



Date: Tuesday, 23 September 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, 23 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 3.00PM**

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Lincoln Fitzgerald (Chief Executive Officer), Wendy Gladman (Director Community Wellbeing), Michelle Stedman (Director Corporate), Steve Van Orsouw (Director Operations) 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

RESOLUTION 2025/148

Moved: Cr David Weaver

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That the apology received from Cr Holt be accepted and leave of absence granted.

CARRIED

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 26 August 2025
2. Council Meeting of 26 August 2025
3. Council Forum of 9 September 2025
4. Special Council Meeting of 9 September 2025

REPORT

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

RESOLUTION 2025/149

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 26 August 2025
2. Council Meeting of 26 August 2025
3. Council Forum of 9 September 2025
4. Special Council Meeting of 9 September 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 26 August 2025
2. Council Forum held 9 September 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 26 August 2025 and the Council Forum held 9 September 2025.

Meeting details	Briefing
Date	26 August 2025
Councillor Attendees	Cr Straub (Mayor) Cr Angelo Cr Weaver (virtual) Cr Wilson
Staff/ Stakeholder representatives	Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing Steve Van Orsouw, Director Operations Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate Lisa Clue, Manager Governance Ange Marshall, Acting Manager Financial Services – item 5 below Darcy Jackson, Statutory Planning Officer, Glenn Harvey, Manager Development and Compliance, Carolyn Stephenson, Senior Strategic Planner, Planning Permit Applicant and Planning Permit Objectors – item 6 below
Item(s) discussed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft Council Plan 2. Review of Council Meeting Agenda 3. Loddon Childcare Preparedness 4. Strategic Risk Review 5. Financial Plan 2025/26 – 2034/35 6. Planning Application 6072 – Use of the land for gold mining (under the Code of Practice) 7. General Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August Council Meeting • Fire water tanks • Road base stockpiles
Conflict of Interest Disclosures – Councillor/officer making disclosure	Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing declared a conflict of interest in relation to tem 3 above.
Councillor/officer left room	Nil

Meeting details	Forum
Date	9 September 2025
Councillor Attendees	Cr Straub (Mayor) Cr Angelo Cr Weaver Cr Wilson
Staff/ Stakeholder representatives	Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer Steve Van Orsouw, Director Operations Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate Lisa Clue, Manager Governance Ange Marshall, Acting Manager Financial Services – items 3 and 4 below
Item(s) discussed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of Council Meeting Agenda 2. Inclusive Communities Plan Review 3. Procurement Policy v13 4. Investment Policy v6 5. Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund Levy – Update 6. Community Support Funding Programs Update 2024/25 7. Strategic Risk Review 8. General Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Update • Calder Highway Improvement Committee • Roadside firewood collection • Public amenities • Rural Road Access – Ambulance Victoria • Meetings with Ministers and Advisers • Renewal Energy Zone Roundtable
Conflict of Interest Disclosures – Councillor/officer making disclosure	Nil
Councillor/officer left room	N/A

RESOLUTION 2025/150

Moved: Cr Miki Wilson

Seconded: Cr David Weaver

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

1. Council Briefing held 26 August 2025
2. Council Forum held 9 September 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.

There were no outstanding actions from Council meeting resolutions prior to August 2025.

All eight actions arising from the August Council meeting resolutions have been completed.

The two actions arising from the 1 September Special Council meeting resolutions have been completed.

RESOLUTION 2025/151

Moved: Cr Nick Angelo

Seconded: Cr Miki Wilson

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.

Loddon Campaspe Councils	
12/09/2025 – Meeting - Bendigo	
Murray River Group of Councils	
19/09/2025 – Meeting with Victorian Government Water Inter Departmental Committee (IDC) regarding the Murray Darling Basin Plan and future funding arrangements - Echuca	
Other Council activities	
Date	Activity
01/09/2025	Loddon Valley Football Netball League Gala Dinner – Bendigo
02/09/2025	Bendigo Loddon Bloom Campaign Launch – Bendigo
	Melbourne Cup Gala Dinner - Bridgewater
03/09/2025	Meeting with Federal Water Minister, the Hon Murray Watt - Canberra
	Meeting with adviser to Federal Childcare Minister, Dr Jess Walsh - Canberra
09/09/2025	September Council Forum - Wedderburn
	Special Council Meeting - Wedderburn

RESOLUTION 2025/152

Moved: Cr Miki Wilson

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council receive and note the Mayoral Report.

CARRIED

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 Angelo

Council activities	
Date	Activity
02/09/2025	Melbourne Cup Tour Gala Dinner - Bridgewater
03/09/2025	Community Planning Group Meeting – Kingower
09/09/2025	September Council Forum - Wedderburn
	Special Council Meeting - Wedderburn
06/09/2025	Loddon Valley Football Netball League Grand Final - Newbridge

Cr Weaver

Section 65 Community Asset Committees:	
18/09/2025 - Boort Park - Meeting	
Other Council activities	
Date	Activity
02/09/2025	Melbourne Cup Gala Dinner - Bridgewater
09/09/2025	September Council Forum - Wedderburn
	Special Council Meeting - Wedderburn
13/09/2025	North Central Football League Grand Final – Wedderburn

Cr Wilson

Calder Highway Improvement Committee	
03/09/2025 – Meeting, hosted by Brimbank City Council	
Section 65 Community Asset Committees:	
31/08/2025 - Inglewood Community Sports Centre Annual General Meeting	
Other Council activities	
Date	Activity
28/08/2025	Inglewood Development and Tourism Committee Meeting
01/09/2025	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting - Wedderburn
	Inglewood and Bridgewater Structure Plans Meeting
02/09/2025	Melbourne Cup Tour and Gala Dinner - Bridgewater
04/09/2025	'Not In Our Name' Councillor Working Group meeting
09/09/2025	September Council Forum - Wedderburn
	Special Council Meeting - Wedderburn
10/09/2025	Community Reference Group Workshop on Draft Council Plan
11/09/2025	'Not In Our Name' Councillor Working Group meeting
14/09/2025	CFA Volunteers Protest against the ESVF Levy - Bendigo
18/09/2025	Bridgewater on Loddon Development Committee – Melbourne Cup Day Debrief

RESOLUTION 2025/153

Moved: Cr Nick Angelo

Seconded: Cr David Weaver

That Council receive and note the Councillors' reports.

CARRIED

10 DECISION REPORTS

10.1 PROCUREMENT POLICY

File Number:

Author: Ange Marshall, Acting Manager Financial Services

Authoriser: Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate

Attachments: 1. Procurement Policy V13

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the Procurement Policy V13.

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 Procurement Policy was discussed at Council Forum on 9 September 2025.

BACKGROUND

The Procurement Policy has been reviewed and updated to strengthen governance, clarity and procurement outcomes in the purchasing activities of Council.

