4.1 - 4 pages]

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Hamilton CBD Revitalisation Project Advisory Group as requested in the resolution from the 9 April 2025 Council Meeting that stated:

“Council establishes a Project Advisory Group with representation from business, community, Councillors and Council officers. Officers are to bring draft terms of reference to this advisory group to a Council Briefing in May 2025.”

Discussion

At the April 2025 Council Meeting, the Concept Plans for the Hamilton CBD Streetscape Project were presented to Council with the recommendation to adopt and commence works on the next stages of the project.

An alternate recommendation was brought forward and resolved upon by Council which read:

1. Council receives the Hamilton CBD Revitalisation Package One Concept Plan.
2. Council requests the architect to provide an option showing the retention of all but the most problematic Plane trees. This is to include a strategy for removal of the problematic trees and proposed replacement species with details on size, growth rate and maintenance considerations.
3. Council establishes a Project Advisory Group with representation from business, community, Councillors and Council officers. Officers are to bring draft terms of reference for this advisory group to a Council Briefing in May 2025.
4. Officers prepare a project management strategy to ensure a minimal impact on businesses and continued access to shops and premises including consideration of the current local economic climate and the timing of Stage One to protect local businesses from losses at peak retail periods. This would be brought to a briefing following adoption of concept plans for stage 1.
5. Officers develop a maintenance strategy for the CBD Plane Trees that includes replacement and retention over the next fifty years.
6. Concept Plans for Packages 2 and 3 be presented to Council at a future Council Meeting that includes retaining existing Plane trees.
7. Council prioritises maintenance issues of the Plane trees, including planter boxes and brick paving.

8. Officers provide a report to Council that considers a council coordinated central business gutter cleaning contract.

This report relates to point three and the establishment of a Project Advisory Group.

A Project Advisory Group (PAG) is a committee established by Council with the purpose of providing advice to Council. A PAG has no decision-making powers. It should be comprised of a range of stakeholders whose experience, knowledge and skills will contribute to matters on which Council is seeking feedback or a decision in relation to a project.

The draft TOR outlined below, sets out specific roles of committee members, how they are appointed, governance, meeting and reporting requirements.

Details of TOR

Purpose:

The purpose of the CBD Revitalisation PAG is to provide Council and the project management team with advice and guidance on:

- Community and business engagement
- Project implementation and timing
- Communications
- General advice around aspects of the project

The PAG will support Council in an advisory capacity through the provision of local knowledge, advice and feedback as required for the design stages of the project.

Scope and Tenure:

The PAG will:

- Assist with and support community and business engagement for the project duration.
- Provide feedback and advice on project implementation timing.
- Attend meetings as required.

The PAG will operate during the life of the design stages of the project, or until such time Council resolves to dissolve the Group.

The PAG can provide advice and make recommendations to Council but has no decision making authority.

Authority:

The PAG will operate in an advisory capacity and is not authorised to make decisions on behalf of Council or the project management team.

Membership and Chair:

The Membership of the PAG includes:

- 1 x Councillor – Chairperson
- 2 x Council Officers - Director Wellbeing and Regulation; Manager Communications and Engagement
- Community and Business representatives who nominate to be part of the group as part of the Expression of Interest process. If over nine nominations are received an interview process will be completed with a report presented to Council with a recommendation on who should be part of the group based on their response to the expression of interest.
- Administrative Officer

Appointment of Members:

Nominations shall be invited from relevant local businesses and community members. The invitation for membership will be advertised across the Southern Grampians Shire.

Business and community representative members will be for a maximum of two years. Members may seek reappointment at the conclusion of their term.

The Councillor representative will be nominated and resolved upon by Council.

Guests may be invited to make presentations to the Project Advisory Group throughout the life of the project as requested by the group. This can include but not be limited to Council staff members, contractors or consultants engaged by Council.

Meeting Arrangements:

The PAG will meet at bi-monthly throughout the concept design phase until the final designs are adopted by Council.

Reporting and Communication

- A Council officer will circulate an agenda at least three days prior to each meeting and take the minutes of the meeting.
- Minutes will be distributed to all members of the Project Advisory Group.
- The Chair will provide meeting updates to Council after each meeting.

Conduct:

PAG members are required to conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the Southern Grampians Shire Council Code of Conduct.

Group members must agree to participate in a positive manner on all aspects of the project, be willing to contribute actively to discussions and consider alternative points of view.

Further standard governance details regarding Reporting and Communication, Resignation, Resources and Budget and Conflict of interest are also included in the TOR.

The TOR will be reviewed as required.

Financial and Resource Implications

This PAG is currently unbudgeted.

While the PAG would have no responsibility for managing finances or access to funding, there would be a cost to resource administration of the group.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Support Our Community

1.1 An empowered and connected community

1.1.3 Provide opportunities for increased community engagement and participation in Council decision making and activities.

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.1 Transparent and accountable governance

5.1.2 Ensure flexible and transparent decision making through open and accountable governance.

Legislation

Council is required to meet its obligations under the Victorian Disability Act 2006 and supporting regulations and guidelines. This includes provision of accessibility parking bays and the provision of disability access to all shops and businesses, where practicable.

The design will also need to conform with all requirements of the Victorian Infrastructure Design Manual.

Reporting requirement will adhere to the Local Government Act 2020

Gender Equality Act 2020

It will be important to ensure that, as much as possible, there is a gender balance within the PAG membership.

Risk Management

The establishment of this PAG aims to help reduce risk to Council throughout the duration of this project by ensuring Council is communicating with the community.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

The PAG will consider Environmental and Sustainability factors as they relate to the CBD revitalisation project when giving feedback and advice to Council.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

Following the Council Briefing on 29 January, the Concept Plans for CBD Revitalisation Package 1 were released for a public consultation. As part of the consultation, a business engagement session was held in the Hamilton Cinema. The designs were able to be viewed in a CBD shopfront while also available to view at the Hamilton Library and Council's Brown Street Customer Service Centre and online via the Council website during the consultation period.

An Expression of Interest process for community members and business owners will be advertised publicly through Council's communication channels.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Alison Quade, Manager Communications and Engagement

Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Adopt the Draft Terms of Reference for the Hamilton CBD Revitalisation Project Advisory Group.
2. Appoint Councillor to Chair the Hamilton CBD Revitalisation Project Advisory Group.
3. Commence an Expression of Interest process to engage community members and business representatives to the Group.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Manning
SECONDED: Cr Henry

That Council:

1. **Adopt the Draft Terms of Reference for the Hamilton CBD Revitalisation Project Advisory Group.**
2. **Appoint Councillor Barber to Chair the Hamilton CBD Revitalisation Project Advisory Group.**
3. **Commence an Expression of Interest process to engage community members and business representatives to the Group.**

CARRIED

12.5

Coleraine Quarry - Section 96A combined planning scheme amendment and planning permit

