



Ararat Rural City

AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 30 July 2024

To be held in the Council Chambers, Shire Offices
(Livestreamed)

Commencing at 6.00pm

Council:

Cr Bob Sanders (Mayor)

Cr Gwenda Allgood

Cr Jo Armstrong

Cr Rob Armstrong

Cr Peter Beales

Cr Henry Burridge

Cr Bill Waterston



Ararat Rural City

A recording of this meeting is being made for the purpose of verifying the accuracy of the minutes of the Council Meeting.

The recording is being streamed live via Facebook, to improve transparency between council and the community and give more people the opportunity to view what decisions are being made. You do not require a Facebook account to watch the live broadcast, simply enter www.facebook.com/araratruralcitycouncil into your address bar.

Recordings of Council Meetings (excluding closed sessions) are made available on Council's website.

SECTION 1 – PROCEDURAL MATTERS	2
1.1 LIVE STREAMING.....	2
1.2 TRADITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/OPENING PRAYER/COUNCILLORS PLEDGE.....	2
1.3 APOLOGIES	2
1.4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES	2
1.5 DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST	3
SECTION 2 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	4
2.1 PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS	4
SECTION 3 – REPORTS REQUIRING COUNCIL DECISION	5
3.1 COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025/ANNUAL PLAN 2024/2025	5
3.2 PROPOSED NEW INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES IN ARARAT	8
3.3 VICTORIAN CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES CHARTER	12
3.4 SAFE LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS PROGRAM	16
3.5 LANDFILL CLOSURE AND REMEDIATION WORKS – STREATHAM, TATYOON AND ELMHURST	23
3.6 RATE COLLECTION POLICY	27
3.7 FINANCIAL HARDSHIP POLICY	29
SECTION 4 – INFORMATION REPORTS	31
4.1 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM	31
SECTION 5 – COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS	36
SECTION 6 – INFORMAL MEETINGS	37
6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS.....	37
SECTION 7 – NOTICES OF MOTION	39
SECTION 8 – URGENT BUSINESS	40
SECTION 9 – CLOSE SESSION (CONFIDENTIAL)	41
CLOSURE OF COUNCIL MEETING TO THE PUBLIC	41
OPEN COUNCIL MEETING RECOMMENCEMENT.....	41
LIFTING OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTIONS.....	41

SECTION 1 – PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 LIVE STREAMING

Council is keen to engage with members of the community and live streams the formal Council Meetings to make them accessible. The stream is available to view on Council’s Facebook page from 6pm and on Council’s website following the Council Meeting.

1.2 TRADITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/OPENING PRAYER/COUNCILLORS PLEDGE

Traditional acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, and pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, we humbly ask you to help us, as elected Councillors of the Ararat Rural City Council. Guide our deliberations. Prosper what is your will for us, to your honour and glory and for the welfare and benefit of the people whom we serve in the Ararat Rural City.

Councillors Pledge

We will faithfully and impartially carry out and exercise the functions, powers, authorities and discretions invested in us under the *Local Government Act 2020* and any other Act to the best of our skill and judgement.

1.3 APOLOGIES

RECOMMENDATION

That the apology of Cr be accepted.

1.4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 25 June 2024 be confirmed.

1.5 DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A Councillor who has a conflict of interest in a matter being considered at a *Council meeting* at which he or she:

- 1 is present must disclose that conflict of interest by explaining the nature of the conflict of interest to those present at the *Council meeting* immediately before the matter is considered; or
- 2 intends to be present must disclose that conflict of interest by providing to the *Chief Executive Officer* before the *Council meeting* commences a written notice:
 - (a) advising of the conflict of interest;
 - (b) explaining the nature of the conflict of interest; and
 - (c) detailing, if the nature of the conflict of interest involves a Councillor's relationship with or a gift from another person, the:
 - name of the other person;
 - nature of the relationship with that other person or the date of receipt, value and type of gift received from the other person; and
 - nature of that other person's interest in the matter,

and then immediately before the matter is considered at the meeting announcing to those present that he or she has a conflict of interest and that a written notice has been given to the *Chief Executive Officer* under this sub-Rule.

The Councillor must, in either event, leave the *Council meeting* immediately after giving the explanation or making the announcement (as the case may be) and not return to the meeting until after the matter has been disposed of.

SECTION 2 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

2.1 PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS

- 1 Unless *Council* determines to consider it as an item of urgent business, no motion (other than a motion to receive the same) may be made on any petition, joint letter, memorial or other like application until the next *Council meeting* after that at which it has been presented.
- 2 It is incumbent on every Councillor presenting a petition or joint letter to acquaint himself or herself with the contents of that petition or joint letter, and to ascertain that it does not contain language disrespectful to *Council*.
- 3 Every Councillor presenting a petition or joint letter to *Council* must:
 - write or otherwise record his or her name at the beginning of the petition or joint letter; and
 - confine himself or herself to a statement of the persons from whom it comes, the number of signatories to it, the material matters expressed in it and the text of the prayer or request.
- 4 Every petition or joint letter presented to *Council* must be in *writing* (other than pencil), typing or printing, contain the request of the petitioners or signatories and be signed by at least 12 people.
- 5 Every petition or joint letter must be signed by the persons whose names are appended to it by their names or marks, and, except in cases of incapacity or sickness, by no one else and the address of every petitioner or signatory must be clearly stated.
- 6 Any signature appearing on a page which does not bear the text of the whole of the petition or request may not be considered by *Council*.
- 7 Every page of a petition or joint letter must be a single page of paper and not be posted, stapled, pinned or otherwise affixed or attached to any piece of paper other than another page of the petition or joint letter.
- 8 If a petition, joint letter, memorial or other like application relates to an operational matter, *Council* must refer it to the *Chief Executive Officer* for consideration.