Key changes include:

- Revisions (reduction) of thresholds for public tender and cumulative spend activities;
- Further clarity on procurement in periods of emergency, panel contract procurement and the Procurement Team's role particularly in processes for obtaining goods, services or works between the values of \$50,000 and \$199,999; and
- Incorporation of recommendations from an Internal Audit on Procurement earlier this year.

The Procurement Policy has been endorsed by Council's Audit and Risk Committee.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The purpose of the Procurement Policy (the Policy) is to outline Council's approach to the procurement of goods, services and works in the delivering services to the community and the operations of the organisation.

The Policy must be reviewed at least once during each four-year Council term in accordance with Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

In early 2025 an Internal Audit was undertaken on Procurement by Council's Internal Auditor. Recommendations of this audit in relation to review of the Procurement Policy included updating the current policy to:

- Include definitions, criteria, limitations (authority, sunset clause) and reporting requirements associated with periods of emergency.
- Reflect changes in procurement processes since the implementation of new systems (Altitude and/or VendorPanel).

These recommendations have been included in the revised Procurement Policy.

The Procurement Policy has been reviewed and updated to incorporate improvements in practice and to provide improved operational clarity while maintaining practicality, best value and transparency for Council, vendors and the community. Revisions to the Policy include:

1. Procurement Thresholds and Tendering

- Public tender threshold has been reduced from \$300,000 to \$200,000 (ex GST) for goods, services, and works.
- Council's Cumulative Spend Threshold (where the cumulative spend with one supplier, or in one category exceeds the threshold over a rolling period) has been reduced in line with the Public Tender Threshold (from \$300,000 to \$200,000) and the rolling period adjusted from 12 months to 24 months.
- Clarity provided on procurement processes for goods, services, or works procured between the values of \$50,000 and \$199,999 including detailed specifications and advertising expectations.

2. Clarifications and Governance

- Stronger connections to Levels of Authority and Instruments of Delegation documents.
- Observed system changes in procurement activity (VendorPanel).
- Expanded detail on exemption in relation to procurement in periods of emergency. This includes clarity on declaration of an emergency period, closure of an emergency period and reporting of exempt procurement during and after an emergency period.
- Additional Definitions added for the terms 'Contract Management' and 'Emergency'.
- Update to accurate legislation titles in some instances.

3. Review timeframe amended to four years from two in the previous Policy version.

4. Clarity on Procurement activity within the scope of Panel Contracts.

- Addition of 'Appendix 3 –Panel Contract Thresholds' to govern procurement within a panel contract.
- Adoption of a tiered classification of Panel Contracts to ensure a balance of practical application for low risk, higher value panel procurement, and transparent competition within panel contract members.

COST/BENEFITS

There are no direct costs associated with considering adoption of this Policy. There are benefits of further streamlining processes and providing robust guidelines to staff which ensures compliance for Council.

RISK ANALYSIS

The Policy will assist in providing guidance for all procurement activities at Council and is binding upon all Councillors, staff, volunteers, contractors, consultants and persons employed or engaged by, or acting on behalf of Council.

The Audit and Risk Committee have reviewed this document from a risk perspective in line with the requirements of their Charter.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The document has been subject to the review process of Loddon Leaders. It has also been through an approval process with the Loddon Procurement Network and discussion at Management Executive Group prior to presentation to the Audit and Risk Committee.

RESOLUTION 2025/154

Moved: Cr Miki Wilson

Seconded: Cr David Weaver

That Council adopt the Procurement Policy V13.

CARRIED

10.2 COMMUNITY PLANNING COMMITTEE FORMAL RECOGNITION - CAMPBELLS FOREST

File Number:

Author: Stacey Williamson, Community Partnerships Officer

Authoriser: Orrin Hogan, Manager Community Partnerships

Attachments: 1. Letter to Council requesting formal recognition

RECOMMENDATION

That Council formally recognise the Campbells Forest Progress Association Inc. as the Community Planning Committee for the Campbells Forest, Yarraberb and district 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

At the April 2019 Council Forum, the criteria and framework for community groups to become the recognised Community Planning Committee was discussed.

Following further consultation, the Community Planning Framework (the Framework), including criteria, was endorsed at the November 2019 Council Meeting.

Since this time Council has formally recognised seventeen Community Planning Committees at Council meetings as detailed in the table below:

Community	Community Planning Group	Formal Recognition at Council meeting
Calivil	Calivil Hall & Recreation Reserve	23/02/2021
Dingee	Dingee Progress Association Inc.	23/02/2021
Inglewood	Inglewood Development and Tourism Committee Inc.	23/02/2021
Mitiamo	Mitiamo Progress Association Inc.	23/02/2021
Serpentine	Serpentine Community Planning Group Inc.	23/02/2021
Wedderburn	Wedderburn Development Association Inc.	23/02/2021
Campbells Forest & Yarraberb	Campbells Forest & District Community Action Planning Group Inc. (<i>disbanded</i>)	25/05/2021
Newbridge, Arnold, & Llanelly	Newbridge Arnold Llanelly Community Plan Committee Inc.	25/05/2021
Kingower	Kingower Development & Tourism Committee Inc.	24/05/2022
Bridgewater	Bridgewater on Loddon Development Inc.	26/07/2022
Eddington	Eddington Community Planning Group Inc.	26/07/2022
Tarnagulla	Tarnagulla Community Planning Group Inc.	26/07/2022
Boort	Boort Tourism and Development Inc.	26/04/2023
Yarrawalla	Yarrawalla Community Planning Committee Inc.	26/04/2023

Pyramid Hill	Pyramid Hill Progress Association Inc.	27/06/2023
Rheola	Rheola Community Planning Inc.	22/08/2023
Korong Vale	Korong Vale Community Planning Committee Inc.	24/10/2023

BACKGROUND

The Framework was developed to support communities in preparing local community plans and to formalise the relationship between the community planning committees and Council.

Under the Framework, community groups seeking formal recognition from Council as a community planning committee must demonstrate that they:

- are an incorporated body
- include community planning within the purpose of their constitution
- maintain a membership structure that enables broad community participation

Access to Council's annual community planning funding program is prioritised for groups that have received formal recognition and developed their community plan in line with the principles of the Framework.

In May 2021, Council recognised the Campbells Forest & District Community Action Planning Group Inc. as the Community Planning Committee for the Campbells Forest and district area. In December 2024 Council received notification that the Campbells Forest & District Community Action Planning Group Inc was disbanding. The application for voluntary cancellation of the Group's incorporation was detailed in the Victorian Government Gazette on Thursday 6 March 2025.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The disbanding of the previous group created a community planning void in the Campbells Forest district. In response, the local community identified the opportunity to establish a Progress Association to oversee both community planning for the district and the management of the Campbells Forest Hall.