Directorate:	Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation
Report Approver:	Rory Neeson (Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation)
Report Author:	Daryl Adamson, Manager Strategy and Regulation
Presenter(s):	Daryl Adamson, Manager Shire Strategy and Regulation
Attachment(s):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C 6 Xsgra - DRAFT Amendment Instruction Sheet [12.5.1 - 1 page] 2. C 6 Xsgra - DRAFT Amendment Cadastral Maps and Aerial Maps [12.5.2 - 8 pages] 3. C 6 Xsgra - DRAFT Explanatory Report [12.5.3 - 8 pages] 4. Cover Letter to Council 10 January 2025 [12.5.4 - 4 pages] 5. DRAFT Planning Report - January 2025 [12.5.5 - 53 pages] 6. Further Letter to Council - 14 February 2025 [12.5.6 - 6 pages] 7. Native Vegetation - DEECA Correspondence [12.5.7 - 7 pages] 8. T P-30-2025 - DRAFT Planning Permit [12.5.8 - 4 pages] 9. W A 410 - 1 WPV - PL N 000923 Statutorily Endorsed - Rigby Bros & Co PL - 30 October 2024 [12.5.9 - 197 pages] 10. W A 410 - 2 Appendices - PL N 000923 Statutorily Endorsed - Rigby Bros - 30 October 2024 Part 1 [12.5.10 - 217 pages] 11. W A 410 - 3 Appendices - PL N 000923 Statutorily Endorsed - Rigby Bros - 30 October 2024 Part 2 [12.5.11 - 194 pages] 12. W A 410 - Community Engagement Plan [12.5.12 - 20 pages] 13. W A 410 - DRAFT Schedule of Conditions - WPV PL N-000923 - Rigby Brothers & Co Pty Ltd - 30 October 2024 [12.5.13 - 5 pages] 14. W A 410 - Dust Management Plan [12.5.14 - 21 pages] 15. W A 410 - Noise Management Plan [12.5.15 - 13 pages] 16. W A 410 - Notice of Statutory Endorsement - WPV PL N-000923 - Rigby Brothers & Co Pty Ltd - 30 October 2024 [12.5.16 - 2 pages] 17. W A 410 - Referral checklist - Rigby Brothers & Co Pty Ltd - 30 May 2022 [12.5.17 - 10 pages] 18. W A 410 - Referral Response DEECA PEA - WPV PL N-000923 - Rigby Brothers & Co Pty Ltd - 22 October 2 [12.5.18 - 2 pages] 19. W A 410 - Referral Response EPA - WPV PL N-000923 - Rigby Brothers & Co Pty Ltd - 23 October 2024 [12.5.19 - 3 pages] 20. W A 410 - Referral Response Heritage Victoria - WPV PL N-000923 - Rigby Brothers & Co Pty Ltd - 2 Oc [12.5.20 - 1 page] 21. W A 410 - Risk Management Plan [12.5.21 - 74 pages] 22. WA410 - Statutory Endorsement Information for Council - WPV PLN-000923 - Rigby Brothers & Co Pty Ltd - 30 October 2024 [12.5.22 - 1 page]

Executive Summary

This report seeks Council's resolution to seek Ministerial Authorisation to prepare and exhibit a combined planning scheme amendment and planning permit application under section 96A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. The amendment has been requested by Rigby Bros & Co Pty Ltd and seeks to facilitate the expansion of the existing Coleraine Quarry at 26 Templeton Street, Coleraine.

The proposal includes the rezoning of approximately 5.6 hectares of land from Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) to Farming Zone (FZ) and the removal of the Development Plan Overlay Schedule 3 (DPO3). A concurrent planning permit is sought for the use and development of the land for extractive industry purposes as part of the existing quarry operation.

The expansion is underpinned by an Endorsed Work Plan Variation approved by DEECA under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* (MRSDA). The amendment seeks to align the Southern Grampians Planning Scheme with the endorsed work plan, regularise long-standing quarry activities, secure access to additional hard rock resources, and ensure the long-term viability of a strategically significant local industry.

It is recommended that Council resolve to seek Ministerial Authorisation under section 8A(3) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to prepare and exhibit the combined amendment and planning permit application.

Discussion

The Coleraine Quarry, located at 26 Templeton Street, Coleraine, has a long and significant operational history that dates to the late 1800s. Originally established to support local infrastructure development, the site has supplied hard rock for more than a century. Early extraction was carried out manually until blasting operations were introduced in the 1930s, significantly increasing the quarry's productivity.

In 1947, operations were contracted out by the Shire of Wannon, and in 1969, the quarry licence was formally transferred to Rigby Bros & Co Pty Ltd (the Proponent), who had been managing the site on the Shire's behalf. When Southern Grampians Shire Council was formed in 1997, ownership of the site was transferred to the Proponent, who has since operated the quarry privately.

The quarry previously operated under Extractive Industry Licence 393, which was transitioned to Work Authority WA410 in April 1996 following legislative changes under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*. Since that time, the quarry has continued to function under established use rights. The most recent updates to the Work Plan occurred in 1975 until the current proposal triggered a formal Work Plan Variation process.

The site has a longstanding reputation as a regional supplier of crushed rock for roads, construction projects, and local government infrastructure works. Its output, typically between 30,000 to 40,000 tonnes annually, reflects a modest scale but regionally significant operation. The product - a durable volcanic trachyte - is highly regarded for its quality and structural characteristics.

The current Quarry Land comprises Lot 1 PS914025 and Lot 2 PS818710 and is zoned Farming Zone. However, to accommodate the proposed extension of the quarry's extraction area and associated infrastructure, the Proponent seeks to include adjoining parcels of land to the south and east, which are currently not zoned for extractive industry:

- Part of 26 Templeton Street (Lot 2 PS818710)
- Lot 1 TP862809 (Pitcher Street)

- Crown Allotment 25 (12 Pitcher Street)
- Crown Allotment 24 (10 Cameron Street)
- Lot 1 PS818710H (17 Gray Street).

These parcels, referred to collectively as the Amendment Land, are partially zoned Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) and are affected by Development Plan Overlay Schedule 3 (DPO3). Under the current zoning and overlay, extractive industry is a prohibited use.

A Work Plan Variation (PLN-000923) for WA410 was statutorily endorsed by DEECA on 30 October 2024. This variation expanded the approved Work Authority area from 5.58 hectares to 12.55 hectares and increased the approved disturbance area from 4.25 hectares to 7.8 hectares. It also provided for a more contemporary rehabilitation framework, risk-based environmental controls, and clarified operating parameters such as extraction depth and site layout.

The proposed planning scheme amendment and associated permit application seek to bring the Southern Grampians Planning Scheme into alignment with the Endorsed Work Plan and to formalise long-standing operations that have incrementally expanded into adjacent land. Several of these parcels have been used for quarry-related activities such as stockpiling for decades.

A comprehensive Planning Report (Equipe Lawyers, January 2025) has been prepared in support of the proposal. This is accompanied by the required planning scheme documentation, including a draft Explanatory Report, Amendment Instruction Sheet, proposed planning permit, and updated zone and overlay maps.

Proposed Changes

The combined planning scheme amendment and planning permit application proposes the following:

Proposed Planning Scheme Amendment

- Rezoning: Rezone the Amendment Land from Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) to Farming Zone (FZ) to allow the land to be used and developed for extractive industry purposes in accordance with the endorsed Work Plan.
- Overlay Removal: Remove Development Plan Overlay Schedule 3 (DPO3) from the Amendment Land to eliminate the requirement for a development plan and remove impediments to permit granting.

These changes will allow the Southern Grampians Planning Scheme to reflect the long-standing non-residential use of the land and ensure consistency with adjoining Farming Zone and Industrial Zone land.

Planning Permit Application

A concurrent planning permit is proposed under section 96A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to:

- Use and develop the Amendment Land for extractive industry as part of the expansion of the existing Coleraine Quarry

- Extend the existing extraction area as defined in the Endorsed Work Plan Variation, including stockpile and hardstand areas
- Authorise associated works, including sediment traps, access tracks, a weighbridge, and relocation of processing plant infrastructure
- Confirm hours of operation and site management practices (noting that no changes to existing operational hours or traffic volumes are proposed)
- Undertake rehabilitation works in accordance with the approved Rehabilitation and Closure Plan contained in the Endorsed Work Plan.

These changes respond to the site's operational needs, accommodate growth in demand for construction materials, and ensure compliance with best practice environmental and risk management frameworks. The expansion area comprises previously disturbed land, avoids native vegetation, and will not result in additional impacts to nearby sensitive receptors.