SECTION 3 – REPORTS REQUIRING COUNCIL DECISION

3.1 COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025/ANNUAL PLAN 2024/2025

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO's OFFICE
REFERENCE: 16241

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the beginning of its current term Council adopted the Council Plan 2021-2025 which outlined its key strategic themes and objectives across the planning period. Each financial year Council produces an annual plan for the financial year which provides a series of actions aimed at operationalising Council's strategic intent. The Annual Plan 2024/2025 is the fourth, and final, annual plan produced in the current planning cycle. It will also cover the period of transition to a newly elected Council and development of new Council Plan.

DISCUSSION

Section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that Council adopts a Council Plan that outlines its strategic direction, objectives, and measures of performance for at least the following four years. Council adopted its Council Plan 2021 – 2025 following the 2020 Council elections. In addition to adopting the Council Plan 2021 – 2025, each year Council produces an Annual Plan for the financial year which outlines the actions to be taken each year to implement Council's strategy. It is essentially the plan to operationalise Council's strategic direction.

The Annual Plan 2024/2025 represents the fourth Annual Plan put in place to achieve the strategic intent of the Council Plan 2021-2025. It is important to consider that this Annual Plan will be in place over the transition to a new Council following the 2024 Victorian Council elections. Therefore, the Annual Plan 2024/2025 will focus on two key outcomes:

- ensuring that the strategies identified in the Council Plan 2021 - 2025 are operationalised in 2024/2025
- delivering key statutory obligations, particularly around strategic planning, of the newly elected Council under the *Local Government Act 2020*

The Annual Plan 2024/2025 has specific actions associated with achieving each objective which sits under each of the six key theme of the Council Plan 2021-2025. The key themes and objectives are provided below:

1. GROWING OUR PLACE

We will create the settings to support growth across our municipality through an improved planning scheme, actively pursuing new housing options and exploring models for in-migration.

- 1.1 Develop a new planning scheme for Ararat Rural City that is clear in its intention, supports growth and builds confidence and certainty around land use.
- 1.2 Support innovative housing models that work to overcome market failure and create the capacity to increase the population of Ararat Rural City.
- 1.3 Work with other levels of government, business, and not-for-for profits to develop programs to increase in-migration to Ararat Rural City to grow our population.

2. BUILDING ROBUST LOCAL ECONOMIES

We will develop strong relationships to build and strengthen a diverse local economy, focussed on creating jobs and wealth through adding value to existing strengths in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and hospitality.

- 2.1 Partner with Federation University Australia to deliver the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct.
- 2.2 Work with other levels of government, local business, and private investors to develop a business park within Ararat Rural City, focused on agricultural value adding and advanced manufacturing, potentially leveraging “behind the meter” power.
- 2.3 Engage with Grampians Tourism and local businesses to drive growth in high yield tourist outcomes.

3. PRESERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT

We will take pragmatic approaches to ensuring that Ararat Rural City Council takes a regional lead in responsible environmental management and engagement with the circular economy.

- 3.1 Position Ararat Rural City Council as a prime mover in driving circular economy policy in waste management, including local processing and management of recyclables, and in use of renewable energy for Council purposes.
- 3.2 Develop innovative energy solutions utilising locally produced waste.
- 3.3 Partner with local organisations and scientific experts to develop an appropriate and pragmatic local government Environment Strategy, focussed on the circular economy, emission reduction through renewable energy and management of Council assets.

4. DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING KEY ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

We will ensure that we plan, fund and develop new infrastructure in ways that delivers strong public value. Existing infrastructure will be managed, renewed, and maintained to ensure that it continues to serve identified public needs.

- 4.1 Ensure that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council’s Asset Plan 2021-2031.
- 4.2 Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.
- 4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, promote community wellbeing and safety, and align with Council’s financial sustainability.

5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

We will work with the communities of Ararat Rural City to maintain social cohesion, support community activity and cultural life, and enhance safety.

- 5.1 Open up Council’s arts and culture assets to greater community participation, ownership and engagement in decision-making.
- 5.2 Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.
- 5.3 Partner with community groups, not-for-profits, and traditional owner organisations to develop Ararat Rural City as a more inclusive and diverse community.

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at the centre through effective financial management; well measured risk management; and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

- 6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes, linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.
- 6.2 Ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions. Council’s internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk.
- 6.3 Continuously improve Council’s community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while acknowledging the need for a range of different techniques to ensure effective engagement.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The Annual Plan 2024/2025 has alignment to each key theme and objective of the Council Plan 2021-2025.

Adopting the Annual Plan 2024/2025 has direct strategic alignment to objective 6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes, linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.

Budget Implications

Adoption of the Annual Pan 2024/2025 does not have any additional budget implications. All actions in the annual plan are budgeted in the 2024/2025 Budget or have no additional resourcing requirements.

Policy/Relevant Law

Section 90 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires that Council produces a Council Plan for a minimum of a four year period. The Annual Plan is a document related to operationalising the Council Plan.

Sustainability Implications

The key theme, *5. Preserving Our Environment*, has direct sustainability impacts. Actions relating to renewable energy, implementation of Council's Environment Strategy and electrification of Council plant all have clear and tangible links to sustainability outcomes.

Risk Assessment

Implementing the Annual Plan has some inherent risks around project and program delivery on time, at cost and at an acceptable quality. These risks are managed through careful budget monitoring, a focus on effective project management and appropriate stakeholder engagement. Council has a commitment to improved performance across all of these areas.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The Annual Plan 2024/2025 has strong themes of innovation and continuous improvement running through it. There are a number of innovative actions identified in relation to sustainability, housing, clustered economic development and partnership.

The strategic challenges including the renewal of Council's asset base, the continuation of an appropriate range and level of services, the maintenance of a sound financial position and protection of our natural environment.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The Council Plan 2021-2025 was developed based on community engagement and consultation. There are a significant number of actions in the Annual Plan 2024/2025 relating to engagement around strategy and service delivery. These include re-booting the Rural Roads Group, implementing the environment strategy and review of the planning scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

That

Council adopts the Draft Annual Plan 2024/2025

ATTACHMENTS

The Draft Annual Plan 2024/2025 and the Council Plan 2021 - 2025 is provided as Attachment 3.1

3.2 PROPOSED NEW INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES IN ARARAT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 16242

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the 30 April 2024 Council Meeting, Council endorsed the exploration and concept development of alternative site/s for the delivery of the services and facilities currently offered at the Ararat Fitness Centre.

