



Date: Tuesday, 22 April 2025
Time: 3.00pm
Location: Loddon Shire Council Chambers, Wedderburn

MINUTES

Council Meeting

**MINUTES OF LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEDDERBURN
ON TUESDAY, 22 APRIL 2025 AT 3.00PM**

PRESENT: Cr Dan Straub (Mayor), Cr Nick Angelo, Cr Gavan Holt, Cr David Weaver and Cr Miki Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE: Lincoln Fitzgerald (Chief Executive Officer), Wendy Gladman (Director Community Wellbeing), David Stretch (Acting Director Operations), Michelle Stedman (Director Corporate) and Lisa Clue (Manager Governance)

1 OPENING AFFIRMATION

The Mayor read the Opening Affirmation

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Chief Executive Officer read the Acknowledgement of Country

3 APOLOGIES

Nil

4 DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nil

5 PREVIOUS MINUTES**5.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

File Number: FOL/19/45615

Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance

Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer

Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council confirm the Minutes of the following meetings as previously circulated to Councillors:

1. Council Briefing of 25 March 2025
2. Council Meeting of 25 March 2025
3. Council Forum of 8 April 2025

REPORT

This report seeks Council confirmation of Minutes from the March 2025 Council Briefing and Council Meeting, and the April 2025 Council Forum, as previously circulated to Councillors.

RESOLUTION 2025/39

Moved: Cr Nick Angelo

Seconded: Cr Miki Wilson

That Council confirm the Minutes of the following meetings as previously circulated to Councillors:

1. Council Briefing of 25 March 2025
2. Council Meeting of 25 March 2025
3. Council Forum of 8 April 2025

CARRIED

6 COUNCIL AUSPICED MEETINGS

6.1 RECORD OF COUNCIL AUSPICED MEETINGS

File Number: 02/01/001

Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance

Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer

Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council confirm the records of the following auspiced meetings as detailed within this report:

1. Council Briefing held 25 March 2025
2. Council Forum held 8 April 2025.

Rule 35 of Council's Governance Rules requires a record of meetings conducted under the auspices of Council to be presented to the next available scheduled Council meeting for confirmation that must include:

- a) a record of which Councillors and officers attended the meeting;
- b) a summary of the matters considered in the meeting; and
- c) a record of any conflicts of interest disclosed by Councillors and officers and any Councillors or officers that left the meeting whilst a matter that their conflict of interest related to was being discussed.

Section 3 of the Governance Rules defines meetings conducted under the auspices of Council to mean a meeting of the kind described in section 131(1) of the Local Government Act 2020 and includes a meeting which:

- a) is schedule or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of Council or briefing Councillors;
- b) is attended by a majority of Councillors;
- c) is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
- d) is not a Council meeting or delegated committee meeting.

This report seeks confirmation of the Council Briefing held on 25 February 2025 and the Council Forum held 11 March 2025.

Meeting details	Briefing
Date	25 March 2025
Councillor Attendees	Cr Straub (Mayor) Cr Angelo Cr Holt Cr Weaver Cr Wilson
Staff/ Stakeholder representatives	Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing Steven Phillips, Director Operations Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate Lisa Clue, Manager Governance Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services – items 2 – 4 below David Stretch, Manager Tourism & Economic Development); Susan Fayad, City of Ballarat and Trevor Budge, City of Greater Bendigo; and Cr Liesbeth Long, Sally Jones, Emma Little, Amber Ricks, and Veronica Hutcheson, Central Goldfields Shire Council - item 5 below Phil Galloway, Syncline Energy - item 6 below Darcy Jackson, Statutory Planning Officer and Louise Johnston, Statutory Planning Coordinator - item 7 below
Item(s) discussed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of Council Meeting Agenda 2. Update on key financial documents and budget indexation factors 3. Request to write off bad debts 4. Draft Fees and Charges 2025/26 5. Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Bid Update – Loddon and Central Goldfields Shires 6. Introduction to the Syncline Community Cable Project 7. Planning Application 6030: Construct a building (storage shed) associated with agriculture 8. Newbridge Water and Sewerage 9. Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Levy 10. General Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy • Mandatory mayor and Councillor Induction Declarations • Corellas
Conflict of Interest Disclosures – Councillor/ officer making disclosure	Cr Holt declared a conflict of interest in relation to item 6 above.
Councillor/officer left room	Cr Holt left the room while item 6 was being discussed.

Meeting details	Forum
Date	8 April 2025
Councillor Attendees	Cr Straub (Mayor) Cr Angelo Cr Holt Cr Weaver Cr Wilson
Staff/ Stakeholder representatives	Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing David Stretch, Acting Director Operations Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate Lisa Clue, Manager Governance Tracy Hunt, Governance Coordinator Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services – items 1 - 3 below Nicole Taylor, Acting Manager Community Services – items 4, 6 and 7 below Orrin Hogan, Manager Community Partnerships – items 4 and 7 below Louise Johnston, Statutory Planning Coordinator and Glenn Harvey, Manager Development and Compliance – item 5 below Rhonda Merritt, Kindergarten Coordinator – item 6 below
Item(s) discussed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft Fees and Charges 2025/26 – Response to Councillor Queries 2. Draft Annual Budget 2025/26 – Draft Financials 3. Revenue and Rating Plan 4. Introduction to Draft Loddon Inclusive Communities Plan 5. Strategic Planning Project Update 6. Wedderburn Early Learning Centre/Wedderburn Kindergarten Update 7. Elderly Persons Units Service Review 8. 2025 Council Meeting Schedule Amendment 9. General Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social housing support services • Meeting with the Victorian Premier, the Hon. Jacinta Allan • Victorian Farmers Federation (Wedderburn Branch Meeting) • Road Maintenance Program
Conflict of Interest Disclosures – Councillor/ officer making disclosure	Cr Holt declared a Conflict of Interest in relation to item 1 above
Councillor/officer left room	Cr Holt left the room while item 1 was being discussed.

RESOLUTION 2025/40

Moved: Cr David Weaver

Seconded: Cr Miki Wilson

That Council confirm the records of the following auspiced meetings as detailed within this report:

1. Council Briefing held 25 March 2025
2. Council Forum held 8 April 2025.

CARRIED

7 REVIEW OF ACTIONS**7.1 REVIEW OF ACTIONS**

File Number: 02/01/002

Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance

Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer

Attachments: 1. Status of Council resolution actions

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive and note the status of Council resolution actions, as attached to this report.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

REPORT

A document containing the status of actions associated with Council resolutions is attached to this Agenda report.

All nine actions arising from March Council meeting resolutions have been completed.

One outstanding action due for completion at this meeting relates to a review of Council's Governance Rules. This matter will be considered later in this Council meeting Agenda, and as such is also now deemed complete.

RESOLUTION 2025/41

Moved: Cr Nick Angelo

Seconded: Cr David Weaver

That Council receive and note the status of Council resolution actions, as attached to this report.

CARRIED

8 MAYORAL REPORT**8.1 MAYORAL REPORT****File Number:** 02/01/001**Author:** Lisa Clue, Manager Governance**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive and note the Mayoral Report.

REPORT

Mayor Straub presented a verbal report at the meeting.