Rationale and Benefits

The proposed amendment and permit application are necessary to secure the long-term viability of the Coleraine Quarry, a critical supplier of crushed hard rock to the Southern Grampians region. The rationale for the proposed changes is multi-faceted, encompassing strategic policy alignment, local economic development, and efficient land use planning.

Strategic Benefits

The proposal is supported by several objectives within the Southern Grampians Planning Scheme, including:

- Clause 14.03-1S (Resource exploration and extraction) seeks to "protect the opportunity for exploration and extraction of natural resources where this is consistent with overall planning considerations."
- Clause 17.03-2S (Sustainable Industry) encourages the protection and expansion of regionally significant industries and minimising land use conflicts.
- Clause 02.03-1 (Settlement) and Clause 02.03-5 (Natural resource use and landscape values) within the Municipal Planning Strategy support facilitating extractive industry in appropriate locations that do not adversely impact urban or environmental values.

The proposed quarry expansion ensures a local supply of construction materials essential for infrastructure projects, which supports economic growth and reduces freight distances. The amendment will also correct a zoning anomaly. Retention of LDRZ over land being actively used and proposed for expansion of extractive industry is inconsistent with the area's strategic direction, as the LDRZ anticipates low-density residential development that would be fundamentally incompatible with quarry operations.

Council is currently undertaking a Structure Plan for Coleraine, and this amendment request does not prejudice the outcomes of that broader strategic planning process. The background report for the Structure Plan identified land use compatibility issues between land zoned Low Density Residential and the existing quarry operations. This amendment addresses and rectifies that identified land use conflict by ensuring zoning and overlay controls are consistent with the existing and proposed industrial use. The proposal is therefore aligned with the strategic directions emerging from the Structure Plan process and strengthens the long-term planning framework for Coleraine.

Assessment of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Potential impacts associated with quarry operations have been comprehensively assessed through the Endorsed Work Plan process, which included agency referrals to DEECA, EPA, and other statutory authorities. Key issues and their mitigations include:

- **Amenity (Noise, Dust, Blasting):**
 - A Dust Management Plan and Noise Management Plan have been prepared and endorsed by DEECA.
 - Best practice control measures will be implemented, including water suppression for dust, limited operating hours, and ongoing monitoring.
 - Blasting practices have been refined and controlled within limits set by EPA guidelines.
- **Visual Impact:**
 - Extraction will be contained below natural ground level.
 - Existing vegetation and landscape buffers will be retained where possible.
- **Traffic:**
 - No increase in daily truck movements is proposed. Existing access arrangements are considered sufficient.
 - A Traffic Impact Assessment has been finalised to confirm the adequacy of the road network.
- **Flora and Fauna:**
 - The expansion avoids native vegetation removal, confirmed through DEECA referral processes.
 - Rehabilitation plans ensure post-closure landscape restoration and environmental enhancement.
- **Cultural Heritage:**
 - Areas of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity have been avoided. Advice was obtained from the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

Through these management frameworks, potential off-site impacts will be mitigated to acceptable levels, ensuring that quarry operations remain compatible with the surrounding environment and community expectations.

Net Community Benefit

The continuation and expansion of the Coleraine Quarry provides significant local benefits, including:

- Ongoing employment opportunities in the extractive industry.
- Continued local availability of competitively priced construction materials.
- Reduced reliance on distant quarries, resulting in transport efficiencies.
- Contribution to regional economic resilience and support for infrastructure delivery.

The combined amendment request aligns with State and Local Policy imperatives to secure resource supply close to demand centres, balancing environmental protection with economic development. The proposal achieves an appropriate balance between protecting

environmental and community amenity values while enabling an essential regional industry to grow in a sustainable manner.

Financial and Resource Implications

The costs associated with the preparation and exhibition of the amendment will be met in full by the proponent, Rigby Bros & Co Pty Ltd. This includes statutory fees, public notice costs, and any associated costs that may arise through the exhibition and panel process, should one be required.

The primary impact on Council will be administrative in nature. Council officers will be required to manage the amendment and permit application process, coordinate with the Department of Transport and Planning, respond to public and agency submissions, and report outcomes to Council throughout the statutory process. While this will involve officer time, the resourcing impacts are considered manageable within existing work programs and are consistent with Council's role as the planning authority.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Grow Our Regional Economy

2.1 Drive economic growth

2.1.1 Research and implement economic initiatives that support new and existing businesses to establish and invest in the region.

2.1.3 Support opportunities for intensification, diversification and value adding within the agricultural and primary industries sector.

Grow Our Regional Economy

2.4 Support local business and industry

2.4.2 Support and facilitate business development and growth initiatives.

2.4.3 Streamline services to reduce red tape in approval process.

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.4 Customer-focused services

5.4.2 Improve the customer experience by delivering accessible and responsive customer service.

Legislation

The planning scheme amendment request supports Council's obligations under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to implement the objectives of planning in Victoria, as outlined in Section 4(1) of the Act. Specifically, it contributes to:

- Providing for the fair, orderly, economic, and sustainable use and development of land by facilitating the expansion of an existing quarry operation that has been strategically assessed for extractive industry use. The amendment regularises existing use patterns and promotes sustainable land use practices aligned with broader regional development goals.

- Protecting natural and man-made resources and maintaining ecological processes and genetic diversity by ensuring that quarry operations are expanded in a controlled and environmentally responsible manner, consistent with the Endorsed Work Plan, and avoiding the removal of native vegetation or disturbance of culturally sensitive sites.
- Securing a pleasant, efficient, and safe working, living, and recreational environment for all Victorians and visitors by minimising land use conflicts between incompatible uses, providing clear zoning that reflects existing and intended land use, and applying modern environmental management standards to quarry operations.
- Balancing the present and future interests of all Victorians by ensuring that the region has ongoing access to a vital construction material supply while simultaneously safeguarding community amenity, environmental values, and setting appropriate expectations for the future use and rehabilitation of the quarry site.

The combined amendment and permit request is consistent with the purpose and intent of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and facilitates outcomes that are in the broader public interest.

Gender Equality Act 2020

There are no direct implications under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in progressing the combined planning scheme amendment request.

Risk Management

Progressing the proposed amendment and permit application provides greater certainty for the landowner, adjoining landowners, and the broader Coleraine community. Formalising the expansion of the quarry through appropriate zoning ensures that land use expectations are clear, and that Council is transparently managing potential land use conflicts.

Council has a responsibility to ensure the planning scheme accurately reflects the existing and intended use of land. Failure to implement the necessary rezoning and overlay removal could lead to several risks, including:

- Ongoing uncertainty for the landowner and adjoining residents regarding the future use of the land.
- Potential for inappropriate residential expectations in areas proximate to an active quarry.
- Development occurring on land unsuitable for residential purposes due to proximity to extractive industry operations, leading to amenity impacts and avoidable land use conflict.

Integrating the quarry expansion into the planning scheme ensures that decisions on land use and development are made with full knowledge of quarry operations and associated management frameworks, including environmental and amenity safeguards. Failure to act could undermine public confidence in Council's ability to plan proactively for the orderly development of Coleraine and compromise the strategic work currently underway through the Coleraine Structure Plan.

Ensuring that the Southern Grampians Planning Scheme reflects the endorsed Work Plan and future quarry operations strengthens decision-making, supports sustainable development, and protects both Council and the community from future planning-related risks.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

The proposed amendment and associated quarry expansion have been developed in accordance with contemporary environmental management standards. The Endorsed Work Plan for the Coleraine Quarry includes detailed risk assessments and management plans addressing environmental sustainability, including dust suppression, water management, noise mitigation, and site rehabilitation.