This report provides the outcome of the above activities for review by Council and proposes that the preferred sites and concepts be released for community consultation and engagement.

DISCUSSION

Site Analysis

Underutilised sites in Ararat were identified and analysed for their suitability to deliver all or parts of the existing services and facilities at the Ararat Fitness Centre. These sites included Council owned or managed land and other Crown or government owned land. Large and vacant privately owned sites were also considered but were assessed as not viable due to the likely cost of purchasing the land on top of the cost of the new community infrastructure.

The sites were assessed against a set of criteria based on what the community and users valued about the existing site and facilities, how the alternative sites could deliver these values, and the absence of adverse factors that exist at the current Ararat Fitness Centre. The criteria included:

- Size Adequacy – Is there sufficient land for the potential facilities?
- Access & Transport – Could young people or those without cars be able to walk, cycle or catch a bus there? Is there or could there be adequate parking? Does this location offer improved road safety outcomes? Are there other access barriers?
- Complementarity – Are there other community uses and facilities that would complement a new indoor sports and aquatic facility? Would it add value to, or detract from, the existing precinct or neighbourhood? Would the site support improved participation, health and wellbeing outcomes?
- Likely cost versus benefits.

Indoor Aquatic Facilities Site

Based on the site analysis, it is recommended that the Ararat Outdoor Pool at Alexandra Gardens be upgraded to an indoor pool with new a children's pool, hydrotherapy pool/spa and sauna, rather than construct a new indoor aquatic facility in another location. The upgraded pool could be utilised all year round, rather than only in summer. This will also save on the cost of excavation and construction of a new swimming pool and the associated pool administration and changeroom facilities, which already exist at the Ararat Outdoor Pool. This will also reduce ongoing maintenance costs which would be incurred if a new indoor aquatic facility was built in Ararat.

The Ararat outdoor pool site cannot accommodate an attached indoor sports facility without imposing on the AFL/cricket oval. Acceptance of this recommendation therefore means that the indoor sports and aquatic facilities will be provided in separate buildings. This may impact on families that have members involved in more than one activity at the Ararat Fitness Centre at the same time.

Indoor Sports Facilities Site

A summary of the site analysis is provided in Table 1 below for the site selection for the new indoor sports facilities. The disused old netball courts and associated building structures at Alexandra Oval Recreation Reserve was identified as the preferred site. Almost all remaining Ararat Fitness Centre facilities and services could be accommodated, except gym facilities. The site is adequate in size for indoor basketball/multi-purpose courts, gymnastics, and squash. The site also has established access and transport connections, yet is not located on or near a busy road or major arterial road, providing improved road and pedestrian safety. It is located in close proximity to the Ararat Outdoor Pool, and it is already used as a multi-purpose sporting precinct with a community centre, AFL, new netball courts, tennis, cricket and an emerging outdoor volleyball scene.

Table 1. Summary of the key sites against the assessment criteria.

Site	Size Adequacy	Access & Transport	Complementarity	Other Comments
Alexandra Oval Precinct (Preferred)	Disused netball and southern lawn tennis courts are adequate in size for new indoor sports facility.	Centrally located. Existing footpath network to the precinct and walking distance from the CBD, train station, and existing nearby bus stops. Existing onsite parking. Internal paths could be constructed to support pedestrian flow between the indoor sports centre and aquatic facilities.	Located within the same precinct as the Ararat Outdoor Pool, AFL, netball, tennis, cricket. The disused lawn tennis courts are being used informally for outdoor volleyball. Existing café located at the outdoor pool in Alexandra Gardens, as well as existing playground, lake, BBQs, outdoor fitness equipment, etc. Close proximity to East Grampians Health Service to support access for their clients.	Selection of this site will help create a more lively sport and recreation hub at the Alexandra Oval and Gardens Precinct.
Kokoda Park	Land size is adequate for a new indoor sports facility.	Somewhat centrally located. Limited existing footpath connections. Walking distance from the train station but potentially too far to walk from CBD. Existing town bus access. New onsite parking will need to be delivered.	Less connected to other sport and recreation facilities. Existing Men's Shed and Ararat Community Enterprise buildings, playground and disused tennis courts. Close proximity to a childcare centre, which will support early childhood access to programs and primary carer access to childcare while participating in sports during the day.	Use of this site will impact on the oval.
Centenary Park	Land size is adequate for a new indoor sports facility.	Less central compared to other sites. Limited existing footpath connections. Not walking distance from train station or CBD. Existing town bus access. New onsite parking will need to be delivered.	Existing playground. While it is walking distance from the Ararat Pony Club and Gordon St Reserve, lack of sight line and paths means these sites do not feel closeby to Centenary Park.	
Ararat Secondary College School Farm Campus	Land size is adequate for a new indoor sports facility.	Less central compared to other sites. No formal footpaths. No nearby public transport. New onsite parking will need to be delivered.	Closer in proximity to the Ararat Pony Club and Gordon St Reserve than Centenary Park, but requires new path connections.	Use of this site may impact on existing agricultural education use of this site.

Initial Concepts

Indicative floor plans have been prepared to assist Council and community to conceptualise what may be possible at the preferred location of the Alexandra Oval Precinct. These are provided as attachments to this report, along with a summary of the design elements and considerations.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

This report aligns with and seeks to achieve the following Strategic Objectives:

4. DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING KEY ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

We will ensure that we plan, fund and develop new infrastructure in ways that delivers strong public value. Existing infrastructure will be managed, renewed, and maintained to ensure that it continues to serve identified public needs.

- 4.1 Ensure that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council's Asset Plan 2021-2031.
- 4.2 Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.
- 4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, promote community wellbeing and safety, and align with Council's financial sustainability.