The newly formed Campbells Forest Progress Association Inc. has requested Council recognition as the community planning committee for the Campbells Forest, Yarraberb and district community. The group has demonstrated compliance with the Framework's requirements, as outlined below:

Community	Community planning group	Request for recognition received	Information request form received	Incorporated	Constitution purpose includes community planning	Open membership
Campbells Forest, Yarraberb and District	Campbells Forest Progress Association Inc.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The Association has also indicated its intention to continue to implement the existing 2018-2028 Community Plan while commencing a comprehensive review of the document and its priorities over the next 12 months.

This pro-active and forward-looking approach represents a positive outcome for both Council and the broader Campbells Forest and district community.

COST/BENEFITS

Formal recognition signals that a community planning group has committed to:

- developing a community plan consistent with the principles in the Framework
- maintaining open membership for all community members
- representing the interests of their community.

Recognised community planning committees provide an important conduit between communities and Council. They enable residents to present collective views, ideas, and priorities, while also fostering local leadership and strengthening collaboration across the district. This supports inclusive decision-making, builds community capacity, and helps align local priorities with Council's broader strategic direction.

To assist this role, Council provides financial support to formally recognised community planning committees to offset administrative and insurance costs. This investment supports committees to remain viable and demonstrates Council's commitment to empowering communities to lead local planning and action.

The proposed allocation for the Campbells Forest Progress Association Inc., consistent with the Community Support Policy, is detailed below:

Community Planning Committee	Proposed allocation – Administration	Proposed allocation - Insurance	Total
Campbells Forest Progress Association Inc.	\$219.07	\$1,150.13	\$1,369.20

RISK ANALYSIS

By operating within the parameters of Council's Community Planning Framework, recognised committees provide assurance of open membership and fair representation of their community's views.

Community Planning Committees are driven by dedicated volunteers, whose contribution of time and energy is highly valued. In smaller communities in particular, there is a risk of volunteer fatigue. Without sufficient support or participation, some committees may face challenges in sustaining their activities or maintaining robust governance structures.

As key voices within their communities, these committees play a vital role in fostering local engagement and communicating priorities, opportunities, and challenges to Council. The Community Partnerships Team, through the Community Development Officer, will continue to provide guidance and support. However, the long-term strength and sustainability of the committees does rely on ongoing community participation, collaboration, and volunteer wellbeing.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Council's Community Partnerships team liaise with and guide the committees as they complete the actions needed to meet the eligibility criteria needed to be recognised by Council as their community's community planning committee.

RESOLUTION 2025/155

Moved: Cr Miki Wilson

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council formally recognise the Campbells Forest Progress Association Inc. as the Community Planning Committee for the Campbells Forest, Yarraberb and district community

CARRIED

10.3 INVESTMENT POLICY

File Number:**Author:** Ange Marshall, Acting Manager Financial Services**Authoriser:** Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate**Attachments:** 1. Investment Policy V6**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council adopt the Investment Policy V6.

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 Policy has been discussed at Council Forum on 9 September 2025.

BACKGROUND

Given the previous consideration of this Policy was undertaken by Council in 2020, this version of the Investment Policy has been subject to a robust review to ensure that it remains relevant and complies with any changes to legislation. Recommended improvements were also received from internal stakeholders and members of the Audit and Risk Committee during previous meetings.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Key changes within the document include:

- Clarifying when bank ratings are measured;
- Noting registration of banks with APRA as an 'Australian-owned authorised deposit-taking institution' or a registered 'Foreign subsidiary bank';
- Noting what happens when a bank's credit rating changes mid investment period;
- Explaining the assessment process for authorising a term deposit establishment;
- Outlining approved investment options;
- Specifying quotation requirements when using a broker;
- Noting appropriate delegation documents where approval to invest is located;
- Clarifying internal controls in place; and
- Reporting of current investments and record keeping requirements.

COST/BENEFITS

Appropriate and well-guided investment of Council funds can have many associated benefits, particularly when competitive interest rates are available.

The revised Policy also allows for flexibility around investment type in order to achieve best return.

Investment caps imposed by the Policy may impact on the availability of interest rates available when competition is low, it does however share the investment portfolio with other reputable institutions.

RISK ANALYSIS

With Financial Sustainability identified as a strategic risk, Council seeking to maximise returns when investing Council funds, and therefore boosting revenue from its cash holdings, can provide a helpful income stream that without wise investments may not otherwise be realised.

Risk of financial loss on investments is also mitigated by utilising reputable banking and investment firms, competitive quotations for rates, placing caps on investment with any one institution, and limiting the extent to which lower interest rates would be acceptable.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The document has been reviewed by the relevant departments, Loddon Leaders and Management Executive Group before being reviewed and endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee.

RESOLUTION 2025/156

Moved: Cr Nick Angelo

Seconded: Cr Miki Wilson

That Council adopt the Investment Policy V6.

CARRIED

10.4 PYRAMID HILL PROGRESS ASSOCIATION - FEE WAIVER APPLICATION**File Number:****Author:** Susan Smith, Administrative Assistant**Authoriser:** Steve Van Orsouw, Director Operations**Attachments:** 1. Fee Waiver Application**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council grant a fee waiver to the Pyramid Hill Progress Association for the Planning Permit Application cost of \$1,496.10 opening of a community enterprise, Finders Keepers Op Shop.

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

There has been no previous discussion with Council on this matter.

BACKGROUND

The Council's Fees and Charges – Waiver or Reduction Policy applies to any not for profit organisation, incorporated association or unincorporated community group where the activity will result in a community benefit.

Applications over \$1,000 are reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer and submitted to Council for approval via a formal resolution.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The Pyramid Hill Progress Association have applied for a Planning Permit fee waiver. They require the permit to comply with the Loddon Planning Scheme for the opening of a community enterprise - Finders Keepers Op Shop. This project has been a community led initiative, with the Pyramid Hill Progress Association managing and delivering the project.

The Progress Association has requested that Council waive the Planning Permit Application fee of \$1,496.10. The benefit to the community as provided in the fee waiver application is that the Op Shop will raise funds to complete community projects.

The granting or refusal of a fee waiver in no way affects or influences Council's statutory obligations to assess the Planning Permit Application on its merit.

COST/BENEFITS

Council has not made any financial contributions to this project to date.

Should Council decide to grant the fee waiver, the cost to Council would be \$1,496.10 in lost revenue however provides increased activation and participation by the community.

This initiative will play a critical role in diverting items from landfill by giving discarded goods such as furniture, homewares, and tools a second life through resale or repurposing. By promoting circular economy principles, it will help reduce the demand for new products and decrease the volume of waste sent to landfill.

RISK ANALYSIS

The risks associated with this fee waiver is considered low.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Council Officers have had discussions with the Pyramid Hill Progress Association on this matter.

RESOLUTION 2025/157

Moved: Cr David Weaver

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council grant a fee waiver to the Pyramid Hill Progress Association for the Planning Permit Application cost of \$1,496.10 opening of a community enterprise, Finders Keepers Op Shop.