Murray River Group of Councils	
01/04/2025 – Representative Panellist - Victorian Basin Communities Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) Lunch and Panel Discussion - Echuca	
North Central Local Learning and Employment Network	
09/04/2025 - Finance and Risk Meeting - online	
15/04/2025 – Board Meeting	
Other Council activities	
Date	Activity
04/04/2025	East Loddon P12 College Special Assembly
	Meeting with Victorian Premier, the Hon. Jacinta Allan - Serpentine
05/04/2025	Pyramid Hill Park Run - Opening
08/04/2025	Meeting with Wedderburn Branch of the Victorian Farmers Federation
	April Council Forum - Wedderburn
09/04/2025	Meeting with State MP for the Ripon electorate, Martha Haylett - Online
17/04/2025	Pyramid Hill Community Centre - Official Opening
19/04/2025	Orienteering Event, Inglewood - Presentation
21/04/2025	Rheola Charity Carnival

9 COUNCILLORS' REPORT**9.1 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS****File Number:** 02/01/001**Author:** Lisa Clue, Manager Governance**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive and note the Councillors' reports.

REPORT

Each Councillor presented a verbal report at the meeting.

Cr Weaver

Council activities	
Date	Activity
07/04/2025	Boort Tourism and Development Meeting
08/04/2025	April Council Forum - Wedderburn
	Boort Easter Tennis Tournament and Ferret Cup

Cr Holt

Council activities	
Date	Activity
08/04/2025	April Council Forum - Wedderburn
	Meeting with Wedderburn Community House Coordinator
	Harness Racing Victoria announcement that Boort and Wedderburn meetings will continue for another year

Cr Wilson

Council activities	
Date	Activity
26/03/2025	Inglewood resident discussions re planning issues related to housing
27/03/2025	Inglewood Development and Tourism Committee Meeting
03/04/2025	Eucy Museum Committee Meeting - online
05/04/2025	Listening Post – Inglewood
08/04/2025	April Council Forum - Wedderburn
13/04/2025	Campbells Forest Community Group - event to farewell members
17/04/2025	Pyramid Hill Community Centre Opening
	Bridgewater on Loddon Development Committee Meeting
21/04/2025	Rheola Charity Carnival

Cr Angelo

Council activities	
Date	Activity
29/03/2025	Eddington Sprints
08/04/2025	April Council Forum - Wedderburn
17/04/2025	Pyramid Hill Community Centre Opening
21/04/2024	Rheola Charity Carnival

RESOLUTION 2025/42

Moved: Cr David Weaver

Seconded: Cr Gavan Holt

That Council receive and note the Mayoral and Councillors' reports.

CARRIED

10 DECISION REPORTS**10.1 GOVERNANCE RULES REVIEW****File Number:****Author:** Lisa Clue, Manager Governance**Authoriser:** Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council endorse the proposed changes to the Governance Rules, as listed in the Agenda Report for the purpose of community engagement in accordance with section 60(4) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The Loddon Shire Council Governance Rules were first adopted by Council on 25 August 2020 and have since been reviewed and amended in July 2022, August 2023 and August 2024.

At the September 2024 Council Meeting, in response to a Notice of Motion, Council resolved that a report be provided to Council at a meeting in December 2024 or January 2025, regarding an amendment to the Governance Rules relating to Question Time.

At the January 2025 Council meeting, Councillors resolved to defer consideration of the amendment to the Governance Rules relating to Question Time, contained within the Notice of Motion, until April 2025.

Councillors discussed Governance Rules amendments at the March 2025 Forum.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting held 16 September 2024, Council resolved the following:

RESOLUTION 2024/124

Moved: Cr Linda Jungwirth

Seconded: Cr Wendy Murphy

That a report be provided to Council at a meeting in December 2024 or January 2025 on:

an amendment of Loddon Shire Council's Governance Rules to -

- a. removing 65, item (4)(b) - must relate to a matter of business on the meeting agenda
- b. amending Rule 65, item (4)(c) to add a time period. ie. Must not relate to subject matter previously responded to by Council in the last six months

CARRIED

Considering human and technology resource challenges, Councillors and officers have, over recent months discussed options for providing remote access to Council meeting proceedings. A number of further amendments to the Governance Rules are proposed in this report to address these challenges, whilst ensuring both legislative compliance and retaining timely remote access to meeting proceedings.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

In response to the September 2024 Council resolution and Councillor and officer discussions over recent months, the following amendments to the Governance Rules are proposed:

Current Rule	Proposed amended Rule	Rationale
Rule 65 Public question time		
<i>65(4) Question put by members of the public</i>		
<i>(a) must be in writing</i>	must be in writing and include the name of the person putting the question. Questions asked on behalf of a business or organisation must include the name of the business or organisation representative.	Provides a point of contact in the event the question is rejected by the CEO in accordance with Rule 65(6) or is to be responded to in writing in accordance with Rule 65(8).
<i>(b) must relate to a matter of business on the meeting agenda.</i>	must relate to a matter within the duties, functions and powers of Council.	Removes the restriction that questions must relate to matters on the current Council meeting agenda and ensures questions relate to matters Council is responsible for.
<i>(c) must not relate to subject matter previously responded to by Council</i>	must not relate to subject matter previously responded to by Council in the last six months.	Reduces the time constraint on questions previously responded to.
Rule 69 Recording of Council meetings		
<i>(1) Council meeting proceedings will be livestreamed for real-time or on demand access via a Council social media channel.</i>	Council meeting proceedings that are open to the public will be recorded, and recordings will be made available on the next business day after the meeting, unless a meeting is required to be livestreamed in accordance with section 66(3) of the Act.	Retains timely remote access to Council meeting recordings, while reducing the resourcing burden associated with managing the livestream.
<i>(2) If a meeting, or part of a meeting is closed to the public due to circumstances described in section 66(2)(b) or 66(2)(c) of the Act and the livestream is not able to be broadcast to a Council social media channel, the meeting may be adjourned, or a recording of the proceedings made available on social media as soon as practicable after the meeting.</i>	If a meeting, or part of a meeting is closed to the public due to circumstances described in section 66(2)(b) or 66(2)(c) of the Act and a livestream is not able to be broadcast to a Council social media channel, the meeting will need to be adjourned.	Amendment supports proposed amendment to Rule 69(1) above.

Current Rule	Proposed amended Rule	Rationale
<i>Rule 69 Recording of Council meetings (continued)</i>		
(3) <i>if a meeting, or part of a meeting is open to the public and the livestream is not able to be broadcast to a Council social media channel, the meeting will continue, and a recording of the proceedings may be made available on a social media page as soon as practicable after the meeting.</i>	Remove	Removal supports proposed amendments to Rule 69 above.

Following Council endorsement of proposed amendments:

1. the proposed amendments will be made available for members of the community to review and provide feedback over a two week period; and
2. a Gender Impact Assessment of the proposed amendments will be undertaken.

Community feedback will be considered by Councillors, after which time a report will be presented to Council seeking adoption of the amended Governance Rules.

COST/BENEFITS

There are no costs associated with this matter, benefits are associated with process improvement.