Budget Implications

The site analysis and initial concept development have been undertaken internally by Council officers and has not had budget implications. The next phase of community consultation and engagement is also expected to be undertaken with existing council resources.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation and engagement, further concept development to enable the procurement for construction may incur costs and will be funded by the reallocated funds from the stage 1 redevelopment of the Ararat Fitness Centre. The estimated cost and budget impacts to deliver the new and upgraded infrastructure will be determined after community have provided their feedback and concept changes are made, if required.

Policy/Relevant Law

Ararat Rural City Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
Ararat Rural City Council's Asset Plan 2022-2032

Sustainability Implications

Improved sustainability design elements and outcomes have been considered as part of the development of the initial concepts and will continue to be factored into the development of this project.

Risk Assessment

New locations and facilities carry the risk causing unintended impacts. The community and stakeholder consultation and engagement will enable Council to identify and resolve any issues during the initial design phase and reduce any future risks.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

This project will develop innovative options for the delivery of enhanced indoor sports, aquatic and gymnastics facilities, and improve the overall recreation offering in the Ararat Rural City.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The proposed location and initial concepts will be released for community and stakeholder consultation and engagement.

To reiterate the April 2024 Council Meeting, the existing facilities and services at the Ararat Fitness Centre will remain until the potential new locations are operational, and existing users will be consulted to support a smooth transition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

1. **Council receives this report and seeks community and stakeholder feedback on the:**
 - a. **Proposed location and initial concept floor plans for a new indoor sports centre at the Alexandra Oval Precinct, and the**
 - b. **Proposed upgrade of the Ararat Outdoor Pool and the initial concept plans.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Proposed New Indoor Sports Centre – Initial Concepts, Proposed Ararat Outdoor Pool Upgrade – Initial Concepts and Summary of Design Elements & Considerations are provided as Attachment 3.2

3.3 VICTORIAN CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES CHARTER

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: STRATEGIC PROJECT LEAD & SUPPORTED PLAYGROUP FACILITATOR/PRE-PREP PROJECT COORDINATOR
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 16243

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report proposes that the Ararat Rural City Council becomes a signatory to the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFCC) Charter.

Council already implements and demonstrates the principles of the Charter in its operations and projects. Becoming a signatory will affirm Council's commitment to the principles of the Charter and conveys our continuing resolve to strive towards a city and community where our children can thrive.

To support Council's status as a signatory to the Charter, this report also proposes the establishment of a Working Group to support the Ararat Rural City community to continue to uphold and to advance the principles of the Charter.

DISCUSSION

The Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFCC) Charter is a statement of principles that underpin actions that support communities to be child friendly. The Charter was launched in 2013 by Bernie Geary, Victoria's former Children's Commissioner. In 2022, an extensive review was undertaken to re-fresh the Charter to ensure alignment with current protocols and practices.

The updated Charter aligns with State, Federal and international protocols and embraces the universal rights of children from birth to 17 years of age as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2016) and the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2006).

The principles of the Charter are to:

- Act in the best interests of the child
- Freedom for children to express their individual opinions and right to have these considered in decisions that affect them
- Create equity for all children based on their needs

The Ararat Rural City Council already demonstrates the principles of the Charter in its development and target outcomes of key strategic documents, such as in our Community Vision 2030, Council Plan, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and our various other plans and policies. This is also demonstrated in the community facilities and infrastructure priorities, such as the Ararat Library refurbishment project that is underway, the new pavilion, sports fields and facilities, and ninja course at the Gordon Street Recreation Reserve, the recent playground upgrades in Ararat and Lake Bolac.

Becoming a signatory will affirm Council's commitment to the principles of the Charter and conveys our continuing resolve to strive towards a city and community where children can thrive. It also complements Council's other activities to support the critically important early childhood education and care sector with the challenges and

opportunities presented with the roll out of Pre-Prep in the municipality in 2025 and creates the mandate for increased attention on the best interests of children in any future plans and strategies.

Adoption of the recommendations of this report will make the Ararat Rural City Council the first small rural council to become a signatory to the Charter.

This report also proposes that a new Working Group with Council, child-related sector, and community representatives be established to support the Ararat Rural City community to continue to uphold and to advance the principles of the Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter. The Working Group may wish to include youth or young adults aged 18 and over in their scope, depending on the areas of interest and expertise of its members. This proposed Working Group will act in an advisory and reference role to the Council and CEO, with the full terms of reference to be developed and agreed by the Working Group.

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) is the auspice agency for the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter and the CFCC Advisory Group, who can provide support to Council to embed the Charter into policy, plans and practice. Council can also send a representative to CFCC Network Meetings to connect with other CFCC signatories and share ideas, resources and collaborate on initiatives.

UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative

The Victorian CFCC Charter closely aligns with the global Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI). This Initiative was launched by UNICEF and UN-Habitat in 1996 to act on the resolutions passed during the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), which declared that the well-being of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy habitat, a democratic society and good governance.

UNICEF provide a large range of online resources via the website: www.childfriendlycities.org to support cities and communities that are building child friendly cities and communities. Before UNICEF can formally recognise a city or a community as child friendly, a range of minimum criteria are required to be met. The recommendations of this report to become a signatory to the Charter and the establishment of the Working Group will contribute to the Ararat Rural City becoming recognised as a Child Friendly City by UNICEF, if we decide to seek recognition in the future.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The recommendations of this report will contribute towards achieving the following strategic objectives:

5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

We will work with the communities of Ararat Rural City to maintain social cohesion, support community activity and cultural life, and enhance safety.

- 5.1 Open up Council's arts and culture assets to greater community participation, ownership, and engagement in decision-making.
- 5.2 Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support, and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.
- 5.3 Partner with community groups, not-for-profits, and traditional owner organisations to develop Ararat Rural City as a more inclusive and diverse community.

4. DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING KEY ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

We will ensure that we plan, fund, and develop new infrastructure in ways that delivers strong public value. Existing infrastructure will be managed, renewed, and maintained to ensure that it continues to serve identified public needs.