CARRIED

10.5 INTERNAL RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

File Number:

Author: Lisa Clue, Manager Governance

Authoriser: Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate

Attachments: 1. Internal Resolution Procedure v1

RECOMMENDATION

That adopt the Internal Resolution Procedure v1 as attached to this Agenda 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

Councillors have discussed the Model Councillor Code of Conduct and resolution procedures during induction sessions following the 2024 elections.

BACKGROUND

In October 2024 the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) was amended to include a new Model Councillor Code of Conduct which became law for all Victorian councils on 26 October 2024.

On 19 November 2024, Loddon Shire Councillor-elects took their affirmations/oaths of office and made a declaration that they will abide by the Model Code of Conduct.

In accordance with section 140 of the Act, and regulation 12A of the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020* (the Regulations), Council is required to adopt procedures in relation to dealing with alleged breaches of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

An Internal Resolution Procedure has been developed (Attachment 1) which aligns with the information that must be included, as specified in Schedule 1A of the Regulations.

The Procedure applies to disputes in which one Councillor (the Complainant) alleges that another Councillor (the Respondent) has breached the Model Councillor Code of Conduct. It provides both parties to a dispute with support and encouragement to resolve the dispute in a manner that enables the Councillors to move forward and maintain effective working relationships. The Procedure is designed to minimise the cost and disruption of disputes to Council and individual Councillors and, where possible, avoid disputes escalating and becoming the subject of internal arbitration.

The Procedure operates alongside, but does not replace, the formal dispute resolution procedures outlined in the Act.

COST/BENEFITS

The development of the Internal Resolution Procedure has been undertaken internally by Council Officers within existing staff resources.

The Internal Resolution Procedure has been developed as a framework to resolve conduct matters internally and informally wherever possible, in turn reducing costs associated with formal resolution processes.

RISK ANALYSIS

Section 140 of the Act provides that a council must implement and adopt an internal resolution procedure in relation to dealing with alleged breaches of the Model Code of Conduct. Schedule 1A of the Regulations specifies the information which must be included in the procedures. The Internal Resolution Procedure presented to Council for adoption, as attached to this report, aligns with the requirements of Schedule 1A of the Regulations.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is not a requirement of this report and has not been undertaken.

RESOLUTION 2025/158

Moved: Cr Miki Wilson

Seconded: Cr David Weaver

That Council adopt the Internal Resolution Procedure v1 as attached to this Agenda report.

CARRIED

11 INFORMATION REPORTS

11.1 LODDON SWIMMING POOLS - END OF SEASON REPORT 2024-2025

File Number:

Author: Orrin Hogan, Manager Community Partnerships

Authoriser: Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing

Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. receive and note the Loddon swimming pools end of season report 2024-2025.
2. acknowledge the financial contributions from Inglewood and District Community Bank and Belgravia Leisure to the 2024/25 subsidised membership/entry initiative, which enhanced community access to Loddon's swimming pools.

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 swimming pools end of season report 2024-2025 was provided to the August 2025 Council Forum.

BACKGROUND

Council operates five swimming pools across the municipality in Boort, Wedderburn, Inglewood, Mitiamo and Pyramid Hill and recognises the Bridgewater Swimming Hole as a regulated point of access to the Loddon River. The operation of the five pools is managed under contract by Belgravia Leisure, including lifeguard supervision, training, chemical operations and daily cleaning.

This report provides information on the performance and financial position of Loddon's aquatic facilities for the 2024/2025 financial year.

Council recently adopted the *Recreation, Open Space and Aquatics Strategy* (ROSA); a 10-year plan providing clear direction for the development, management and provision of sport, recreation, open space and aquatic facilities. The strategy includes a capital works program of \$1.3 million over the next decade needed to maintain the current infrastructure, in addition to annual operating and maintenance costs.

The ROSA also identifies the need for an Aquatics Service review within the first three years of the plan's implementation. The summary information within this report will inform this service review.

ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The 2024/25 pool season operated from 16 November 2024 to 10 March 2025, with standard opening hours of 2:00 pm – 7:00 pm during school holidays and 3:30 pm – 7:00 pm during the school term.

Pools were closed for a total of five days due to adverse weather conditions, including when forecast temperatures were below 24 degrees and during storm activity. No other closures were recorded. As a result, Loddon Shire pools operated for 95.6% of the scheduled season—an improvement of 4.2% compared with 2023/24.

Key highlights of the season included:

- Early morning swimming at Boort, Wedderburn and Inglewood which continued to attract community support.
- Twelve community events held across pool venues, including movie nights, pool parties, and lawn games.
- Aqua aerobics classes offered at Boort, Wedderburn, Inglewood, and Pyramid Hill. Mitiamo hosted a smaller program supported by the Healthy Loddon Campaspe initiative.

Discounted entry and half price memberships were introduced across all pools in 2024/25. This initiative was instigated by an \$11,478 contribution from the Inglewood and District Community Bank to support Wedderburn, Inglewood and Mitiamo pools. Belgravia Leisure contributed \$3,806 to extend the initiative to the Pyramid Hill pool and Council included the Boort pool through contract rise and fall adjustments.

This partnership initiative was well received by the Loddon community and is considered the primary driver behind an 18% increase in overall attendance, with total visits rising from 14,928 in 2023/24 to 17,517 visits in 2024/25.

Total pool expenditure across the five pools for the season was \$833,116. Despite higher contract and maintenance costs, increased visitation kept the average cost per entry stable at \$47.56, compared with \$47.63 in 2023/24.

COST/BENEFITS

The contracted operational cost for the 2024/2025 season was \$515,544. Including Council's administration and maintenance costs, total expenditure was \$833,116.

Whilst the average cost per entry remains high, it is acknowledged that Council's outdoor pools provide community benefits such as:

- supporting active, healthy lifestyles
- providing safe, supervised environments that reduce risks associated with swimming in dams, channels and inland waterways
- creating inclusive spaces for recreation and social connection across all ages and backgrounds.

These benefits directly support Council's Plan and Community Vision, particularly:

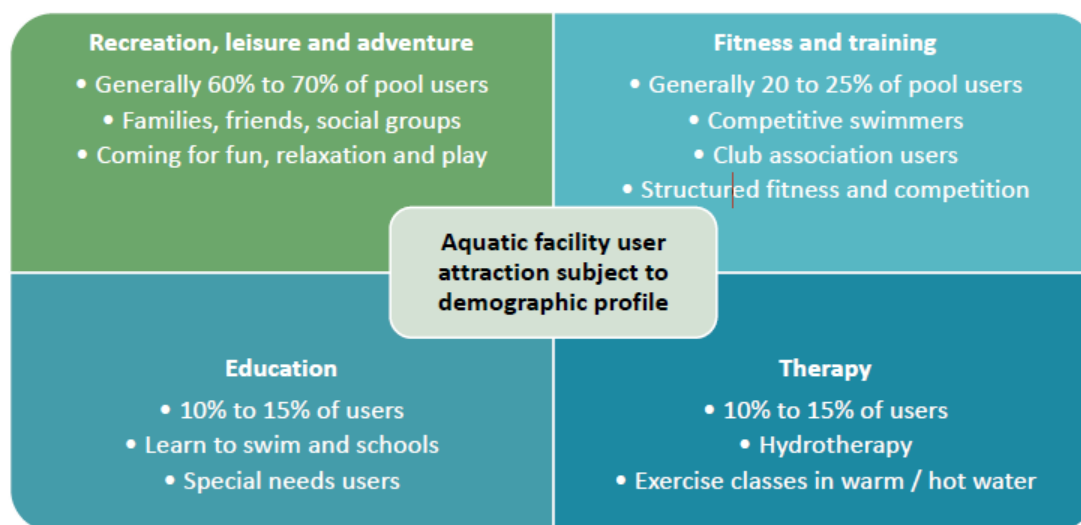
1.1.1 – Plan for future facilities and infrastructure that meet community need