Quarry operations are inherently adaptive over time, with progressive rehabilitation stages designed to ensure environmental resilience. The risk of exacerbating climate change impacts such as increased erosion or sedimentation has been minimised through best-practice environmental controls endorsed by DEECA.

In this context, the amendment is considered to support sustainable development by ensuring local material supply reduces the need for long-distance transportation, thereby minimising carbon emissions associated with freight.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

Initial engagement with relevant referral authorities has occurred through the statutory Endorsed Work Plan process, which included referrals to DEECA, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), and other relevant agencies. These agencies raised no objections to the expansion proposal subject to the implementation of best-practice environmental management controls.

Following Ministerial Authorisation, the amendment and combined planning permit application will be placed on public exhibition in accordance with section 96C of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. Exhibition will include direct notification to affected landowners and occupiers, referral authorities, and any other prescribed bodies, along with a notice published in local newspapers and the Government Gazette.

The public exhibition process provides an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to review the proposed amendment and permit, raise submissions, and have their views formally considered. Should submissions be received that cannot be resolved, a Planning Panel may be appointed by the Minister to consider submissions and make recommendations to Council.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Rory Neeson, Director, Wellbeing Planning and Regulation

Daryl Adamson, Manager Shire Strategy and Regulation

Anita Collingwood, Planning Coordinator

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Resolves to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning under *Section 8A of the Planning and Environment Act 1987* to prepare and exhibit a combined planning scheme amendment and planning permit application under Section 96A of the Act to facilitate the expansion of the existing Coleraine Quarry at 26 Templeton Street, Coleraine.
2. Authorises the Director, Wellbeing Planning and Regulation to make any necessary changes to the amendment documentation to comply with conditions of authorisation.
3. Upon receiving authorisation, prepare and exhibit the amendment and combined permit application in accordance with section 96C of the Act.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Calvano
SECONDED: Cr Rainsford

That Council:

1. Resolves to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning under *Section 8A of the Planning and Environment Act 1987* to prepare and exhibit a combined planning scheme amendment and planning permit application under Section 96A of the Act to facilitate the expansion of the existing Coleraine Quarry at 26 Templeton Street, Coleraine.
2. Authorises the Director, Wellbeing Planning and Regulation to make any necessary changes to the amendment documentation to comply with conditions of authorisation.
3. Upon receiving authorisation, prepare and exhibit the amendment and combined permit application in accordance with section 96C of the Act.

CARRIED

12.6 Response to Notice of Motion 2/25 - Cat Curfew

Directorate: Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation
Approver: Rory Neeson (Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation)
Report Author: Daryl Adamson, Manager Strategy and Regulation
Attachment(s): Nil

Executive Summary

At the Council Meeting held on 12 February 2025, a motion was presented by Cr Henry which discussed the management of cats within the Shire. Council resolved that Officers were to present a report at a future Council meeting on:

1. **Further Implementation of a Cat Curfew in line with Council's Local Law:** Council Officers review enhancing the enforcement of a cat curfew as per the current Local Law. The aim is to mitigate the adverse effects of free-roaming domestic cats on local wildlife and community safety.
2. **Impact and Control of Feral Cats in the Shire and what further measures could be implemented to control them:** Council Officers review the current impact of feral cats in the Shire and considered additional measures to control their population. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of existing strategies and exploring new methods to address the issue.

Discussion

This report discusses the implementation, rationale, and regulation of the cat curfew, as well as its impact on the community. The Southern Grampians Shire Council introduced a cat curfew as a key action in its Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2021 – 2025, which was informed by community feedback.

The introduction of the cat curfew was supported previously by Council, which was in favour of a night-time cat curfew. Additionally, many organisations, including the RSPCA and the Cat Protection Society of Victoria, have expressed their support for curfew measures throughout the State of Victoria.

A cat curfew is a specified time when cats are not allowed outside of their property boundary. In the Southern Grampians Shire, the curfew is in place from sunset until sunrise. The curfew was included as part of the Community Local Law No.1 of 2022 Clause 31:

“The owner of any cat must confine the cat to the owner's property either within the dwelling or within another escape-proof structure between the hours of sunset and sunrise.”

To comply with this Clause, cats must be confined to their owner's property during the following times:

- Non-daylight savings hours: between 6.30pm and 6.30am
- Daylight savings hours: between 8.30pm and 6.30am

According to the Australian Veterinary Association (2016), "The fact is, the more time a pet cat spends safe at home, the less risk of injury or death from road accidents, fighting, and disease. A pet cat kept safe at home can live up to four times longer than a cat left to roam."

The cat curfew is consistent with how other animal-related matters are managed under the Community Local Law No.1 of 2022. Authorised Officers use the following principles when enforcing the regulation:

- Educating cat owners on their responsible pet ownership requirements
- Issuing warnings and notices to comply where appropriate
- Issuing infringement notices to offenders where appropriate

Community members are encouraged to contact the Council if there is a known cat in the neighbourhood that regularly trespasses onto their property in the evening. Residents experiencing problems with cats or feral cats trespassing on their property, can contact the Council Rangers which has traps available for loan. These traps can help manage and mitigate the issue by safely capturing the cats, allowing for their return to their owners or appropriate handling by the Council. This measure supports the overall goal of the curfew by ensuring that cats are kept within their designated boundaries and reducing the impact on the community and wildlife.

Registering cats and ensuring registration details remain up to date is crucial for keeping cats safe. Registration details are used to reunite pets with their owners if they are lost or captured through the Council's Cat Trapping Program. As per the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*, all cats over three months of age must be microchipped and registered with the Council. The Council offers the following advice to cat owners on our website:

- Keep cats secured in catteries.
- Contain cats, particularly at night, to restrict roaming outside its place of residence which can lead to potential nuisance complaints being lodged with Council.
- House training - placement of kitty litter, and provision of readily available food sources, including water.
- Cats should wear a collar with name, address where it resides and the owner's contact number.
- Cats should have a bell attached to their collar to assist in reducing predation of birdlife.

If a cat is found wandering during curfew hours and is not registered, the owner will be required to register it before it is released. If the owner cannot attend within the timeframe given by the Authorised Officer, the cat will be transported to the Council's pound for appropriate handling.

However, to further enhance the effectiveness of the Southern Grampians Shire Council's sunset to sunrise cat curfew, the Council could consider several enhancements or additional controls:

1. **Increased Public Awareness Campaigns:** A more comprehensive education and awareness campaigns to inform residents about the benefits of the cat curfew and responsible pet ownership. This could include workshops, social media campaigns, and community events.

2. **Enhanced Monitoring and trapping program:** Implementing a more robust system for residents to report stray or roaming cats. This could involve an online reporting tool to ensure timely and efficient handling of complaints, along with increasing the number of traps available for loan to manage and mitigate the issue effectively.
3. **Stricter Penalties for Non-Compliance:** Introducing higher fines and stricter penalties for repeated violations of the curfew. This would act as a stronger deterrent for non-compliance and encourage more responsible behaviour among cat owners.
4. **Partnerships with Local Veterinary Clinics:** Collaborating with local veterinary clinics to offer discounted services for microchipping, desexing, and registering cats. This would make it easier and more affordable for residents to comply with the curfew requirements.
5. **Increased Patrols:** Conducting regular patrols in the evening in areas with high incidences of roaming cats. This proactive approach would help identify and address issues before they escalate.
6. **Support for Cat Owners:** Providing resources and support for cat owners to help them keep their pets indoors at night.
7. **24-Hour Cat Curfew:** Implementing a 24-hour cat curfew to further protect wildlife and reduce the risks associated with roaming cats. This would require cats to be always confined to their owner's property, not just during nighttime hours. Such a measure would significantly decrease the chances of cats encountering dangers outside and would further promote responsible pet ownership.