- 4.2 Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.

4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, promote community wellbeing and safety, and align with Council's financial sustainability.

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at the centre through effective financial management; well measured risk management; and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

6.3 Continuously improve Council's community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while acknowledging the need for a range of different techniques to ensure effective engagement.

Budget Implications

Becoming a signatory to the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter does not have any direct budget implications. The establishment and administration of the proposed Working Group will be undertaken by existing staff resources. Any future budget implications will be considered as part of the Council's annual budget development and business-as-usual processes.

Policy/Relevant Law

N/A

Sustainability Implications

It is expected that increased attention to the best interest of children will result in improved sustainability outcomes for the Ararat Rural City.

Risk Assessment

No risks identified with becoming a signatory to the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter. Risks associated with the operational requirements of the proposed Working Group will be managed in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Framework.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

If the recommendations of this report are adopted, the Ararat Rural City Council will be the first 'small shire' council (group category according to the Essential Services Commission) to become a signatory to the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

During the engagement and consultation process for the development of the Ararat Rural City's Early Childhood Education Workforce Plan (currently in draft), it was identified that a whole of community approach would be beneficial not only to support the staff in their efforts to educate and care for young children, but also for the health and wellbeing of the children themselves. Easy access to suitable natural environments, intergenerational interactions, sports facilities, and other venues and activities would contribute toward enabling a highly satisfying career for early childhood education and care workers, as well as provide engaging and stimulating educational opportunities for young children. It was also recognised that the Ararat Rural City Council and the local community were either already partnering and collaborating with the early years services to achieve this, or there was strong support to do so.

Becoming a signatory to the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter is a way to acknowledge what we already do and is in the draft Early Childhood Education Workforce Plan as a strategy to help increase recognition of the importance and value of the early childhood education and care sector and workforce in the community.

Further stakeholder collaboration and engagement will occur through the establishment of the proposed Working Group, and the activities that may occur via this group.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. **The Ararat Rural City Council becomes a Signatory to the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter**
2. **A new Working Group be established to support the Ararat Rural City community to continue to uphold and to advance the principles of the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter**
3. **A report be provided to Council at the March 2025 Council Meeting on the progress of the establishment of the Working Group and its terms of reference.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter is provided as Attachment 3.3

3.4 SAFE LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS PROGRAM

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CIVIL ENGINEERS
DEPARTMENT: INFRASTRUCTURE
REFERENCE: 16244

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Safe Local Roads and Streets Program (SLRSP) is a collaborative effort between Victoria's Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC). The program aims to support Victorian Councils in planning and implementing safe system infrastructure improvements across their local networks.

Under this program, each council can apply for an initial funding amount of \$2 million from a total pool of \$200 million. There is also the possibility of securing additional funding for high-value or innovative projects. Notably, there is no co-contribution requirement from the Council. Councils are encouraged to propose projects slightly exceeding the preliminary funding amount, as well-conceived projects are likely to receive approval.

The program offers assistance in project scoping and design, with pre-assigned consulting partners for each council. For Ararat Rural City Council, SMEC has been designated as the consulting partner. The costs for SMEC's consultation services are partially covered by the allocated \$2 million and partially funded through other TAC streams.

This report provides detailed information about the funding project and seeks the Council's approval for the nominated projects.

DISCUSSION

A project commencement workshop was hosted by the Council in late May 2024, where preliminary project concepts were proposed by our engineering team, and the program's scope was discussed. Since then, the Council's team has worked with SMEC to develop a suite of projects that address key areas of concern and complies with program constraints, notably the restriction that no works be carried out on VicRoads managed roads.

Designs and funding applications are to be finalised within six months of the initial workshop, by November 2024. The delivery timeframe for all funded projects is 18 months from the date of approval, being May, 2026.



PROPOSALS


Projects proposed by the Council's engineering team are presented in the table below, and in greater detail on subsequent pages. All projects are supported or supported in principle by the funding body. The diagrams shown are preliminary concepts, final designs will consider additional factors including community feedback and road safety audit findings (audits will be carried by the TAC at no cost to Council).

Project	Location	Description	Cost (estimate)
1	Queen St/Moore St, Ararat	Raised roundabout	\$ 541,000
2	View Point St/High St, Ararat	Intersection safety improvements	\$ 113,000
3	Vincent St/Alexandra Ave, Ararat	Raised crossing	\$ 288,000
4	Buangor-Ben Nevis Rd/Mount Cole Rd/Warrak Rd, Warrak	Intersection realignment and speed zone changes	\$ 789,000
5	Moore St & Princes St, Ararat	Wombat crossings	\$ 116,000
6	Ingor St, Ararat	Wombat crossing	\$ 85,000
7	King St, Ararat	Wombat crossing	\$ 92,000
8	View Point St/Tobin St/Taylor St, Ararat	Intersection safety improvements	\$ 169,000
Total Estimated Investment (TEI)			\$2,193,000+

PROJECT DETAILS

	Status	Location	Description	Cost (estimate)	Diagram
Project 1	Supported (In-principle)	Queen St/Moore St, Ararat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised intersection with mountable roundabout • Addresses severe side impact crash risk (3 recorded in last 5 years) • Maintains truck accessibility • Potential for pedestrian priority crossings 	\$541,000	
Project 2	Supported	View Point St/High St, Ararat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-align kerb and install splitter islands • Speed cushions on View Point • Removes see-through effect of intersection 	\$113,000	

<p>Project 3</p>	<p>Supported (in principle)</p>	<p>Vincent St/Alexandra Ave, Ararat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised Intersection • Pedestrian priority crossing between Alexandra Avenue & Gardens 	<p>\$288,000</p>	
<p>Project 4</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>Buangor-Ben Nevis Rd/Mount Cole Rd/Warrak Rd, Warrak</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-alignment of intersections in Warrak • Re-prioritisation of Buangor-Ben Nevis Road • 60km/h speed zone introduction in Warrak township (community request) 	<p>\$789,000</p>	