RISK ANALYSIS

Clear Governance Rules ensure effective meetings, and provide clear direction for meeting protocol and logistics.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

This report seeks Council endorsement of proposed amended Governance Rules for the purpose of community engagement.

Councillors and officers discussed proposed amendments at the March Forum.

RESOLUTION 2025/43

Moved: Cr Miki Wilson

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council endorse the proposed changes to the Governance Rules, as listed in the Agenda Report for the purpose of community engagement in accordance with section 60(4) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

CARRIED

10.2 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE REMUNERATION REPORT

File Number: FOL/20/612
Author: Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services
Authoriser: Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate
Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. increases the quarterly remuneration paid to independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee to \$585.00, effective the quarter commencing 1 May 2025
2. maintains payment of an extra quarter remuneration to the Chair during a one year term
3. maintains a travel reimbursement for independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee, paid at the rate that Councillors are reimbursed for travel.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

BACKGROUND

Loddon Shire Council established an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) pursuant to Section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act). The ARC supports Council in discharging its oversight responsibilities related to financial and performance reporting, risk management, fraud prevention systems and control, maintenance of a sound internal control environment, assurance activities including internal and external audit, and Council's performance with regard to compliance with its policies and legislative and regulatory requirements. It acts in this capacity by monitoring, reviewing, endorsing and advising on matters as set out in the ARC Charter.

Remuneration is paid to each Independent Committee Member under Section 53(6) of the Act. Councillor Committee Members are not remunerated for their time on the ARC.

Council was previously provided with an ARC remuneration report at the Council Meeting held on 26 March 2024, where Council resolved to:

- increase the quarterly remuneration paid to independent members of the Audit Committee to \$570, effective the quarter commencing 1 May 2024;
- maintain payment of an extra quarter remuneration to the Chair during a one year term; and
- maintain a travel reimbursement for independent members of the Audit Committee, paid at the rate that Councillors are reimbursed for travel.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The Consumer Price Index for *All Groups – Melbourne for December Quarter to December Quarter* seasonally adjusted, is used annually to determine increases to ARC members' remuneration. The indexation was sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics for December 2023 to December 2024, and the increase is 2.4%.

Application of 2.4% to the ARC's current remuneration of \$570.00 per quarter calculates to \$583.68 per quarter. This report recommends that this amount be rounded up to \$585 per quarter.

Last year's report confirmed Council's commitment of an extra quarterly payment to the Chair during a one-year term. This payment recognises the additional responsibility held by the Chair.

It also confirmed a travel reimbursement to be paid to independent members at the same rate as the Councillors' travel reimbursement.

COST/BENEFITS

There is a small financial cost to Council resulting from this report that can be accommodated within Council's budget.

RISK ANALYSIS

Council increases the likelihood of recruiting and retaining skilled ARC members by ensuring that remuneration is reviewed on a regular basis.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Nil

RESOLUTION 2025/44

Moved: Cr Nick Angelo

Seconded: Cr Gavan Holt

That Council:

1. increases the quarterly remuneration paid to independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee to \$585.00, effective the quarter commencing 1 May 2025
2. maintains payment of an extra quarter remuneration to the Chair during a one year term
3. maintains a travel reimbursement for independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee, paid at the rate that Councillors are reimbursed for travel.

CARRIED

10.3 SEEKING FEEDBACK ON DRAFT REVENUE AND RATING PLAN**File Number:** 09/04/001**Author:** Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services**Authoriser:** Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate**Attachments:** 1. DRAFT Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council endorse the release of the Draft Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 for the purposes of seeking public feedback in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this paper, or involved in the subject matter of the paper.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The inaugural Loddon Shire Council Revenue and Rating Plan (the Plan) was adopted by Council in 2021 in accordance with the then newly legislated *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020).

Consistent with the requirements under the LGA 2020, the Plan is now being reviewed under the Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework.

Councillors undertook induction workshops post-election that covered the requirements of the Plan and subsequently participated in a mini-workshop and discussion at Councillor Forum in April 2025 ahead of the Plan's considered release for community feedback.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, Council established the first Rating Strategy (the Strategy).

When established, the LGA 2020 required each Council to prepare a Revenue and Rating Plan to cover a minimum period of four years following each Council election. As a result, Council reviewed and built on the existing Strategy and adopted the first Plan in 2021 in accordance with the LGA 2020.

The Plan establishes the revenue raising framework within which the Council proposes to work. In line with the recent Local Government elections, this Plan is now due for review.

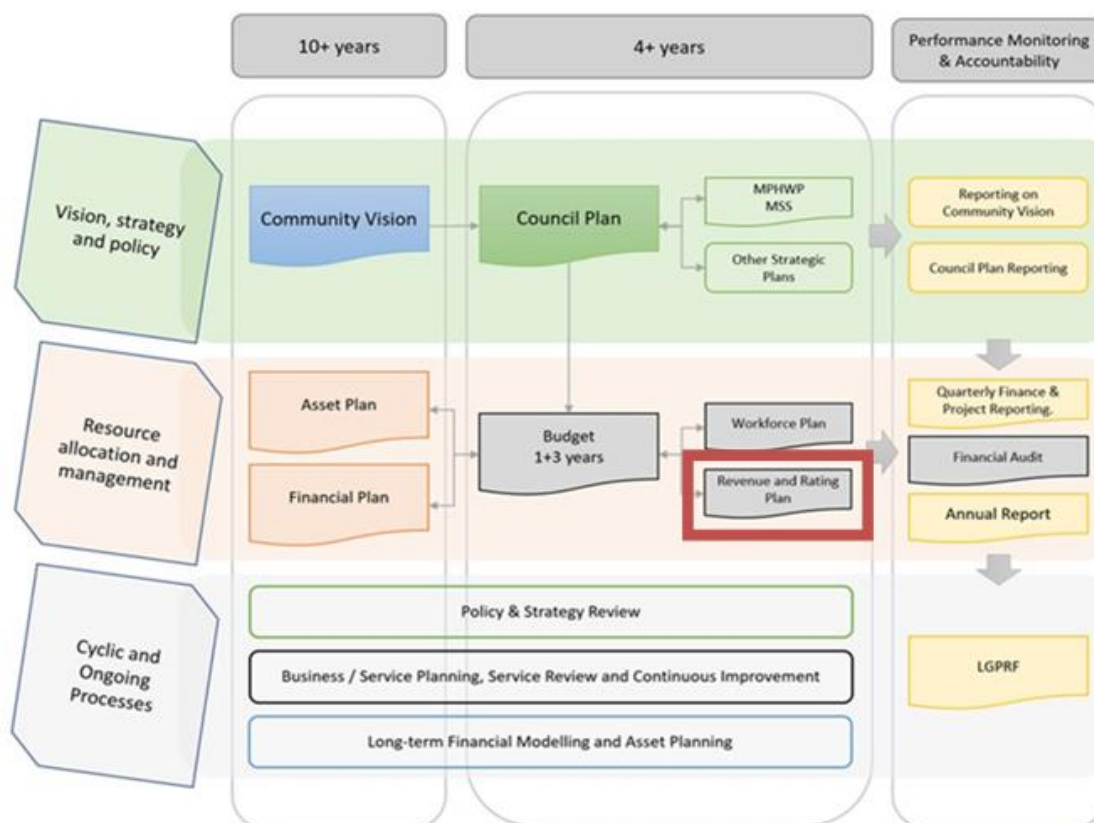
This document includes the basic principles for rate collection within Council and replaces information that was previously published within the Annual Budget, ensuring Council's position remains transparent and available to all ratepayers.