In the past reporting period, Rangers have managed to trap a total of 134 cats. Out of these, 18 cats were successfully rehomed or reclaimed by their owners, contributing positively to the community by reducing stray cat populations. Unfortunately, 114 cats had to be euthanised due to various reasons, including health issues and lack of suitable homes. Currently, two cats remain in the pound awaiting further action. These figures highlight the ongoing challenge of managing the cat population within the Shire and underscore the need for continued efforts in community education.

Council Officers consider the current 'sunset to sunrise cat curfew' to be a carefully regulated and considered measure aimed at protecting both cats and wildlife. This curfew reduces the risks associated with roaming cats and promotes responsible pet ownership within the community.

Financial and Resource Implications

Implementing additional controls to enhance the Southern Grampians Shire Council's sunset to sunrise cat curfew will have several financial and resource implications.

- Increased public awareness campaigns will require funding for materials and advertising. This includes costs for printing brochures, creating online content, and organising community events.
- Developing an enhanced monitoring and trapping program will involve initial setup costs and ongoing maintenance expenses. This includes purchasing additional traps, developing an online reporting tool, and allocating staff time to manage and respond to increased complaints.

- Stricter penalties for non-compliance may require legal consultations and updates to the existing Community Law No.1 of 2022, along with administrative costs for processing fines and managing appeals.
- Collaborating with local veterinary clinics to offer discounted services may involve negotiating new agreements and possibly subsidising some costs.
- Regular patrols and inspections will necessitate additional staffing or reallocating existing staff resources, leading to increased labour costs and the need for vehicles and equipment.
- Implementing a 24-hour cat curfew would likely increase the need for enforcement and monitoring, leading to higher staffing and administrative costs, as well as additional costs for publicising the new curfew hours and educating the community.

Several Victorian Local Government Areas (LGAs) have rejected the implementation of a 24-hour cat curfew. The primary concerns include the increased need for enforcement and monitoring, which would lead to higher staffing and administrative costs. Additionally, there would be significant expenses and health and wellbeing consideration for cat owners to comply with new regulations, especially during a cost-of-living crisis.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Protect Our Natural Environment

4.1 Protect and enhance biodiversity including the health of waterways, wetlands, soil and air

4.1.3 Protect endemic flora and fauna species throughout the Shire.

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.2 Effective advocacy

5.2.2 Advocate on behalf of the community in line with identified and agreed priorities.

Legislation

Domestic Animals Act 1994

Community Local Law No.1 of 2022

Gender Equality Act 2020

The discussion and recommendations within this report have no impacts related to the Gender Equality Act 2020. Further consideration will be given to the Act when the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025 – 2029 is developed.

Risk Management

By implementing Council's current mitigation measures and potential proposed measures outlined within this report, the Southern Grampians Shire Council aims to protect local wildlife while promoting responsible pet ownership.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) provides various measures to control the cat population and mitigate their impact on wildlife. This document provides an effective and comprehensive risk management strategy.

A revised DAMP is to be submitted to the department by 4 December 2025.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

Implementing a curfew to protect the welfare of animals aligns with broader climate change, environmental, and sustainability considerations. Climate change poses significant threats to ecosystems and biodiversity, exacerbating the vulnerability of wildlife. By reducing the risks associated with free-roaming cats, such as predation on native species and disruption of local fauna, the curfew supports efforts to maintain ecological balance and biodiversity. For instance, the Grampians National Park (Gariwerd), is home to diverse wildlife, and measures and discussed controls in this report protect its delicate ecosystems. Additionally, the Eastern Barred Bandicoot enclosure in Hamilton is a critical habitat for this endangered species and reducing threats from domestic and feral cats is essential for their survival.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

The DAMP is now due for renewal, which is mandated by Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. This provides a structured opportunity for both the Council and the community to address and improve strategies related to domestic animal management. By involving the community, the Council can ensure that the new DAMP reflects local needs and concerns. Promoting responsible pet ownership is a key aspect of this renewal, emphasising the importance of proper care, training, and socialisation of pets to enhance their well-being and reduce potential issues within the community.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Daryl Adamson, Manager Shire Strategy and Regulation
Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. Receive this report as a response to the Notice of Motion from Cr Helen Henry at the February 2025 Council Meeting.
2. Commence preparation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025 – 2029 with community consultation focusing on strengthening domestic and feral cat controls.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Henry
SECONDED: Cr Barber

That Council

1. Receive this report as a response to the Notice of Motion from Cr Helen Henry at the February 2025 Council Meeting.
2. Commence preparation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025 – 2029 with community consultation focusing on strengthening domestic and feral cat controls.

CARRIED

12.7 Councillor Gift Policy Review

Directorate: People and Performance
Report Approver: Darren Barber (Director People and Performance)
Report Author: Karly Herring, Governance Coordinator
Attachment(s): 1. Council Policy People and Performance Councillor Gift Policy
June 2025 [12.7.1 - 6 pages]

Executive Summary

Council is required to adopt and review a Councillor Gift Policy in accordance with section 138 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Discussion

Section 138 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) requires Council to adopt a Councillor Gift Policy which must include procedures for the maintenance of a gift register and any matters prescribed by the regulations.

The Councillor Gift Policy was last adopted by Council on 10 February 2021.

It was due for review in February 2025 and no substantial changes have been made to the policy.

The Councillor Gift Policy aims to ensure transparency and the principles of good governance and accountability are practiced by Councillors. The Policy provides an overview of Councillor's legislative responsibilities with regard to gifts, including legislated thresholds, conflicts of interest, personal interests, campaign donations and standards of conduct.

The Policy outlines the overall process for declining or accepting gifts as well as the process of recording all gifts and all offers of gifts in a register.

Financial and Resource Implications

This Policy applies to Councillors and staff obligations are addressed in the Code of Conduct.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.1 Transparent and accountable governance

5.1.1 Strengthen the governance role of Councillors by informing, resourcing, skilling and supporting the role.

5.1.2 Ensure flexible and transparent decision making through open and accountable governance.

Legislation

Section 138 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires Council to adopt a Councillor Gift Policy.

Gender Equality Act 2020

There are no direct gender equality implications for this Policy.

Risk Management

Regular review of Council policies ensure policies are fit for purpose.

The Councillor Gift Policy reduces risk by increasing transparency and accountability by implementing a gift register for inspection and oversight.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

There are no environmental or sustainability considerations in relation to this report.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

This policy will be made publicly available on Council's website and a register is available for viewing.

The policy aims to increase public transparency and awareness and provide explanation as to why Councillors do not accept gifts.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Karly Herring, Governance Coordinator

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the Councillor Gift Policy.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Calvano
SECONDED: Cr Henry

That Council adopt the Councillor Gift Policy.

CARRIED

12.8

Quarterly Finance Report to 31 March 2025

Directorate: People and Performance
Report Approver: Darren Barber, Director People and Performance
Report Author: Nick Templeton, Head of Finance
Attachment(s): 1. Financial Quarterly Report at 31 March 2025 [12.8.1 - 14 pages]

Executive Summary

The Finance Report for the quarters ended 31 March 2025 is presented for the information of Council.

Discussion

The Finance Reports set out actual results compared to Budget for the first nine months of the 2024/25 financial year and contains the Standard Statements namely:

- Comprehensive Income Statement,
- Balance Sheet,
- Statement of Cash Flows,
- Statement of Capital Works and

The Report also includes information on cash balances, current borrowing ratios and debtor balances.

Included in the March 2025 quarterly report is a summary of the key components of the Finance Report with key information available for readers of the report. Narratives also accompany each of the statements.

The Comprehensive Income Statement result for the nine months to 31 March is a surplus of \$8.639m and the forecasted result for the same period was a surplus of \$9.652m. During the March quarter there was total revenue recognised of \$5.090m while the total expenditure for the three months was \$11.459m.