<p>Project 5</p>	<p>Supported</p>	<p>Moore St & Princes St, Ararat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wombat Crossings to provide pedestrian priority between schools and on Moore St 	<p>\$116,000</p>	
<p>Project 6</p>	<p>Supported (in principle)</p>	<p>Ingor St, Ararat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wombat Crossing to provide pedestrian priority between post office and CBD 	<p>\$85,000</p>	

Project 7	Supported (in principle)	King St, Ararat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wombat Crossing to provide pedestrian priority across King St to high school 	\$92,000	
Project 8	Supported (in principle)	View Point St/Tobin St/Taylor St, Ararat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wombat crossing across View Point St to provide pedestrian priority crossing Realignment of Tobin St intersection to increase sight lines and discourage high intersection speeds Pedestrian refuge splitter island on Tobin St, maintains PTV bus route accessibility 	\$169,000	
		Total Estimated Investment (TEI)		\$2,193,000+	

This report requests the Council’s approval for the proposed projects to enable the continued progress of this project

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

4. DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING KEY ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

We will ensure that we plan, fund and develop new infrastructure in ways that delivers strong public value. Existing infrastructure will be managed, renewed and maintained to ensure that it continues to serve identified public needs.

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications for this program, as there is no co-contribution requirement from the Council. The program is fully funded by Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC).

Policy/Relevant Law

- Road Safety Act 1986
- Safe Local Roads and Street Funding

Sustainability Implications

Sustainable road safety developments offer a comprehensive way to protect the environment, enhance social well-being, and drive economic growth. By focusing on these initiatives, communities can build safer, more efficient, and equitable transportation systems for everyone.

Risk Assessment

Risks will be managed through project planning and management procedures and project administration.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The policies and procedures at the Council's Transfer Stations will be reviewed and improved to ensure ongoing compliance to the EPA registration conditions and requirements.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

- Extensive stakeholder engagement has been undertaken between the Council and the DTP, TAC and design consultants SMEC to provide the proposed program of works.
- Community stakeholder engagement will continue to be undertaken following approval of the proposed works by Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

Council approve the program as detailed in this report for the Safe Local Road and Streets Funding.

ATTACHMENTS

The Safe Local Roads and Streets Program Fact Sheet is provided as Attachment 3.4

3.5 LANDFILL CLOSURE AND REMEDIATION WORKS – STREATHAM, TATYOON AND ELMHURST

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: QUALITY SERVICES COORDINATOR
DEPARTMENT: INFRASTRUCTURE
REFERENCE: 16245

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the Council meeting on 27 February 2024, the Council approved the closure of the Tatyoon and Streatham Landfill sites and modification of the Elmhurst site to a transfer station following the issuance of Environmental Action Notices (EANs) by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in February 2024.

Consequently, the Tatyoon and Streatham Landfill sites were closed on 13 April 2024, with sufficient notice provided to the community and the supervising Council employee.

Remediation efforts began at the Tatyoon Landfill site during the week of 15 April 2024, with works at Streatham and Elmhurst Landfills following and concluding in early June 2024.

The Council has met EPA's deadline and received subsequent compliance to the notices.

This report provides an overview of the works completed to comply with the EAN's and the associated costs.

DISCUSSION

At the Council meeting of 27 February 2024 Council approved the closure of the Tatyoon and Streatham Landfill sites and modification of the Elmhurst Landfill site to a new transfer station, due to the EPA Environmental Action Notices (EAN) placed on each site in February 2024.

The EAN's for the Elmhurst, Streatham and Tatyoon Landfill sites had the following requirements:

1. Immediately cease accepting waste at the premises where it cannot be lawfully accepted.
2. Take the waste to a place or premises that may lawfully accept that waste by 28 June 2024.
3. Provide a report to the EPA by 05 July 2024 that shows that the waste has been taken to a place which may lawfully accept it.

The Tatyoon and Streatham Landfill sites were closed effective 13 April 2024, providing adequate notice to the community and the Council employee who supervised the sites on a weekly basis.

Works commenced at the Tatyoon Landfill site during the week commencing 15 April 2024, using a 30 tonne excavator to remove waste from the site into 30m³ skips that were put on site. Skips proved to slow down the works and truck and trailer was used to move waste directly to the Cleanaway Landfill at Stawell. The same process has now been used to also complete works at the Streatham and Elmhurst Landfills concluding in early June 2024.

Tatyon Before & After



Streatham Before & After



Elmhurst Before & After



Removal of waste from all landfills has been completed. This includes removal of all disposed waste and debris and the removal of drums, mobile garbage bins and small structures which have been returned to the Ararat Transfer Station.

In total 258 tonnes has been removed from the Tatyoon site, 1524 tonnes removed from the Streatham site and 146 tonnes removed from the Elmhurst site and taken to the Cleanaway landfill in Stawell.

Complying with the EANs and its requirements have had budget implications to Council. The relocation of the unlawful waste to Stawell Landfill has incurred transport costs and disposal costs. However, failure to comply with the EANs as provided would have likely resulted in financial penalties to the Council.

The costs to Council for the works are detailed below:

	Tatyoon Landfill	Streatham Landfill	Elmhurst Landfill
Employee Costs	\$844	\$2,850	\$1,059
Equipment Hire and Fuel	\$19337	\$57,453	\$15,195
Landfill Fees/Skip Hire	\$65,733	\$355,728	\$33,685
	\$85,914	\$416,031	\$49,939

These urgent works were not budgeted for in the 2023/24 budget, it is requested that Council approve, the expenses will be covered by the Waste Reserve.

Notification of completed works to the EPA has been completed and compliance certification has been received. Long term rehabilitation of each site will need to be undertaken to EPA standards.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

3. PRESERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT

We will take pragmatic approaches to ensuring that Ararat Rural City Council takes a regional lead in responsible environmental management and engagement with the circular economy.