1.1.3 – Maintain sports and recreation and open public spaces to enable and promote access and participation

These are further reinforced by the ROSA which outlines four key actions to guide decision-making:

- Activate Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Facilities: *Deliver innovative approaches and encourage a diversity of activities, programming and events at aquatic facilities to increase visitation.*
- Maintain quality Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Facilities: *Conduct close analysis and feasibility studies of individual pool locations. Upon catastrophic plant and/or pool failure, Council investigates, with the community, future aquatic options.*
- Maintain quality Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Facilities: *Seek external funding opportunities to support any planned upgrade or renewal of recreation, open spaces and aquatic assets.*
- Delivery of a Sustainable Service: *Investigate management models and partnering opportunities for aquatic facilities e.g., Community partnership models and regional management models with partnering councils.*

The pools provide safe, supervised environments for people to engage with water for a range of purposes, including the main markets as outlined the diagram below.



Source: Loddon Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy Background Report, – Otium Planning Group Pty Ltd

While there are many benefits arising from council investing \$833,116 per year in an aquatic service, there is also an opportunity cost for council to consider. This service operates for a short period of time (16 November to 10 March) with limited opening hours during that time period and low attendance. Considering this, the community and council may consider the relative merits of this investment against other service and infrastructure priorities of the community.

RISK ANALYSIS

Council faces a number of key risks associated with operating its five public swimming pools including:

- escalating maintenance costs and reliability challenges due to ageing infrastructure
- substantial future capital investment required for pool shells, plant rooms and plumbing systems, many of which are approaching 70 years of age
- increasing operating costs (power, salaries/wages, chemicals, etc)
- increasing regulatory requirements.

Failure to proactively manage these risks may result in reputational damage should temporary or permanent pool closures occur. Encouragingly, no major infrastructure failures were recorded during the 2024/25 season, with all pools remaining fully operational throughout the season.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

There was no consultation or engagement required in the development of this report.

RESOLUTION 2025/159

Moved: Cr Nick Angelo

Seconded: Cr Miki Wilson

That Council:

1. receive and note the Loddon swimming pools end of season report 2024-2025.
2. acknowledge the financial contributions from Inglewood and District Community Bank and Belgravia Leisure to the 2024/25 subsidised membership/entry initiative, which enhanced community access to Loddon's swimming pools.

CARRIED

11.2 FLOOD RESTORATION PROGRESS UPDATE**File Number:****Author:** Steve Van Orsouw, Director Operations**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive and note the 2025 Flood Recovery Update.

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 last quarterly report on progress of the Flood Restoration Program was provided at the August 2025 Council meeting.

BACKGROUND

The October 2022 and 2023/24 flood events were provided Australian Government Reference Numbers (AGRN) of 1037 and 1096 consecutively which are referred to in the reporting. Having previously reported to Council on the flood recovery program, the information within this report provides a program summary to 31 August 2025. The flood recovery program involves coordination across several agencies and legislative frameworks, including:

- National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA)
- National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA)
- Natural Disaster Financial Assistance (NDFA) Team – Administering Authority
- Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement (DRFA)
- Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV)
- Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS)
- Council Flood Support Fund (CFSF)
- Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) – Assessing Authority
- Delivery Agencies: Local Councils and Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs)

As can be appreciated, while navigating these agencies has presented challenges, the collaboration particularly with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) assessors has been constructive. The Council team has gained valuable experience, improved negotiation capabilities, and built strong relationships with both Natural Disaster Financial Assistance (NDFA) and DTP. These partnerships will continue to support effective delivery and oversight of the program moving forward.

ISSUES/DISCUSSIONFlood recovery program to date - Table 1

Having worked through the various recovery stages, leaves only REPA works to be completed. The claim status of other stages as previously reported are summarised below.

AGRN	Relief & Recovery (R&R)	Counter Disaster Operations (CDO)	Emergency Works (EW)	Immediate Restoration Works (IRW)	Total
1037 #	1	3	5	5	14
\$	42,949	287,822	381,892	3,897,256	4,604,899
Rejected \$	5,735	227	5,799	3,149	14,911
1096 #	1	-	1	-	2
\$	37,956	-	240,533	-	378,489
Rejected \$	-	-	11,910	-	11,910
Total #	2	3	6	5	16
\$	80,905	287,822	622,425	3,897,256	4,983,388
Rejected \$	5,735	227	17,709	3,149	26,821

Restoration of Essential Public Assets (REPA) ongoing Program of Works as reported to NEMA – Table 2

Below is a summary of approvals and completed works as at 31 August 2025. This information will change and be updated on a quarterly basis as works and claims progress.

AGRN	Packages No	Certified Estimates \$	Expenditure to Date \$	Estimated Cost \$ to Complete	Total Final Cost \$ Estimated	Completed #	Claimed #
1037	32	18,941,004	4,005,410	14,005,059	18,010,469	12	7
1096	6	3,332,425	-	3,332,425	3,332,425	-	-
	38	22,273,429	4,005,410	17,337,484	21,342,894	12	7

It is highly pleasing to have \$21,342,894 of approved works packages ready for delivery. Council is now progressing design and tender for works packages and will shortly move into the delivery phase. Managing this volume of work across the municipality will be a challenge for supervision of works and additional resources are being sought to ensure quality and timeliness.

Council Flood Support Fund (CFSF) – Table 3

Immediately following each of the 1037 and 1096 flood events, Local Government Victoria (LGV) provided funding for flood damage not covered by insurance or the DRFA. This is reported on quarterly and acquitted annually to LGV. The status as of 30 Jun 2025 is represented below.

AGRN	Funds Received \$	Funds Expended \$	Balance Remaining \$
1037	1,500,000	1,195,855	304,145
1096	500,000	243,276	256,724
	2,000,000	1,439,131	560,869

The activities still incurring costs are the Skinners Reservoir Dam design, the Nardoo Creek trail repair and the resourcing of the Flood Restoration Program team. These funds will be fully expended 30 June 2026.