Cash and investment held at 31 March 2025 was \$7.527m.

Key narratives to 31 March 2025 include;

Income Statement

The Comprehensive Income Statement result for the nine months to 31 March is a surplus of \$8.639m and the forecasted result for the same period was a surplus of \$9.652m. The actual and forecasted result for the period is very positive and is due to the rates for the full year being raised in the first quarter, which means that 99% of the annual forecasted rates revenue is recognised prior to this period.

The main variances within the report are identified with an explanation provided for what has transpired, which includes:

REVENUE

- Reimbursement of rate pensioner concessions 155k forecast in the first half of year is not yet received. Donations received not budgeted 417k. Capital Grants not yet received 1.406m;
- The major variance for the quarter was the reduction in asset sales from lakes edge and miscellaneous property of 5.142m in 2024/25 with this being forecast into the 2025/26 budget.

EXPENDITURE

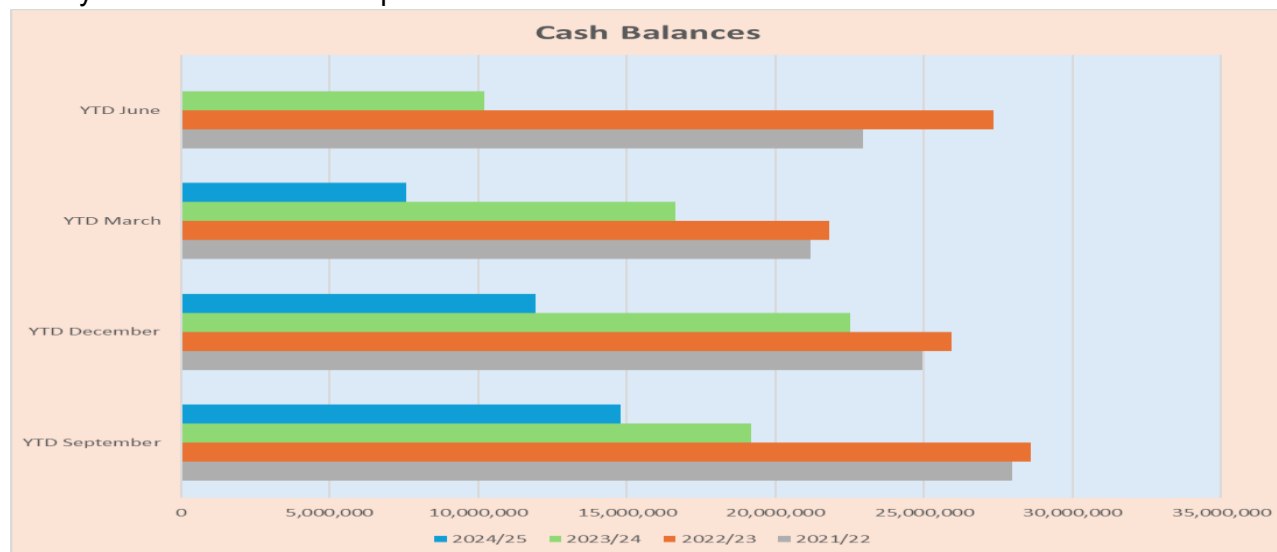
- Fringe Benefits Tax payments are a quarterly contribution based on tax office estimates, final cost is calculated and confirmed in the last quarter;
- contributions to community groups was lower than expected for the first half of the year with higher expenditure expected for January to June 2025;
- Plant and fleet operations is the net cost and includes internal hire (allocation) of Council owned fleet usage to projects. Plant usage for operating activities are higher until the November to April period, which is when the majority of capital works is undertaken and plant is utilised for capital rather than operating. The financial result of the plant and fleet operations is expected to improve up until April and capital works are completed;
- Utility cost are higher than budgeted, largely due to increased gas prices.

Statement of Cash Flows and Balance Sheet

Council is holding \$7.527m in cash and investment at 31 March 2025. The forecast at 31 March was for cash and investments of \$10.718m.

Debt servicing and debt commitment ratios are both strong, being well below the acceptable maximum level which is due to the low level of borrowings.

Four year cash balance comparison.



Statement of Capital Works

Detailed reports on the financial progress of the capital works and major projects are also provided for information. Capital works for the YTD to March were \$17.001m completed compared to a YTD forecast of \$19.266. The capital works carried forward from 2023/24 was a total net amount of \$10.986m.

Expenditure incurred included progression of the works at Melville Oval of \$5.521m, Hamilton-Chatsworth road works \$1.299m, Vic Point Road \$826k, Gallie Road \$572k, Hamilton Pool works \$460k along with Pedrina Park works of \$372k.

The capital expenditure for the December to March quarter was a total amount of \$7.059m to increase the year to date expenditure to \$17.001 compared to the \$9.942m spent at 31 December 2025.

Financial and Resource Implications

The report communicates our financial sustainability and compliance with our annual budget.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.1 Transparent and accountable governance

5.1.1 Strengthen the governance role of Councillors by informing, resourcing, skilling and supporting the role.

5.1.2 Ensure flexible and transparent decision making through open and accountable governance.

Legislation

Section 97 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires that after the end of each quarter, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) must ensure that a quarterly budget report is presented to the Council. The report must include a comparison of the actual and budgeted results to date and an explanation of material variations, and any other matters prescribed by the regulations.

In addition, the second quarterly report of a financial year must include a statement by the CEO as to whether a revised budget is, or may be, required. The June report is indicative only with the final report being Council's official financial report which is audited and then included as part of Council's Annual Report.

Council is also required to implement the financial management principles detailed in Section 101 of the Local Government Act 2020 which states:

(1) The following are the financial management principles:

- (a) Revenue, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and financial transactions must be managed in accordance with a Council's financial policies and strategic plans;

- (b) Financial risks must be monitored and managed prudently having regard to economic circumstances;
 - (c) Financial policies and strategic plans, including the Revenue and Rating Plan, must seek to provide stability and predictability in the financial impact on the municipal community;
 - (d) Accounts and records that explain the financial operations and financial position of the Council must be kept.
- (2) For the purposes of the financial management principles, financial risk includes any risk relating to the following:
- (a) The financial viability of the Council;
 - (b) The management of current and future liabilities of the Council;
 - (c) The beneficial enterprises of the Council

Gender Equality Act 2020

There are no direct implications to the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in preparing the Financial Report, however, Council casts a strong gender lens across all of its operations, programs and projects throughout the year and the budget allows for provisions that support gender equality initiatives.

Risk Management

The report measures financial risk and compliance with our annual budget.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

The report measures financial sustainability and compliance with our annual budget.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

The report communicates our financial sustainability and compliance with our annual budget.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Nick Templeton, Head of Finance

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive the Finance Report for the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Barber
SECONDED: Cr Manning

That Council receive the Finance Report for the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

CARRIED

12.9 Council Plan Quarterly Reporting - 1 January 2025 - 31 March 2025

Directorate: People and Performance
Report Approver: Darren Barber (Director People and Performance)
Report Author: Karly Herring, Governance Coordinator
Attachment(s): 1. Annual Plan Council Plan - 1 January 2025 - 31 March 2025
[12.9.1 - 32 pages]

Executive Summary

The Action and Task Progress Report for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025 has been prepared to provide information regarding the performance of the organisation against the Council Plan's Annual Plan.

Discussion

The Annual Plan is developed each year to assist in the delivery of the Council Plan objectives and to demonstrate to the community the key projects to be delivered that year.

The Annual Plan sets out the specific actions and includes a detailed list of Council's activities and initiatives for the upcoming financial year. These initiatives are projects that are undertaken over and above normal service delivery and are intended to attain important outcomes for Council and the community.