This will see Council build on the current Strategy and add to the required revenue components.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

This Plan is an important part of Council's integrated planning and reporting framework as outlined in Figure 1. At each stage of the integrated planning and reporting framework there are opportunities for community and stakeholder input which is important to ensure transparency and accountability to both residents and ratepayers.

This Plan explains how Council calculates the revenue needed to fund its activities, and how the funding burden is proposed to be apportioned between ratepayers and other users of Council facilities and services.

Figure 1: Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework

Source: Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions 2020

In particular, the Plan sets out Council decisions in relation to rating options available to it under the LGA 2020 to ensure fair and equitable distribution of rates across property owners.

It also sets out principles for decision making regarding other revenue sources such as fees and charges, and what factors any deliberation to vary the rate cap in the future may consider.

The Plan does not set revenue targets for Council; it outlines the strategic framework and decisions that inform how Council will go about calculating and collecting its revenue.

COST/BENEFITS

The Plan will be used to guide Council in making decisions around the setting of rates, municipal charges and fees and the equitable distribution of these fees and charges for future long term Financial Plans and Annual Budgets.

RISK ANALYSIS

The principles of good governance require Council to provide ongoing or periodic monitoring and review of the impact of major decisions. It is essential that Council evaluates, on a regular basis, the legislative objectives to which it must have regard and those other objectives which Council determines are relevant.

Council is seeking to fully document its objectives and approach to the raising of revenue and rates in line with its goal of providing transparency in its decision-making.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The document has been subject to the standard approval process of Management Executive Group and Council Forum prior to presentation in the Council Meeting Agenda.

If endorsed, Council will place this document out for public feedback for a period of 28 days before a recommendation for adoption is considered.

RESOLUTION 2025/45

Moved: Cr Gavan Holt

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council endorse the release of the Draft Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 for the purposes of seeking public feedback in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

CARRIED

10.4 SEEKING FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26**File Number:** FOL/25/804**Author:** Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services**Authoriser:** Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate**Attachments:** 1. DRAFT - Fees and Charges 2025/26**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. seek feedback on the Draft Fees and Charges Schedule in accordance with the Community Engagement Policy
2. where applicable, provide preliminary notification of residential accommodation charge changes to tenants.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

A draft Fees and Charges Schedule (Schedule) was provided to Councillors for consideration at the Council Briefing held on 25 March 2025 and Council Forum held on 8 April 2025.

BACKGROUND

Each year as a part of the budget process a Schedule is prepared and submitted for approval by Council. This year it is proposed that the Fees and Charges for the year 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 be advertised once again with the Draft Budget so that the community is able to see the whole suite of Council finances in context.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The approach for the 2025/26 schedule was to review fees and charges in line with the Financial Plan, which includes an indexation of 3.00% to discretionary fees and charges.

Some cost areas within the Schedule have a proposed increase of more than 3.00% due to rounding to nearest dollars (or five dollars).

Landfill and transfer stations are expected to remain the same, with larger increases every few years and swimming pool fees have seen a slight increase after many years without any increase.

Generally, the new Schedule would take effect from the start of the 2025/26 financial year, however, included in the Schedule are residential accommodation charge changes. These will require a minimum notice period of 60 days with notification forwarded to tenants as soon as practicable after consideration of Council with any approved price increase receiving its required notice period.

Subject to Council approval, the Draft Schedule will be advertised seeking feedback from the community. Council would receive submissions until close of business on Monday 26 May 2025. This is the same timeframe proposed for feedback on the Draft Annual Budget.

It is proposed that Council would consider any feedback received at the Council Forum to be held on Tuesday 10 June 2025 and consider formally adopting the Schedule at the June Council Meeting.

COST/BENEFITS

The adoption of the Schedule provides a transparent process and allows the community to provide feedback about the proposed fees and charges prior to approval by Council.

Raising fees and charges on particular services helps to provide an equitable contribution of revenue towards the cost of service delivery.

RISK ANALYSIS

The risk to Council of not considering and then advertising the Draft Budget is that it will not comply with requirements under the *Local Government Act 1989* and the *Local Government Act 2020*.

There is a minor risk of avoidance of payment by customers.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Community Engagement Policy outlines community engagement as an ongoing dialogue with our community to identify civic issues and opportunities and assist Council with planning and informed decision-making.

The feedback and input from community engagement promotes:

- transparency in decision making
- relationship building with communities and stakeholders
- increased community and stakeholder capacity to understand issues facing Council.

Council acknowledges and adheres to the Community Engagement Principles contained in section 56 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

RESOLUTION 2025/46

Moved: Cr Miki Wilson

Seconded: Cr David Weaver

That Council:

1. seek feedback on the Draft Fees and Charges Schedule in accordance with the Community Engagement Policy
2. where applicable, provide preliminary notification of residential accommodation charge changes to tenants.

CARRIED

10.5 SEEKING FEEDBACK FOR THE 2025/26 DRAFT BUDGET**File Number:** FOL/25/804**Author:** Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services**Authoriser:** Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate**Attachments:** 1. Loddon Shire Council Draft Annual Budget 2025-2026**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. seek feedback on the Draft Budget in accordance with the Community Engagement Policy
2. adopt the proportion of rates raised within various valuation categories as follows:
 - Rural Production to have a differential rate 12% lower than the General (Residential, Commercial and Other) differential rate
3. agree that the above distribution of rates raised demonstrates fairness and equity across the municipality
4. implement a differential rate to be struck between categories of Rural Production and General as follows:
 - General (Residential, Commercial and Other) - 0.187185 Cents in the Dollar of Capital Improved Value
 - Rural Production - 0.164762 Cents in the Dollar of Capital Improved Value
5. apply a Municipal Charge of \$250 to all properties, except where an exemption has been granted for a Single Farm Enterprise under the *Local Government Act 1989*
6. apply a Garbage Charge of \$425 per Residential Garbage Service (140 Litre Bin) and \$578 per Commercial Garbage Service (240 Litre Bin)
7. apply a Kerbside Recycling Service Charge of \$160 per service (240 Litre Bin).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Council was presented with the 2025/26 Draft Annual Budget (the Draft Budget) at a Council Forum on 8 April 2025.

BACKGROUND

The Draft Budget has been prepared following discussions with Councillors and senior officers.

Council has once again used the Best Practice Guide 'Model Budget' to assist with developing the budget. The Executive Summary is based on this model and has been prepared to provide an explanation of the major components of the Draft Budget.

A number of financial reports have also been developed outlining expected income and expenditure for all areas of Council in 2025/26 and comparing these to the forecast actual results for 2024/25.