Budget Implications

Complying with the EANs and its requirements have had budget implications to Council. The relocation of the unlawful waste to Stawell Landfill has incurred transport costs as well as disposal costs. However, failure to comply with the EANs as provided would have likely to resulted in financial penalties to the Council.

These urgent works were not budgeted for in the 2023/24 budget, it is requested that Council approve, the expenses will be covered by the Waste Reserve.

Policy/Relevant Law

- Environment Protection Act 1977

Sustainability Implications

Compliance with the EPA Environmental Action Notices will ensure that Council meet the requirements of the Environment Protection Act 1977 with regard to landfills and waste facilities, and has positive implications on the environment.

Risk Assessment

Risks were managed through project planning and management procedures and project administration.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The policies and procedures at the Council's Transfer Stations will be reviewed and improved to ensure ongoing compliance to the EPA registration conditions and requirements.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

- Internal stakeholder engagement and collaboration has occurred through the review and response the EANs.
- Community engagement occurred with relation to the closure of the Streatham and Tatyoon Landfills and the modification of the Elmhurst Transfer Station.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

Council approve the payment for the works at the Tatyoon, Streatham and Elmhurst Landfills with up to \$551,884 provided through the waste reserve.

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item.

3.6 RATE COLLECTION POLICY

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 16246

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rate Collection Policy provides Council with a policy framework for the collection and administration of rates and charges. The policy aims to provide ratepayers with a clear and transparent understanding of options and assistance available for the repayment of rates and charges.

DISCUSSION

Payment Options

In accordance with section 167(1) of the Local Government Act 1989 ratepayers must be allowed to pay rates and charges by way of four instalments. Council also allows payments in a lump sum on 15 February each year. Council offers a wide range of payment options including in person at Council offices, direct debit, BPay, Australia Post, by mail, or online via eNotices or on Councils website.

Interest on Arrears and Overdue Rates

Interest is charged on all overdue rates in accordance with Section 172 of the Local Government Act 1989. The maximum interest rate applied is determined by the Minister and published by notice in the Government Gazette.

Council may exempt any person from paying the whole or part of any interest amount generally or specifically under Section 172 (3).

To assist ratepayers further in the payment of rates and charges Council will allow a grace period of 30 days before interest is applied to late instalments and late lump sum payments. This will allow reminder notices to be sent free of interest which will assist in the administration of payments.

Council officers have the authority to write off property balances of \$10 or less if the balance is related to interest now being calculated daily.

Debt Recovery

If an account becomes overdue, Council will issue an overdue reminder notice. If the account remains unpaid, and a payment plan has not been established, Council may take legal action without further notice to recover the overdue amount. All fees and court costs incurred will be recoverable from the ratepayer.

If an amount payable by way of rates in respect to land has been in arrears for three years or more, Council may take action to sell the property in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989 Section 181.

Payment Plans

Any Ratepayer who is experiencing financial difficulties is advised that Council is sympathetic to their financial situation and that flexible payment plans can be developed based on their ability to pay.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 171B of the Local Government Act 1989, Council may enter into a payment plan with a ratepayer for the payment of a rate or charge. Ratepayers wishing to establish a payment plan are required to make application.

Council will consider all reasonable payment plan applications. However, efforts should be made to negotiate full payment of overdue debts by the end of the current financial year, or before the issuance of the next annual rates and valuation notices. A payment plan for overdue rates older than one financial year should aim to settle all outstanding balances, including current and arrears, within a maximum period of four (4) years. Council Officers can provide assistance in calculating appropriate payment amounts to achieve this objective.

After agreeing to a suitable payment plan, Council will send an acceptance letter to the applicant outlining the terms of the arrangement. A waiver of interest will then apply to the account. If rates remain outstanding or if there is a default in an agreed payment plan, interest will be reinstated, and the account may be referred to the Council's debt collection agency for further action.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at the centre through effective financial management; well measured risk management; and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes, linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.

Budget Implications

Council's acceptance of a suitable payment plan will result in a reduction in interest income.

Policy/Relevant Law

The Local Government Act 1989 provides for payment plans for unpaid rates or charges. Council may also exempt any person from paying the whole or part of any interest either generally or specifically.

Sustainability Implications

This report does not raise any sustainability implications.

Risk Assessment

The development of the Rate Collection Policy provides a clear and transparent understanding of options and assistance available for the repayment of rates and charges.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The availability of a payment plan, coupled with the waiver of interest, alleviates the financial hardship faced by applicants, enabling them to review their financial situation and potentially meet future rate payments promptly.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Nil.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **Adopt the Rate Collection Policy; and**
2. **Place the Rate Collection Policy on the Council website.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Rate Collection Policy is provided as attachment 3.6

3.7 FINANCIAL HARDSHIP POLICY

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 16247

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 171A of the Local Government Act 1989, a person who is suffering financial hardship, or would suffer financial hardship if that person had to pay the full amount of a rate or charge, may apply to Council for the waiver of the whole or part of the rates or interest charged for late payment.

The Financial Hardship Policy provides Council with a policy framework to provide financial relief to ratepayers who need assistance to pay their rate arrears within a practical, reasonable time frame. The policy aims to provide ratepayers with a clear and transparent understanding of options and assistance available if facing financial hardship.

DISCUSSION

Council fees and charges are a secure and reliable source of revenue that Council uses to deliver services to the community. It is important to remember that Council still requires cashflow to deliver critical services to the community, however, it is also recognised that Council can provide assistance in certain circumstances.

Financial hardship is a circumstance of experiencing a lack of financial means, which may be either ongoing or temporary. It is acknowledged at the outset that ratepayers may experience financial hardship for a whole range of issues and that meeting rate obligations constitutes just one element of several difficulties that may be faced. The simplest description of hardship is "a customer or ratepayer who wants to pay but cannot".

Ratepayers experiencing financial difficulties are advised that Council is sympathetic to their financial situation and that flexible repayment plans can be developed based on their ability to pay. A person who is suffering financial hardship or would suffer financial hardship if that person had to pay the full rate, may apply to Council for the waiver of the whole or part of the rates or interest charged for late payment.