Reports on the progress of the Annual Plan are reported to Council quarterly. This allows Council to receive timely, relevant and measurable information about how the organisation is performing. This in turn allows Council an opportunity to raise concerns about performance in a timely manner. The Annual Plan reporting will also help formulate the Annual Report and support the reporting against the Council Plan each year.

There are 73 actions in the report of which:

- 60 actions (82%) are on track - at least 90% of the target achieved
- 10 actions (14%) require monitoring –between 70% and 90% of the target achieved
- 3 actions (4%) are off track – less than 70% of target achieved

Details about the specific performance of the Annual Plan actions are detailed in the attached Action and Task Progress Report.

Financial and Resource Implications

Financial implications have been accounted for in Council's adopted Budget.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.1 Transparent and accountable governance

5.1.1 Strengthen the governance role of Councillors by informing, resourcing, skilling and supporting the role.

5.1.2 Ensure flexible and transparent decision making through open and accountable governance.

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.2 Effective advocacy

5.2.2 Advocate on behalf of the community in line with identified and agreed priorities.

Legislation

Council is required to adopt a Council Plan in accordance with section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and subsequently determine whether any adjustments are required.

This Plan is supported by the development of an Annual Plan which details the actions that will be undertaken to achieve the strategic objectives in the Council Plan.

Gender Equality Act 2020

Any gender equality implications will be addressed on a case-by-case basis on the body of work directly related to individual actions.

Risk Management

Reporting on the Annual Plan is to be presented to Council quarterly so Council can regularly monitor the performance of the organisation.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

Any climate change, environmental and sustainability considerations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis on the body of work directly related to individual actions.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

The Report is publicly available and accessible to the public to ensure regular updates are required regarding the implementation of the Council Plan.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Karly Herring, Governance Coordinator

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive the Action and Task Progress Report for 1 January 2025 – 31 March 2025.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Henry
SECONDED: Cr Barber

That Council receive the Action and Task Progress Report for 1 January 2025 – 31 March 2025.

CARRIED

12.10 Model Code of Conduct Internal Resolution Procedure

Directorate: People and Performance
Report Approver: Darren Barber (Director People and Performance)
Report Author: Karly Herring, Governance Coordinator
Attachment(s): 1. Model Councillor Code of Conduct and Internal Resolution Procedure 2025 [12.10.1 - 9 pages]

Executive Summary

On 25 June 2024, the *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Act 2024* received royal assent. It includes reforms aimed at strengthening leadership and dispute resolution and oversight.

As a result, the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2024 require Councils to adopt procedures for dealing with alleged breaches of the Model Code of Conduct by 1 July 2025.

Discussion

The Internal Resolution Procedure must:

- Deal with alleged breaches of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct.
- Include a conciliation process that is to be conducted by the Mayor, or if the Mayor is party to the matter or is unable to perform the role, the Deputy Mayor or another person.
- Detail how an alleged breach is to be dealt with and what available processes may be used.
- Detail how a Councillor may initiate a request to have a matter dealt with.
- Detail roles and responsibilities of the parties to a matter.
- The role, function and duty of each person for conducting the process.
- Any support that Council is to make available.
- The form and availability of a record of any agreement, resolution or outcome reached.

Financial and Resource Implications

There are resource implications relating to staff time, namely, Governance and the Councillor Conduct Officer, these positions would be responsible for providing administrative support to assist with the conciliation process.

External facilitation would potentially have financial implications, depending on the mediator appointed to oversee the process.

Council will not pay the costs of legal advice or representation for any Councillor in connection with this Procedure. Parties to a dispute may seek their own legal or other advice at their own cost, if they choose to do so.

If a breach of the standards of conduct is outside the scope of this procedure, there are financial implications for Council associated with internal arbitration and Councillor Conduct Panels.

Under the councillor conduct framework:

- complaints of **misconduct** by a councillor are heard and determined under the council's **internal arbitration process** by an independent arbiter
- complaints of **serious misconduct** by a councillor are heard and determined by **councillor conduct panels**
- allegations of **gross misconduct** are dealt with by the **Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)**.

The costs associated with council's internal arbitration process, including the arbiter's fee, must be met by the council.

The registrar has set the fees to be paid to arbiters at \$954 per day.

The costs associated with councillor conduct panel hearings are met by the council for which the hearing is conducted.

The registrar has set the fees for legal panel list members at \$1193 per day, and for non-legal members at \$1078 per day.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.1 Transparent and accountable governance

5.1.1 Strengthen the governance role of Councillors by informing, resourcing, skilling and supporting the role.

5.1.2 Ensure flexible and transparent decision making through open and accountable governance.

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

5.3 Committed and skilled staff

5.3.1 Encourage an organisation that values equality, diversity, workplace health, safety and wellbeing.

Legislation

The *Local Government Act 2020* establishes a councillor conduct framework that provides a clear hierarchy for the management of councillor conduct issues and is supported by the Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Act 2024 and Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2024.

Gender Equality Act 2020

The Councillor Conduct Framework is a legislated process to guide and support conduct issues and any gender equality elements would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Risk Management

The Procedure ensures Council meets its legislative responsibilities and regular review furthers best practice guidance.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

There are no direct climate change, environment and sustainability considerations in relation to the procedure.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

The Procedure forms part of the public record and ensures transparency regarding process and cost implications.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Karly Herring, Governance Coordinator

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the Model Councillor Code of Conduct Internal Resolution Procedure.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Manning
SECONDED: Cr Calvano

That Council adopt the Model Councillor Code of Conduct Internal Resolution Procedure.

CARRIED

12.11 Planning Committee Meeting - 28 May 2025

Directorate: Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation
Report Approver: Rory Neeson, Director, Wellbeing Planning and Regulation
Report Author: Sharon Clutterbuck, Executive Assistant to Director Wellbeing Planning and Regulation
Attachment(s): 1. Planning Committee Meeting - Minutes - 28 May 2025 - confirmed [12.11.1 - 37 pages]

Executive Summary

The Minutes from the Planning Committee meeting held on 28 May 2025 and endorsed by members of the Committee are presented to Council for information.

Discussion

This committee was established as a Delegated Committee of Council on 12 August 2020 in accordance with Section 64 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Matters for consideration at a Planning Committee:

- All planning permits valued between \$5 million and \$10 million (or less if the officer is recommending refusal except if refusal relates to a matter which is prohibited under the Planning Scheme).
- All planning permits that receive between 10 and 20 objections.
- All applications where the officer is recommending refusal (except if refusal relates to a matter which is prohibited under the Planning Scheme).
- Power to decide to grant an amendment to a planning permit if the value of the original development exceeds \$5 million or if 10 or more objections were received, or if the officer is recommending refusal (except if refusal relates to a matter which is prohibited under the Planning Scheme)
- All planning permits made pursuant to Section 97C of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to request the Minister to decide the application.
- All planning scheme amendment under section s.8A(7) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to prepare the amendment specified in the application without the Minister's Authorisation if no response received after 10 days.
- All planning scheme amendments that clarify or correct mistakes in the Planning Scheme (applied for under Section 20(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*).
- Whether applications should be referred to the full Council for a decision.

The meeting on 28 May 2025 considered the following matters:

TP-09-2025 proposed a permit under Clause 52.05 (Signs) for the construction and display of externally illuminated major promotional signage at Gordon Street, Coleraine.

The Committee resolved to refuse to grant a permit and the reasons for refusal are outlined in the minutes.

TP-64-2024 proposed a permit under Clause 52.05 (Signs) for the construction and display of a single sided, electronic sign at 7 Ballarat Road Hamilton.