The Draft Budget includes:

- the continuation of a positive cash position
- the continuation of the Community Planning program
- projects and initiatives included in Council's various strategic plans
- no new borrowings
- continuation of the use of discretionary reserves.

Council's rating increase for 2025/26 is in line with the Victorian State Government's Rate Capping Policy which has been set at 3.00% on the 2024/25 forecast budget rate income.

Council has discretion over increases relating to garbage and recycling charges, and has included a 6.00% increase in the Draft Budget. This increase in individual bin services and adjustments to the costing of public space bins continue to ensure a cost neutral position for waste collection services while responding to the introduction of additional statutory requirements.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Subject to Council approval, the Draft Budget will be advertised seeking feedback from the community. Council would receive submissions until close of business on Monday 26 May 2025. This is the same timeframe proposed for feedback on the Draft Fees and Charges Schedule.

It is proposed that Council would consider any feedback received at the Council Forum to be held on Tuesday 10 June 2025 and consider formally adopting the Budget at the June 2025 Council Meeting.

COST/BENEFITS

The benefits to Council and the community are that a consultative budget process complies with the *Local Government Act 1989* and the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Budget provides a measure for accurate planning, and ensures that Council can deliver services and projects included in the document.

RISK ANALYSIS

The risk to Council of not considering and then advertising the Draft Budget is that it will not comply with requirements under the *Local Government Act 1989* and the *Local Government Act 2020*.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Community Engagement Policy outlines community engagement as an ongoing dialogue with our community to identify civic issues and opportunities and assist Council with planning and informed decision-making.

The feedback and input from community engagement promotes:

- transparency in decision making
- relationship building with communities and stakeholders
- increased community and stakeholder capacity to understand issues facing Council.

Council acknowledges and adheres to the Community Engagement Principles contained in section 56 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

RESOLUTION 2025/47

Moved: Cr Gavan Holt

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council:

1. seek feedback on the Draft Budget in accordance with the Community Engagement Policy
2. adopt the proportion of rates raised within various valuation categories as follows:
 - Rural Production to have a differential rate 12% lower than the General (Residential, Commercial and Other) differential rate
3. agree that the above distribution of rates raised demonstrates fairness and equity across the municipality
4. implement a differential rate to be struck between categories of Rural Production and General as follows:
 - General (Residential, Commercial and Other) - 0.187185 Cents in the Dollar of Capital Improved Value
 - Rural Production - 0.164762 Cents in the Dollar of Capital Improved Value
5. apply a Municipal Charge of \$250 to all properties, except where an exemption has been granted for a Single Farm Enterprise under the *Local Government Act 1989*
6. apply a Garbage Charge of \$425 per Residential Garbage Service (140 Litre Bin) and \$578 per Commercial Garbage Service (240 Litre Bin)
7. apply a Kerbside Recycling Service Charge of \$160 per service (240 Litre Bin).

CARRIED

10.6 INGLEWOOD TOWN HALL HUB COMMUNITY ASSET COMMITTEE - DISSOLUTION**File Number:****Author:** Lisa Clue, Manager Governance**Authoriser:** Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. dissolve the Inglewood Town Hall Hub Community Asset Committee, effective 1 May 2025; and
2. write to members of the Inglewood Town Hall Hub Community Asset Committee thanking them for their voluntary service to the community.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The Inglewood Town Hall Hub (ITHH) Community Asset Committee was established by resolution of Council on 25 August 2020.

Council has appointed members to the ITHH Community Asset Committee annually since the Committee was established.

Councillors were briefed on the transition of management of the Inglewood Town Hall Hub at the March 2025 Council Forum.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and Council's Community Asset Committee Policy, powers, duties and functions required of Committee members to manage the community asset have been delegated by the Chief Executive Officer.

In accordance with Council's Community Asset Committee Policy, a Community Asset Committee may seek to be dissolved by Council at any time.

This report responds to an ITHH Community Asset Committee resolution made 3 March 2025, requesting Council consider dissolving the Committee and supporting a request from the Inglewood Community Neighbourhood House Committee of Management to take on management of the Inglewood Town Hall Hub.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Since early to mid-2024, discussions have been held between officers and members of the ITHH Community Asset Committee and the Inglewood Community Neighbourhood House (ICNH) Committee (as an Inglewood Town Hall Hub tenant) on matters relating to management of the Town Hall Hub, including opportunities to increase the use of, and further develop facilities within it.

Since October 2024, discussions have focussed on transitioning management of the Town Hall Hub from the ITHH Community Asset Committee to the ICNH Committee under a Management Agreement. These discussions have included negotiating the content of a Draft Management Agreement, including documented responsibilities of parties involved.

Council has recently received meeting Minutes from both committees containing resolutions that support transitioning management of the Town Hall Hub to the ICNH Committee under a Management Agreement. Additionally, negotiation of the Draft Management Agreement content is now complete.

If Council resolves to dissolve the ITHH Community Asset Committee, the associated Instrument of Delegation will be revoked by the Chief Executive Officer and the Management Agreement will be prepared for signing by Council and the ICNH Committee to become effective 1 May 2025.

COST/BENEFITS

There are no direct costs associated with the transition arrangements proposed in this report as the content of the Management Agreement is, in the most part consistent with the content of the ITHH Community Asset Committee Instrument of Delegation by the Chief Executive Officer.

RISK ANALYSIS

The transition arrangements detailed in this report will reduce the number of volunteers required to manage the community asset.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Transition arrangement discussions involving Council officers and members of both the ITHH Community Asset Committee and the ICNH Committee have been ongoing since early to mid-2024.

RESOLUTION 2025/48

Moved: Cr Miki Wilson

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council:

1. dissolve the Inglewood Town Hall Hub Community Asset Committee, effective 1 May 2025; and
2. write to members of the Inglewood Town Hall Hub Community Asset Committee thanking them for their voluntary service to the community.

CARRIED

10.7 DRAFT LODDON SHIRE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES PLAN 2025-2029 FOR PUBLIC DISPLAY**File Number:****Author:** Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** 1. Draft Loddon Shire Inclusive Communities Plan 2025-2029**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council place the draft Inclusive Communities Plan 2025-2029 on public display and seek community feedback.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

A presentation was provided to the 14 May 2024 Council forum to outline the Inclusive Communities Plan project, including the proposed community engagement plan.

The draft Loddon Shire Inclusive Communities Plan 2025-2029 was presented at the 8 April 2025 Council Forum.

BACKGROUND

The Community Vision 2031 is “*Creating a community where everyone is welcome and all have the opportunity to live, work and thrive*”. To deliver this, the Council Plan 2021-25 includes an objective for “*A growing and vibrant community*” with the following strategic objectives:

2.1 We will promote population growth to support a growing and diverse community.

2.2 We will support a connected and inclusive community that provides opportunities for current and new community members at all ages, abilities and stages of their life.

The Draft Loddon Shire Inclusive Communities Plan 2025-2029 (ICP) supersedes the Access and Inclusion Plan 2018-2022 and is designed to foster a more inclusive, equitable, and accessible environment for all members of the community.

While the ICP aims to improve access and inclusion for the whole community, when considering access and inclusion there are other cohorts within our community which can experience disadvantage or are often under-represented in mainstream community activities, including our young people, LGTBIQ+ community members, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and older people.