Betterment

Betterment funding allows council to restore assets in a way which is more resilient to future flood events. Funding of \$1,000,000 was allocated through the DRFA for Betterment work. Only a minor amount has been claimed against this source, but as the REPA work above progresses and claims lodged, this balance will be drawn down as works progress.

Advances – Table 4

The DRFA have provided cash advances to Council to assist in the funding delivery of approved works. As funds are utilised additional advance requests will be sought based on approved estimates. The status of this is as follows.

Stage	Advanced	Utilised	Balance
IRW	3,503,102	3,503,102	-
REPA	6,218,342	748,959	5,469,383
	9,721,444	4,252,061	

Next Steps

Loddon Shire is progressing in its infrastructure recovery program, with all but 1 of the packages submitted approved. The remaining package awaiting approval is the Derby Serpentine Road Bridge to be replaced with a more resilient floodway. This has been assessor approved and it is expected that the package will be approved by ERV in coming weeks.

Although REPA work has been progressing and multiple packages are completed, to date, the strategy of releasing smaller schedule of rates packages has proven effective, particularly for diverse and localised works. As we shift toward larger lump sum packages valued between \$3M to \$5M and encompassing up to 290+ individual sites, we anticipate increased contractor interest due to the consistency and scale of the work.

This approach will also streamline contract administration and allow the team to focus more intensively on delivery and oversight. We are also preparing for the expected audit process, which will likely cover financial management, risk controls, and quality assurance. The staff in the field teams continue to play a vital role in quality assurance, ensuring all works meet the required standards before final sign off.

Loddon Shire Road Program 2025/26

The total road infrastructure program in Loddon for 2025/26 financial year is \$33.3 million. This consists of a combination of \$22M from the State and Commonwealth governments through the DRFA program, \$5.3M from Council as part of its Annual Infrastructure Program and Council's operational maintenance program of \$6M. These works will contribute to the overall performance of Council's road infrastructure and community satisfaction.

COST/BENEFITS

The supporting funds received by funding agencies has supported the flood recovery efforts, returning Council's road infrastructure to pre flooding condition.

RISK ANALYSIS

A fundamental learning from earlier phases was the lack of pre-condition photographic data, and immediate post-flood photos which impacted the ability to substantiate claims. This is a common challenge across all Australian Councils. To address this, Officers are investigating dedicated systems that will record road infrastructure condition data, aligning with NDRRA requirements. The cost of such systems is modest compared to the long-term benefits they offer in disaster recovery and claims validation.

As tender packets are released, the required completion date of 30 June 2026 will become clearer, and this may result in Council seeking an extension of time to complete the entire works program. Advanced notice of this will be required by the DRFA.

As previously reported, the long-term repair of the Skinners Flat Reservoir wall and spillway is not eligible for DRFA funding. Given the likely high cost, this work is expected to be beyond Council's financial capacity without substantial support from State or Federal Governments.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The report has been completed in consultation with officers from the Works Department, Finance Department and other external government agencies.

RESOLUTION 2025/160

Moved: Cr David Weaver

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council receive and note the 2025 Flood Recovery Update.

CARRIED

12 COMPLIANCE REPORTS

12.1 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE UPDATE

File Number:

Author: Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate

Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer

Attachments: Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the:

- Summary of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting – 1 September 2025
- Audit and Risk Committee – Annual Performance Assessment Report – 2024 – 2025 Update.

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 most recently received an update on a Loddon Shire Council Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting at its July 2025 meeting.

An Audit and Risk Committee Annual Performance Assessment Report was most recently presented to Council at its May 2024 meeting.

BACKGROUND

Council's ARC has been established in accordance with section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, to support it 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.

This report is a requirement of the ARC Charter which states:

'A summary of each ARC meeting will be reported at the next meeting of the Council.'

'The ARC shall undertake a process to evaluate its performance annually in accordance with the survey in Appendix 5 and report the outcomes of the evaluation process to Council through the Chief Executive Officer, including recommendations for any opportunities for improvement.'

ISSUES/DISCUSSIONSummary of meeting

Below is a summary of the ARC meeting held on Monday, 1 September 2025 in the Loddon Shire Council Chambers.

Member attendees:

Marg Allan – Independent Member (Chair)
Rod Poxon – Independent Member
Amber Currie – Independent Member
Mick Cummins – Independent Member
Cr Miki Wilson – Substitute Councillor Representative

Officer attendees:

Lincoln Fitzgerald – Chief Executive Officer
Michelle Stedman – Director Corporate
Lisa Clue – Manager Governance
Ange Marshall – Acting Manager Financial Services
Michelle Hargreaves – Administration Officer Governance

Other attendees:

Brad Ead – AFS & Associates Pty Ltd
Mahesh Silva and Shivram Goel – RSD Audit – for item 17 below

Apologies:

Cr Gavan Holt

The following matters were considered by the ARC at the meeting:

Report	Discussion points
Status of actions generated during ARC meetings	<p>The ARC received a report on the status of actions generated during its meetings.</p> <p>The Committee noted no actions from previous meeting resolutions were outstanding at the May 2025 ARC meeting and all actions from the May and July 2025 meeting resolutions have been completed.</p> <p>One action requested by the Committee during the course of meetings, relating to the Community Planning Fund review, remains outstanding.</p>
Audit and Risk Committee Members and External Auditors In-Camera Discussion	<p><i>Council officers left the meeting while this item was being considered.</i></p>
External Audit Outcomes Review	<p>Representatives from RSD Audit provided an update on the outcomes of the 2024/25 external audit.</p> <p>The ARC resolved to note the outcomes of the external audit.</p>

Report	Discussion points
Draft Financial and Performance Statements Year Ended 30 June 2025 – For discussion	<p>The ARC discussed the Draft Financial and Performance Statements as presented and resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Audit and Risk Committee note the report on the Draft Financial and Performance Statements – Year ended 30 June 2025, and 2. That management determine and advise the Audit and Risk Committee of a Special Meeting date for review and endorsement of complete Financial and Performance Statements – Year ended 30 June 2025. <p>Note: A Special meeting of the ARC has been scheduled for 29 September 2025.</p>
CEO Report	<p>The ARC resolved to receive and note a report from the CEO updating the Committee on a number of matters including the former Campbells Forest Community Asset Committee; Council's Code of Conduct; Information Security; The 2025/26 Budget and Financial Plan; Council's Enterprise Agreement; the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund; Disaster Recovery Funding; Skinners Flat; and Worksafe inspections.</p>
Draft Financial Plan 2025/26 – 2034/35	<p>The Draft Financial Plan 2025/26 – 2034/35 was presented to the ARC for review and feedback ahead of further consideration of the plan by Councillors, and release of the Plan for community feedback. The ARC resolved to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acknowledge the efforts of staff in developing the Draft Financial Plan 2. Express concern at the status of the Financial Plan; and 3. Advise Council that the Committee supports a revision of the Financial Plan within twelve months to address the financial sustainability of the Council, including actions and timelines that will achieve the requirements of the Plan.
Audit and Risk Committee Annual Performance Assessment	<p>The ARC received a report on the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Performance Assessment 2024/25 and resolved to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the responses to the annual assessment of performance survey 2024/25; 2. Note that the annual assessment will be tabled at the 23 September 2025 Council Meeting; 3. Support a review of the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, including the Work Plan, with a view to articulating the focus of the Committee, including sequence of approvals; and 4. Support creation and implementation of a more concise performance assessment survey, and process review to include participation of management.
Strategic Internal Audit Program (SIAP) status update and Internal Audit scope review	<p>The ARC received an update on the delivery status of the Strategic Internal Audit Program 2023 - 2026 (SIAP) and a high level scope for a review of Budgeting Preparation and Monitoring.</p> <p>The Committee resolved to note the delivery status of the SIAP and endorse the high level scope as presented.</p>