The Committee resolved to refuse to grant a permit and the reasons for refusal are outlined in the minutes

Financial and Resource Implications

Preparation of reports, agenda and minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting utilises Council resources. Council Officers present reports and provide information to the committee.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Grow Our Regional Economy

2.4 Support local business and industry

2.4.2 Support and facilitate business development and growth initiatives.

2.4.3 Streamline services to reduce red tape in approval process.

Legislation

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* provides that certain local government authority responsibility and functions can be delegated to Committees of Council or Council Officers.

Gender Equality Act 2020

There are no gender equality implications.

Risk Management

There are no risk management implications through Council receiving these Planning Committee minutes, however a variety of factors relating to risk were considered as part of decisions made by the Planning Committee at each meeting.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

Whilst there are no direct implications in this category associated with the report, it should be noted that Council and the committee are committed to producing documentation and data through systems that have the least impact on the environmental. Agendas, reports and minutes are produced electronically and distributed via email. Presenters have the option to attend meetings virtually to reduce the need for travel.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

A copy of the Minutes is available on Council's website

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Sharon Clutterbuck, Executive Assistant, Director Wellbeing Planning and Regulation
Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 28 May 2025.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Manning
SECONDED: Cr Rainsford

That Council receive the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 28 May 2025.

CARRIED

12.12 Audit & Risk Committee Meeting Minutes - 9 May 2025

Directorate: People and Performance
Report Approver: Darren Barber, Director People and Performance
Report Author: Nadine Rhook, Executive Assistant Director People and Performance
Attachment(s): 1. 09-05-2025 - ARC Minutes [12.12.1 - 4 pages]

Executive Summary

The Minutes from the 9 May 2025 meeting as endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) are presented to Council for adoption.

Discussion

Under Section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020* the Council must establish an Audit and Risk Committee, as an Advisory Committee of the Council. This Committee fulfils both a statutory and consultative function. It provides feedback, advice and direction to Council on both Risk and Financial matters in accordance with the committee charter.

Financial and Resource Implications

Preparation of reports, agenda and minutes of the Audit and Risk Meeting utilises Council resources. Council Officers and Chief Executive Officer attend the Audit and Risk Committee meeting to present reports and provide information to the committee.

Independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee are paid a sitting fee as members of the Committee and internal auditors are engaged to conduct audits in accordance with the endorsed audit schedule throughout the year.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

- 5.1 Transparent and accountable governance
- 5.1.1 Strengthen the governance role of Councillors by informing, resourcing, skilling and supporting the role.

Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

- 5.3 Committed and skilled staff
- 5.3.1 Encourage an organisation that values equality, diversity, workplace health, safety and wellbeing.

Legislation

The Audit and Risk Committee is established in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* (Section 53).

Gender Equality Act 2020

There are no *Gender Equality Act 2020* implications through the noting of the Audit and Risk Committee minutes.

Risk Management

The Audit and Risk Committee has clear function in review of Councils Risks as per the Committee Charter.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

Whilst there is no direct implication in this category associated with the report, it should be noted that Council and the committee are committed to producing documentation and data through systems that have the least impact in the environment. Agendas, reports and minutes are produced electronically and distributed via email. Presenters are encouraged to attend meetings virtually to reduce the need for travel.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

Changes in membership will be communicated to the relevant stakeholders when a change in membership has occurred.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Darren Barber, Director People and Performance

Nadine Rhook, Executive Assistant Director People and Performance

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the Minutes for the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 9 May 2025.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Calvano
SECONDED: Cr Barber

That Council note the Minutes for the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 9 May 2025.

CARRIED

13 Notices of Motion

There were no Notices of Motion on tonight's agenda.

14 Urgent Business

There was no Urgent Business.

15 Mayor, Councillors and Delegate Reports

Address from the Mayor and Councillors in relation to matters of civic leadership and community representation, including acknowledgement of community groups and individuals, information arising from internal Committees and delegates committees, advocacy on behalf of constituents and other topics of significance.

15.1 Cr Afton Barber

Cr Barber provided a verbal report which can be viewed in the livestream of the Meeting on Council's Facebook page.

15.2 Cr Albert Calvano

Cr Calvano provided the following report:

- 24 May: I volunteered to work on gate No2 at Melville oval, good crowd and sold lots of raffle tickets.
Unfortunately, Kangas didn't win against South Warrnambool, they were too good.
Had a lot of positive comments on the finish of Melville oval.
- 2 June: I attended the Audit & Risk Committee meeting which was held at Martin J Hynes Auditorium.
- 4 June: I attended a meeting with the friends of the Hamilton Botanic gardens, the president spoke of the friend's contributions and then a tour of the gardens and the Thomson Memorial Fountain restoration. And we all enjoyed a beautiful morning tea.

15.3 Cr Adam Campbell

Cr Campbell was an apology for tonight's Meeting.

15.4 Cr Helen Henry

Cr Henry provided a verbal report which can be viewed in the livestream of the Meeting on Council's Facebook page.

15.5 Cr Dennis Heslin

Cr Heslin provided a verbal report which can be viewed in the livestream of the Meeting on Council's Facebook page.

15.6 Cr Jayne Manning

Cr Manning provided a verbal report which can be viewed in the livestream of the Meeting on Council's Facebook page.

15.7 Cr Katrina Rainsford

Cr Rainsford provided the following report:

15 May	MAV pre council forum and conference, where councillors were concerned about the Upper House "debate" and decision to vote in favour of the introduction of the new Emergency Services Volunteer Fund Levy.
16 May	MAV Conference - dominated by debate on response to the State Govt ESVF Levy
20 May	Attended the CFA Protest Rally at Spring St against the State Govt ESVF Levy
21 May	SGSC Briefing
27 May	Reconciliation event @ Melville Oval Pavilion
28 May	SGSC Planning Committee Meeting and site visits
30 May	Pre Planning Agenda SGSC for Hamilton Showgrounds Advisory Committee
2 June	Hamilton Showgrounds Advisory Committee final meeting minutes and Chairs report has been circulated
4 June	SGSC Hamilton Business Forum @ Speckled Frog
4 June	SGS Council meeting with Friends of the Botanic Gardens to tour the gardens and view proposed Playspace
5 June	Hamilton Eisteddfod Choir night performances
9 June	Hamilton Gallery Sensorium Display and Children's Sensory Gallery Experience
10 June	SGSC NCFH Breakfast Farmer Health Workshop @HECC Hamilton Showgrounds
11 June 2025	New Citizenship Ceremony @ new Melville Oval Pavilion

A heads up to the community to get onto the VicGrid website or attend one of their session in Thompson St morrow. last session Hamilton, there was one out at Penhurst today and I hope the community were able to attend. I have concerns that the draft zone for windtowers includes country between Mt Rouse and the Grampians. The windtower height dwarfing local landmarks and dominating out landscapes.

I am also concerned that at a wind energy company presentation there was comment that the solar capacity was saturated, yet when I researched the period that windtowers are more effective it was also during daylight hours.

What we need developing and what we are going to get may be disconnected. I respect the climate change energy requirements and it is good that community are able to have input. We hope the State Government is listening.

16 Confidential Reports

RECOMMENDATION

That the following items be considered in Closed Council as specified in section 66(2)(a) and referenced in section 3(1), Confidential Information (a) council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Henry
SECONDED: Cr Calvano

That the following items be considered in Closed Council as specified in section 66(2)(a) and referenced in section 3(1), Confidential Information (a) council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released

CARRIED

16.1 Hamilton Industrial Estate Variations

The meeting was closed to the public at 7:31 pm.

17 Close of Meeting

This concludes the business of the meeting.

The Council Meeting of 11 June 2025 closed at 7:38pm.

Confirmed by Resolution at the Council Meeting held on 9
July 2025.