The plan aims to create an inclusive community where young people feel accepted, supported, and safe. We also recognise that for youth to stay in or return to Loddon, they need to feel that their values, ideas, and perspectives are respected.

In 2023, Council resolved to fly the Rainbow flag on May 17, recognizing IDAHOBIT Day (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia) in response to a petition. This practice can now be formalised through clear and consistent policy as Council’s position through the ICP.

Council is home to an increasing number of people from non-English speaking backgrounds, who can experience isolation and exclusion due to the language barrier experienced, but also due to the differences in cultural background.

Following the transition out of aged care service delivery, Council committed to the development of a strategic position on positive ageing. This plan identifies how we can enhance positive ageing in our community by encouraging age-friendly spaces that respect and consider older people in all community activities.

By incorporating these cohorts into the draft ICP it reduces the number of strategic documents being developed by Council and minimises action duplication as many of the outcomes identified in the ICP are common across a diversity of groups.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The vision of the Loddon Inclusive Communities Plan is for Loddon Shire to be an inclusive and welcoming place for all. Everyone will feel safe and welcome to participate in social and community life, no matter their background, gender, ability, faith, culture or age. Partnerships and collaboration are encouraged to foster social cohesion and connection. We will be a community of inclusive communities.

Whilst the Disability Act 2006 provides information on Council's role in the development of a Disability Action Plan, the ICP also enhances Council's ability to comply with other legislation including the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, which requires councils to promote equality and prevent discrimination based on characteristics such as race, gender, disability, and age and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), ensuring that individuals with disabilities have equal access to services, facilities, and opportunities. The DDA goes beyond physical accessibility and includes reducing barriers in areas such as social inclusion, active participation, access to information and employment.

Additionally, through implementation of the ICP, Council will contribute to reporting on our Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), as the outcomes and actions outlined in the ICP directly align with the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020. This legislation requires local governments to promote gender equality, ensuring that gender equity is integrated into all policies, programs, and services.

In addition to these legislative requirements, the plan aligns with Council's Community Vision: Creating a community where everyone is welcome and has the opportunity to live, work and thrive.

By adhering to the legislative imperatives and embedding inclusivity in all areas of planning and service delivery, Council is committing to fostering a community that supports the full participation of all its members.

The ICP will enhance access and inclusion opportunities broadly across our community, through the delivery of actions related to the key focus areas:

Community Participation	Empowering communities to be engaged, feel listened to, and be involved in decisions that impact them.
Partnerships and relationships	Forging strong partnerships and relationships to address barriers to feeling included.
Programs and activations	Creating vibrant places for everyone, with a range of activities and events that celebrate diversity
Places and spaces	Exploring ways to make our built environments and public spaces more activated and welcoming.
Positive ageing	Encouraging a healthy mindset and a commitment to staying physically, socially and cognitively active in our older years.
Internal commitment	Taking a leadership role and embedding inclusive values within our organisation.

An operational action plan will guide the implementation of identified outcomes in the ICP. The action plan will be reviewed and updated every 2 years to ensure ongoing progress against the plan.

COST/BENEFITS

The success of this plan is based on collaboration and strategic partnerships between government, health, education, other health and wellbeing agencies, community service organisations and community interest groups.

Individually, local government authorities are unlikely to have the capacity to address the range of factors that influence community health and wellbeing, positive aging, youth engagement and improved access and inclusion for members of their communities. As such, Loddon Shire Council recognise that partnerships with other key agencies and working together is paramount in order to maximise positive access and inclusion outcomes.

It is anticipated that actions identified in the operational action plan will be undertaken within existing budgets, or with sourced external funding as required. Any actions that may incur a cost to Council are subject to Council approval through the annual budget allocation process.

Loddon's Community Partnerships Team will consult, collaborate, advocate and forge partnerships with outreach services and connect and empower community. The Inclusive Communities Plan has been written to support and guide our combined effort into these diverse social spaces and embed access and inclusion in our community.

RISK ANALYSIS

Council is required to address components of various legislation or funding requirements, which can result in the development of multiple strategic documents. The ICP has been developed as a multi-faceted access and inclusion plan which supports Council to align with relevant legislative frameworks, such as Disability Act, Equal Opportunity Act and Disability Discrimination Act and support meeting Council's obligations under the Gender Equality Act.

Council acknowledges that the most successful outcomes will be achieved when planned and delivered in a partnership and collaborative environment with other agencies and community groups. An over reliance, or lack of understanding on external partners and stakeholders capacity to deliver could result in delays or failures to deliver outcomes. This can be mitigated through Council continuing to take a leadership role in establishing and guiding the development of health and wellbeing partnerships.

A number of the initiatives identified in the ICP will be reliant on external funding, which puts the delivery of these activities at risk should funding not eventuate. Council, or other lead agencies will need to manage community expectation carefully, clearly communicating the reliance on funding to progress the program or activity.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The development of the ICP was shaped by extensive community consultation across Loddon Shire, engaging over 230 community members and organisations. The first consultation round from 20 May to 23 June 2024, offered various ways for the community to provide feedback, including pop-up events, a community survey completed by 175 participants, a staff and contractor survey, and targeted stakeholder discussions. Engagement took place in schools, senior citizen centres, community halls, workplaces, and shopping centres across East Loddon, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill, Boort, Dingee, Wedderburn, Tarnagulla, and surrounding areas. Conversation kits were distributed to promote participation and gather feedback, including written and drawn responses, with activities aimed at all community members, including younger audiences.

This report provides the opportunity for Council to approve the placing of the draft Inclusive Communities Plan on public display and invite our community to provide their feedback.

RESOLUTION 2025/49

Moved: Cr Gavan Holt

Seconded: Cr David Weaver

That Council place the draft Inclusive Communities Plan 2025-2029 on public display and seek community feedback.

CARRIED

10.8 WEDDERBURN EARLY LEARNING CENTRE ADVOCACY**File Number:****Author:** Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council write to the Minister for Children, the Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP, to advocate for the inclusion of a sessional kindergarten program at the Wedderburn Early Learning Centre.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Information on the progress of the Wedderburn Early Learning Centre was provided to Council at the 8 April 2025 Council Forum.

BACKGROUND

The Victorian State Government committed to the construction and operation of 50 Early Learning Centres in communities across Victoria that have the greatest need for childcare and kindergarten places. The first four sites commenced operation in 2025. Loddon Shire Council is one of 14 sites that will be constructed this year and be ready to operate in 2026.

Council officers attended a meeting with Early Learning Victoria and Department Education representatives in March 2025. This meeting provided Council with some information on the early childhood programs that will be provided at the new Wedderburn Early Learning Centre (ELC) from 2026.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Kindergarten in Victoria is delivered in two different formats. Sessional kindergarten (offered in all Loddon Shire Council kindergartens) is a structured early childhood education program that operates for a set number of hours each week, across set days and only during school terms. In Loddon we currently offer 15 hours of three and four year old kindergarten delivered in 5 hour sessions over three days. In 2026 Loddon kindergartens enter the transition to the Pre-Prep program, increasing the delivery of four year old kindergarten to a minimum of 20 hours per week.