Report	Discussion points
Internal Audit Report – Key Internal Controls	<p>The ARC received a report on an Internal Audit on Key Internal controls.</p> <p>The Committee resolved to endorse the report and accept eleven recommended actions in full.</p> <p>Two recommended actions were rated moderate risk, eight were rated minor risk, and one was an identified improvement opportunity.</p>
Internal Audit Report – Fleet Management	<p>The ARC received a report on an Internal Audit on Fleet Management.</p> <p>The Committee resolved to endorse the report and accept six recommended actions in full.</p> <p>All recommended actions were rated minor risk.</p>
Progress on open audit recommendations	<p>The ARC received a report on the status of actions from past internal audits, resolving to endorse nine audit actions deemed complete and approve adjusted due dates for the completion of three actions.</p>
<i>Independent Member, Amber Currie declared a conflict of interest in relation to the next item on the Agenda and left the meeting.</i>	
Investment Policy v6	<p>The ARC received a report on a review of Council's Investment Policy, and resolved to endorse the Policy ahead of its presentation to Council for adoption.</p>
<i>Independent Member, Amber Currie returned to the meeting.</i>	
Procurement Policy v13	<p>The ARC received a report on a review of Council's Procurement Policy, resolving to endorse the Draft Procurement Policy v13 and recommend that Council adopt the Policy.</p>
Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Fraud and Corruption Control Plan	<p>The ARC received a report on a recent review of Council's Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and first draft Fraud and Corruption Control Plan, and resolved to endorse both documents, with minor amendments.</p>
Review of Council's Insurance Programme	<p>The ARC received and resolved to note a report on Council's insurance programme including claims; learnings from claims and uninsured exposures; and variance in premiums;</p>
Reimbursement of Councillor expenses	<p>The ARC received and resolved to note a quarterly report on Councillor expenses.</p>
Investigations undertaken by regulatory and integrity agencies relevant to Council	<p>The ARC received and noted a report on investigations undertaken by regulatory and integrity agencies.</p>

Report	Discussion points
Matters referred by Councillor representative	<p>Cr Wilson raised a number of matters including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value of Audit and Risk Committee financial expertise to Council and Councillors • Potential for joint meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee and Councillors, including to address identified vulnerabilities • Councillors attendance at Audit and Risk Committee meetings as observers • Strategic risk currently under review relating to volunteers and an ageing population in the municipality • Council's Road Management Plan, reviewed and approved by Council at the August Council meeting • The impact of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) levy, sand mining and power line projects on local families.
Audit and Risk Committee Members and Internal Auditor In-Camera Discussion	<i>Council officers left the meeting while this item was being considered.</i>

Annual Performance Assessment

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires an ARC to undertake an annual assessment of its performance against the Audit and Risk Committee Charter and provide a copy of the annual assessment to the Chief Executive Officer for tabling at the next Council Meeting.

Independent members and the Councillor representative were invited to complete a survey developed to assess ARC performance over 2024/25, with three independent members and the Councillor representative completing the survey on this occasion.

The survey consisted statements that described a high-performing ARC, covering a number of areas including the function of the charter, skills and interactions within the Committee and with Council, training and development, risk management, statutory compliance and reporting, agendas and reports, conduct of meetings, and both internal and external internal audit functions.

All respondents gave feedback on the majority of statements which is presented across two tables:

Table 1 indicates survey results where the Committee's self-assessed areas *showed strong performance*.

Table 1 - Areas of 2024/25 ARC Annual Survey showing strong performance:

Topic	Survey results
ARC Charter	<p>All respondents agreed that the Charter clearly articulates the Committee's roles and responsibilities and provides it with the necessary authority to discharge them, and that the Charter ensures the Committee is sufficiently independent from the management of Council.</p> <p>Respondents in the most part agreed that the Charter facilitates and supports the effective operation of the Committee.</p>

Topic	Survey results
Skills and experience	<p>All respondents agreed that the Committee has shown an openness to new ideas and different views in its deliberations.</p> <p>Respondents in the most part agreed that the Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. has been sufficiently proving and challenging in its deliberations, 2. has been able to analyse and critically evaluate information presented to it by management, and 3. has responded appropriately where significant risks and/or control breakdowns have been brought to its attention.
Understanding the Business	<p>All respondents agreed that the Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. has an adequate understanding of Council's financial and statutory reporting requirements 2. receives appropriate briefings on changes in financial and performance reporting requirements. <p>In the most part, respondents agreed that the Committee has an adequate understanding of Council's internal control framework to mitigate significant risks, and its legislative compliance requirements.</p> <p>Respondents generally felt the Committee receives appropriate briefings on current and emerging business risks and changes in the business/regulatory environment.</p>
Meeting administration and conduct	<p>All respondents agreed that the Committee receives agendas and supporting papers in sufficient time prior to meetings, and Committee minutes are appropriately maintained and provided to Council on a timely basis.</p> <p>Respondents agreed in the most part that agendas are structured to allow sufficient time to discuss all critical issues and that meetings are well run and productive.</p>
Communication with Council	<p>The two statements for this topic related to the appropriateness of Committee communications to Council about its deliberations and decisions, and its activities.</p> <p>Whilst two respondents agreed that these communications are appropriate, two were unsure.</p>
Management Commitment and Support	<p>All respondents agreed that information and briefing papers presented by management meet the Committee's expectations in respect of Council's external reporting requirements and that the Committee has a positive attitude to continuous improvement in its dealings with management.</p> <p>Respondents in the most part agreed that information and briefing papers presented by management meet its expectations in respect of management of Council's compliance and regulatory obligations.</p>
Internal Audit	<p>All respondents agreed that the Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. has reviewed and approved the internal audit plan and any significant changes to it; 2. considered the performance of the internal audit function; and 3. reviewed the ARC Charter to ensure that appropriate structures, authority, access and reporting arrangements are in place for the internal audit function. <p>Respondents in the most part also agreed that the Committee had considered the adequacy of the internal audit process, and that the Audit and Risk Committee Charter had been reviewed to ensure that appropriate structures, authority, access and reporting arrangements are in place for the internal audit function.</p>
External Audit	<p>All respondents agreed that the Committee had reviewed and approved the external audit plan.</p> <p>Respondents in the most part agreed that the Committee had reviewed external audit reports and management letters and monitored management responses to findings and recommendations made by external audit, and that the Committee provided feedback on the performance of external audit.</p>

Alongside the areas of strong performance were areas that may *require improvement and/or further attention*.