Council participates in the Free Kinder program, receiving funding from the Victorian Government that provides families with access to free kinder (not means tested).

The other delivery model is integrated kindergarten, which is kindergarten delivered within a long day care setting. This combines early childhood education with long day care services, and usually means parents can access extended hours of care on more days of the week, with no cessation during school holidays.

Long day care (including sessions containing integrated kindergarten) are subject to means tested childcare fees. Integrated kindergarten in long day care receive an offset applied to the long day care fees. Eligible families will also receive the Commonwealth Childcare Subsidy (CCS). Families then pay the remaining fee amount after the CCS and Free Kinder Offset is applied. This will vary depending on income levels, level of care and subsidy eligibility.

The kindergarten program delivered in either of these models is identical and must align with the current early learning framework and kindergarten regulations.

The standard models offered at the State operated ELCs include long day care (for under three year olds) and integrated kinder with long day care for 3-5 year olds. Whilst this will apply at the Wedderburn ELC, this may be a cause of concern for parents, particularly those in the mid to high income range, where they move from a free kinder program to one that will incur some level of cost.

There are benefits to families who wish to utilise long day care where their child can attend kinder in the same location during the period of care, but it can be seen as a disadvantage for parents who only wish to access standard sessional kindergarten hours of care, which currently is free and not means tested.

It is understood that at the discretion of the Minister for Children, an Early Learning Centre may be able to offer sessional kindergarten at least for the first year, with additional years following a review on need.

As Loddon is coming from a base of no long daycare, we expect that some parents may prefer the option of sessional kindergarten in the first year of operation, until their family circumstances adjust to the availability of childcare. Council may wish to consider writing to the Minister for Children, the Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP, to advocate for the inclusion of a sessional kindergarten program at the Wedderburn Early Learning Centre.

COST/BENEFITS

There are no costs associated with this report.

The development of the Wedderburn Early Learning Centre addresses a long term position of Council to attract childcare to the municipality. The opening of the centre in 2026 will provide families with the opportunity to access a structured, centre based childcare service that provides childcare as well as offering educational and developmental activities.

RISK ANALYSIS

Whilst Wedderburn families have been strong advocates for access to childcare and the development of the Wedderburn Early Learning Centre is welcomed, there may not be an understanding by families that the models of care that are traditionally offered in an early learning centre vary from those offered by a kindergarten that delivers a sessional program. The offering of sessional kindergarten at the early learning centre for at least the first year will assist with the adjustment and transition to the new models of care that will now be available to families.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

There has been no consultation or engagement required to formulate this report.

RESOLUTION 2025/50

Moved: Cr David Weaver

Seconded: Cr Gavan Holt

That Council write to the Minister for Children, the Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP to thank the Victorian State Government for the inclusion of a sessional kindergarten program at the Wedderburn Early Learning Centre in 2026.

CARRIED

10.9 DELEGATION TO CEO FOR PAYMENT OF FIRE SERVICES PROPERTY LEVY**File Number:****Author:** Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council resolves to delegate to the Chief Executive Officer the authority to approve payment of the Fire Services Property Levy to the State Revenue Office up to the value of \$1.53M (excluding GST) for quarter three of the 2024/2025 rating year.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Council last formally reviewed its Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer at the April 2024 Council meeting in which it noted delegation for the CEO to make payments of up to \$1.2M (excluding GST) of collected Fire Services Property Levy to the State Revenue Office.

BACKGROUND

As a legal entity and not a 'natural person', Council can act in only one of two ways: by resolution or through others acting on its behalf. The power for Council to act by resolution is set out in section 59 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act).

Alternatively, a Council can act through others. A number of acts and regulations provide for Council to delegate certain powers, duties or functions to members of Council staff. Where this is to occur, appointments are formalised through a written 'instrument of delegation'.

Delegations to the Chief Executive Officer are provided for under section 11 of the Act, which also prescribes a number of powers, duties and functions not able to be delegated.

In addition to the legislative requirement for all delegations to be reviewed within 12 months after a general election, delegations are reviewed regularly as, at times Council decisions are the subject of legal scrutiny, which calls for precision about what decision was made, who made it and when it was made.

Each year, Council makes quarterly payments to the State Revenue Office (SRO) of monies collected on behalf of the State Government for the purposes of the Fire Services Property Levy. These payments are usually covered under Council's Instrument of Delegation to the CEO with forecasts made as to the likely payments that Council is to receive each quarter (and is required to reimburse to the SRO). These forecasts are then considered when setting the delegation limit.

Part of the collected Levy is based on property valuation, with the other part a fixed rate. It is also noted that payment timelines of the levy are associated with Council rates collection timeframes, in that the number of ratepayers making full amount rate payments in February directly affects a higher levy payment required in quarter three.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Council previously considered changes to the Instrument of Delegation to the CEO in order to (among other changes) define a delegated payment limit for the Fire Services Property Levy (\$1.2M).

Due to an increase in property valuations (subsequently increasing the variable component of the Levy) as well as an increase in ratepayers paying their rates in full for the 2024/25 rating year, the quarter three payment of \$1,529,726.68 (excluding GST) to the State Revenue Office exceeds the CEO's delegation.

The State Government has also recently outlined their intention to replace the Fire Services Property Levy with the new Emergency Service and Volunteers Fund.

As Council's Instrument of Delegation to the CEO will require review in the near future to align with the yet to be released new legislation, it is proposed that Council consider an interim delegation for the quarter three payment of the Fire Services Property Levy, noting that a full review of Council's Instrument of Delegation to the CEO will need to be considered if and when required by the legislation of the proposed Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund.

COST/BENEFITS

Providing an interim delegation as outlined in this report will not have any financial impacts for Council.

RISK ANALYSIS

Routine review of delegations ensures that council staff, including the Chief Executive Officer are able to act on behalf of Council in accordance with relevant and current legislation and regulations.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Not Applicable.

RESOLUTION 2025/51

Moved: Cr Nick Angelo

Seconded: Cr Miki Wilson

That Council resolves to delegate to the Chief Executive Officer the authority to approve payment of the Fire Services Property Levy to the State Revenue Office up to the value of \$1.53M (excluding GST) for quarter three of the 2024/2025 rating year.

CARRIED

11 INFORMATION REPORTS**11.1 PROGRESS UPDATE REGARDING 30 KELLY STREET, PYRAMID HILL****File Number:****Author:** Orrin Hogan, Manager Community Partnerships**Authoriser:** Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive and note this report.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

A report on the proposed use of 30 Kelly Street, Pyramid Hill by The Mixed Bag @ Pyramid Hill community enterprise was provided to the 24 August 2021 Council meeting.

A report requesting a change in the project owner to Pyramid Hill Progress Association and an extension to the project was provided to the 26 September 2023 Council meeting.

An update on correspondence received from the Pyramid Hill Progress Association was provided to the 25 March 2025 Council briefing and at the subsequent Council meeting Council was provided with the 2025/2026 annual infrastructure program, including the 30 Kelly Street building.

BACKGROUND

Council's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service originally operated from the building located at 30 Kelly Street Pyramid Hill (the building). Following the relocation of the MCH to more appropriate premises, the building was used, in conjunction with an adjoining shed, to accommodate the Pyramid Hill Men's Shed group. The Men's Shed ceased operations prior to 2020 and the building has not been used since that time. When the Men's Shed reformed as a new group/entity, they utilised the shed behind the building (refer Picture #1 below). They have since relocated and the shed has been removed.

The development of the Pyramid Hill streetscape project provided an opportunity to consider if the building was surplus to Council requirements and if the space created by the removal of the building would enhance the overall amenity of the redeveloped streetscape.

At that time a group of local community members approached Council officers with a community enterprise proposal to establish a 'Share Shop' business known as 'The Mixed Bag', requesting that the building be retained as a retail premise.

An inspection of the building prior to the start of the pandemic in 2020 identified that works had been undertaken on the interior of the building which would require some reinstatement and that the building was in a general state of disrepair.



Picture #1 (above)

1: 30 Kelly Street building

2: Men's Shed building which has since been removed as part of the streetscape redevelopment.

At the August 2021 Council meeting, Councillors resolved to provide The Mixed Bag @ Pyramid Hill a period of 12 months to explore and evaluate the proposed refurbishment of the building. Further, Council resolved to revisit the future of the building if The Mixed Bag @ Pyramid Hill community enterprise was not operational within 12 months, or at such time as advised that the building is no longer required by the community enterprise.

The proposed community enterprise was not operational within 12 months of the original decision.

On 30 May 2023 Cr Dan Straub and Director Community Wellbeing met with representatives from The Mixed Bag @ Pyramid Hill and the Pyramid Hill Progress Association to discuss the status of the community enterprise proposal. At that time Pyramid Hill Progress Association requested they be provided with the opportunity to take over the lead role in a potential development of a community enterprise in the building.

At the 26 September 2023 Council meeting, Councillors resolved to provide Pyramid Hill Progress Association with access to the building up to 31 December 2024 for assessment and planning purposes. At the end of this access period the Pyramid Hill Progress Association were provided with the opportunity to progress to stage 2 (an options deed) with Council to allow the building to be renovated or redeveloped prior to entering into a formal lease agreement allowing the operation of a community enterprise from the site.

As at the nominated date of 31 December 2024 Council had not received notification from Pyramid Hill Progress Association advising of their intent to progress to stage two and enter into an options deed with Council and as such Council sought clarification.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

On 31 January 2025 the Pyramid Hill Progress Association advised council that they had decided not to proceed with the community enterprise, and acknowledged that Council would now recommence the process for considering the future of the building.

The building has been determined to be in a state of disrepair that would require significant investment to return it to a compliant and useable space. A building assessment in 2020 estimated this cost at approximately \$120,000.

The building had already been identified as surplus to Council's current or future service delivery requirements, this is further reinforced with the construction of the new Pyramid Hill Community Centre that offers a range of consulting and meeting rooms.

Additionally, the redevelopment of the area surrounding the building through the recent streetscape project provides the opportunity to consider how this site can enhance the works recently completed.

In consideration of all of these factors, the building at 30 Kelly Street Pyramid Hill is included in the 2025/2026 annual infrastructure plan for removal. The intention is to then rehabilitate the site and install turf to compliment the recent work completed in this area.

COST/BENEFITS

The costs associated with the removal of the building at 30 Kelly Street and the rehabilitation of the site has been factored into the 2025/2026 annual infrastructure plan. The cost estimate remains confidential at this time as not to compromise Council's position in commercial negotiations.

With the finalisation of the Pyramid Hill Streetscape project there is no longer an opportunity to include any development of the site into that project. To integrate the site into the surrounding area, following the removal of the building, the area will be turfed. This will expand the open space available in the Kelly Street Park and will improve the visual amenity of the open space and connection to both the Hall and Community Centre.

RISK ANALYSIS

The building has been surplus to Council's operational requirements for a significant period of time, and has been vacant for many years, which carries a risk of vandalism and dereliction.

The retention of this building without purpose could be considered unreasonable and serving as an increasing liability as the cost of removal increases with lapsing time. This unused asset also remains part of Council's asset plans and impacts on Council's forecast financial sustainability.

We acknowledge there may be some community dissatisfaction with the removal of a long standing building. In consideration of this, Council also considered that:

- the building is surplus to Council requirements and in a state of disrepair, which would require significant investment to return the building to a safe work space
- Council has invested in the development of the Pyramid Hill Community Centre which will provide a significantly increased level of service with improved health and wellbeing space for the community
- two community groups over a period of three and a half years were provided with the opportunity to assess if the redevelopment and operation of the building as a community enterprise was feasible and sustainable
- the building is detracting from a much improved community parkland and streetscape amenity.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Council has engaged with Pyramid Hill Progress Association as detailed in this report.

RESOLUTION 2025/52

Moved: Cr David Weaver

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council receive and note this report

CARRIED

12 COMPLIANCE REPORTS

12.1 COMMUNITY ASSET COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENT OF NEW MEMBER

File Number: FOL/20/7622
Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance
Authoriser: Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate
Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council appoints Julie Ritchie as a member of the Donaldson Park Community Asset Committee.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Council last appointed members to the Community Asset Committees in December 2024.

BACKGROUND

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) provides for the establishment of, and appointment of members to Community Asset Committees for the purpose of managing community assets in the municipal district. The Act further provides for the CEO to delegate certain powers, duties and functions of the Council to members of its Community Asset Committees.

Each Community Asset Committee Instrument of Delegation requires the Committee to nominate members to be formally appointed by Council for a one year term.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

In December 2024, Council appointed 15 members to the Donaldson Park Community Asset Committee, noting at that time the booking officer position was vacant. Council Officers have recently been advised that the Donaldson Park Community Asset Committee has nominated Julie Ritchie to be formally appointed by Council.

COST/BENEFITS

Community Asset Committees provide an opportunity for community members to play a key role in assisting Council with the management and maintenance of a number of important facilities within the Loddon Shire, for the benefit of their local community. Without this group of valued volunteers, Loddon Shire would not be able to resource the number and quality of facilities within the municipality.

RISK ANALYSIS

Risks associated with Community Asset Committee member management of Council facilities are mitigated as much as possible through the Instruments of Delegation including clause 7.3 which provides for the removal or refusal of a member or members.

Without these Community Asset Committees it would not be possible for Loddon Shire to resource the number or quality of facilities currently offered. There is a risk that if Council is not able to recruit and retain volunteers, the level of service provided to the community may decline.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Reporting by Community Asset Committees to Council, including nominated members occurs through an online portal, with support provided by Council Officers as required.

RESOLUTION 2025/53

Moved: Cr Gavan Holt

Seconded: Cr Miki Wilson

That Council appoints Julie Ritchie as a member of the Donaldson Park Community Asset Committee.

CARRIED

13 URGENT BUSINESS

Nil

14 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Nil

NEXT MEETING

The next Meeting of Council will be held on 27 May 2025 at Wedderburn commencing at 3.00pm.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 4.38 pm.

Confirmed this.....day of..... 2025

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CHAIRPERSON