Insights provided by the Committee within the survey have identified the following areas that may benefit from either further discussion by the ARC or provision of further information or guidance by Council officers.

Table 2 - Topics of 2024/25 ARC Annual Survey showing areas for improvement:

Topic	Survey results	Officer response
ARC Charter	Respondents were divided on whether during the past year, the ARC had adequately addressed all of its responsibilities as detailed in the Charter.	<p>Commentary from the survey suggests that sustained efforts from the organisation to address Internal Audit actions and improving operational and strategic risk reporting would assist the Committee to address its responsibilities under the charter. Also to be considered is a review of the ARC Charter to ensure efforts are focussed on areas that would address highest risks and bring about the most meaningful outcomes.</p> <p>For Action</p>
Skills and Experience	<p>Respondent assessments of the Committee's collective skills varied, with the majority unsure or disagreeing that the Committee has the desired mix of skills to allow it to effectively discharge its responsibilities, and that its collective skills are adequate in light of its responsibilities.</p> <p>The majority of respondents were unsure if there is a clear process that Committee members can follow to access advice and/or training to improve their skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Areas for improvement may include identifying and filling skill-gaps of the committee to improve on discharging its responsibilities, and clearer support to access training to improve skills and knowledge.</p>	<p>In consultation with the Chair of the ARC, it is proposed that a skill-gap analysis be undertaken ahead of recruitment for next Independent Member vacancy to maximise coverage of priority areas.</p> <p>This analysis can inform a training and development plan tailored to the members of the Committee.</p> <p>For Action</p>
Understanding the business	Quantitative results suggest that improvements could be made around the provision of more detailed briefings on integrity body reports, as well as the Committee's understanding of Council's Risk Management Framework and Risk Profile.	<p>Officers to consider targeted briefings on integrity body reports with Council's Internal Auditor. With a further charter revision flagged to enable more in-depth focus on priority areas, officers to consider Council's Risk Management Framework and Risk Profile as a priority.</p> <p>For Action</p>
Meeting administration and conduct	Respondents were divided as to the Committee having had an appropriate number of meetings to properly discharge its responsibilities and agendas and supporting papers being of sufficient clarity and quality of agendas and supporting papers to enable the Committee to make informed decisions.	<p>Agenda and report structures, report content and alignment of all reporting to the organisation's Risk Profile will be reviewed and considered to support clarity of content.</p> <p>This will combine with a charter review to identify priority areas for Committee focus.</p> <p>For Action</p>

Topic	Survey results	Officer response
Management Commitment and Support	<p>Respondents were divided on two statements within this topic:</p> <p>Information and briefing papers presented by management may not meet the Committee's expectations in respect of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council's risk profile and mitigating actions for key risks, and 2. Maintenance of a strong internal control environment that is effective in mitigating key risks. 	<p>In conjunction with previous action regarding report structures, content and alignment, the organisation will work directly with the ARC Chair to ensure that Committee expectations are being met.</p> <p>For Action</p>

Further to the substantive questions, respondents were invited to provide final comments to which officer responses are listed below:

Final comments from Survey	Officer response
Look forward to seeing management respond to the concerns raised by the survey and uplift the quality of these meetings.	<p>Management is committed to ensuring that the ARC has the information they require to fulfil their responsibilities and welcomes feedback from the Committee about the ways in which this could be improved.</p> <p>For Noting</p>
Medium - long term financial sustainability appears to me to be a key risk. I'm unclear why it is not identified by the council as a High or Very High risk. I suggest consideration be given to this at the Council's risk session in May.	<p>Council's consideration of the Strategic Risk around financial sustainability is underway with wording looking to reflect a more holistic picture (including increased expenses alongside static revenue), which will likely increase level of risk more in line with Committee expectations.</p> <p>Underway</p>
The ARC could be further supported by more analysis of the financial position through a set of key ratios presented with each financial report.	<p>Key ratio metrics are being considered for inclusion in Quarterly Finance Reports ongoing.</p> <p>Underway</p>
Council could present budget and LTFP assumptions to the ARC for review and awareness before these key documents are finalised for council. This gives the ARC an understanding of the issues and provides context for the quarterly reviews of the financial position of council.	<p>Agreed. Timing of reporting being considered to enable this, including options for 'offline' reviews.</p> <p>Underway</p>
It would also be appropriate to receive an update on the process for developing the council plan.	<p>Noted. This is a time-sensitive item; a full update on the Council Plan development will be provided at a future meeting.</p> <p>Underway</p>
A key opportunity for improvement is to have an organisational blitz on implementing the Internal Audit actions. That would go a long way to addressing ARC concerns.	<p>Noted. Limited ability to undertake a 'blitz' more widely due to specialised nature of long-standing actions and limited resources across the organisation that can assist. Other methods being taken including looking to outsource delivery.</p> <p>For Action</p>
To support the knowledge of the ARC (and awareness of the ARC in the org) we could have a manager present to each ARC meeting on their role and key risks.	<p>Noted. This will be discussed with Loddon Management team for future Committee meetings.</p> <p>For Action</p>

Final comments from Survey	Officer response
When IA findings are being presented, the relevant manager and director could be present to hear and contribute to the discussion.	Noted. This can be facilitated. <i>Underway</i>
Council might find it useful for the Chair of the ARC to attend the council briefing when the biannual report is being presented.	Noted. This was undertaken for the most recent Biannual Report from the Committee and it was useful for all parties. A Chair's introduction will also be provided within this report. <i>Underway</i>

COST/BENEFITS

This report provides Council with oversight of the work of the ARC, providing a level of surety that services are undertaken efficiently and effectively.

There are no costs associated with development of this report, however there are modest costs associated with the Audit and Risk Committee and undertaking regular internal and external auditing of Council activities. These costs are provided for in Council's approved budget.

RISK ANALYSIS

The ARC has risk management oversight for the Council and monitors, reviews, endorses and advises Council on matters as set out in the Charter.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Officers involved in the conduct of the ARC meeting were consulted in the preparation of this report.

RESOLUTION 2025/161

Moved: Cr Miki Wilson

Seconded: Cr Nick Angelo

That Council receives and notes the:

- Summary of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting – 1 September 2025
- Audit and Risk Committee – Annual Performance Assessment Report – 2024 – 2025 Update.

CARRIED

13 URGENT BUSINESS

Nil

14 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Nil

NEXT MEETING

The next Meeting of Council will be held on 28 October 2025 at Wedderburn commencing at 3.00pm.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 3.50 pm.

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

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CHAIRPERSON