An application form to facilitate consideration of a request for deferral or waiver of rates is required to be completed. Council may require the person to give further details or to verify particulars.

Applications for the waiver of rates will only be considered based on genuine hardship, supported by another government agency, welfare group or financial counsellor. The intent of providing a waiver will be to allow the ratepayer to overcome immediate financial difficulties with a supported financial plan to ensure that future commitments to rates and other household payments can be accommodated.

Waiver of rates will only apply to rates on the ratepayer's primary residence. This excludes commercial properties, industrial properties, residential investment properties and in most cases farm properties. Applications for waiver will be considered as a confidential report to Council.

Applications for the deferral of rates will be considered based on genuine hardship. The deferred payment option means rates, charges and interest are still charged, but the ratepayer does not have to pay the amount until Council considers the payment will not cause the ratepayer financial hardship, or the ratepayer no longer owns or occupies the land. Deferral of rates will apply to all classes of property.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at the centre through effective financial management; well measured risk management; and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes, linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.

Budget Implications

Any waiver of rates will result in a reduction in income. Deferring rates will not result in a reduction in income. If the property is exempted from payment of interest, then this would result in a reduction in interest income.

Policy/Relevant Law

The Local Government Act 1989 provides for the deferral or waiver of rates and charges. Council may also exempt any person from paying the whole or part of any interest either generally or specifically.

Sustainability Implications

This report does not raise any sustainability implications.

Risk Assessment

Granting any waiver could establish a precedent; however, the legislation exists to offer individuals experiencing financial hardship, or who would face financial hardship upon full payment, an opportunity to apply to Council for a waiver of all or part of any rate, charge, or interest imposed for late payment.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Waiving the interest will relieve the financial hardship the applicant is experiencing and allow them to reassess their financial position so they may be able to pay rates on time.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Nil.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **Adopt the Financial Hardship Policy; and**
2. **Place the Financial Hardship Policy on the Council website.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Financial Hardship Policy is provided as attachment 3.7

SECTION 4 – INFORMATION REPORTS

4.1 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 16249

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has approved its 2024/2025 Capital Works Program as a pivotal component of the current budget. With a substantial capital works investment totaling \$15.513 million, the budget primarily targets infrastructure enhancements.

Key initiatives include:

- Mount William Road Stage Two Construction - supported by Federal Government funding.
- Buangor Ben Nevis Road Stage One Construction - beginning from the Western Highway section.
- Urban Gravel to Seal Road Upgrades continuing to upgrade accessibility across urban areas.
- Maintenance of Footpaths, Drainage, and Kerb and Channel

These projects underscore the Council's commitment to improving local infrastructure and fostering community development in the 2024/2025 fiscal year.

DISCUSSION

Council's 2024/2025 Capital Works Program marks a significant shift from previous years, reintroducing larger road and bridge construction projects post-pandemic. The program's budget has increased by \$6 million, with substantial state and federal funding, alongside smaller targeted works.

The focus for 2024/2025 remains on renewing and updating Council assets, leveraging in-house capabilities, and supporting local employment and contractors.

Key areas include:

- Enhanced road reseal program
- Urban drainage improvements
- Footpath network upgrades
- Major urban road gravel to seal program
- Stage two of Mt William Road Reconstruction
- Three Roads to Recovery funded projects (Churchill Avenue, Webb Street, Buangor Ben Nevis Road bridge)

Budget Status:

As of July 24, 2024, 2% of the budget is spent, with end-of-month invoices pending. Some new project tendering has commenced and continuing projects from the previous financial year, including Mt William Road.

Works are due to commence on the Resurfacing of Pomonal Tennis Courts in the near future, and Buangor Ben Nevis Road plans are complete, pending cultural heritage and flora and fauna reports before commencement.

	Budget	Committed/ Contracted	Expended	%	Notes
<u>PROPERTY - CAPITAL</u>					
Property Capital	\$270,000	\$105,226	\$9,143	20%	Works have been committed for resurfacing of the Pomonal Tennis Courts and replacement of windows at the Town Hall in the Arts & Crafts Room.
Ararat Library Upgrade	\$200,000				Scoping works are progressing with for quotations to be finalised for the internal fitout requirements. With extensive lead times this will need to undertaken in the coming months.
Tatyoan Oval, Drainage, Irrigation & Resurfacing	\$80,000				Full funding for this project is \$330,000 with money from the Country Football/Netball Grants Program. A preferred contractor has been nominated and presented to the July 2024 Council Meeting.
TOTAL PROPERTY		\$105,226	\$9,143	20%	
<u>PLANT & EQUIPMENT</u>					
Book stock - Library Book Replacement	\$40,000	-	-	-	
TOTAL PLANT & EQUIPMENT					
<u>ROADS</u>					
Gravel Road Sheeting & Gravel Road Widening	\$1,800,000		\$3,914	<1%	Isolated Road Resheeting works have commenced.
Reseal Program	\$1,000,000				The reseal program is expected to be provided to the contractor in the coming weeks.
Mt William Road (24/25 HSVPP Funding)	\$6,250,000				These works will commence on completion of the current works on Mt William Road.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road	\$2,143,000		\$1,178	<1%	Plans and technical reporting have been completed. Council is working with Australian Cultural Heritage Services to

					complete CHMP Due Diligence and plan requirements. This is expected to be undertaken by October for the full section of road. Construction in segmented areas should be able to progress once that area has been documented and approved.
Weighbridge Place, Lake Bolac		\$74,900			Asphalting works at Weighbridge Place have been committed to be complete by 31 October 24 before the commencement of grain season. The intersection with Mortlake Ararat Road is in poor condition and require the upgrade to withstand the heavy vehicle that use the area.
Churchill Avenue, Ararat	\$800,000	\$8,750	\$280	1%	Design works have commenced.
Webb Street, Ararat	\$700,000	\$8,750	\$446	1%	Design works have commenced.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge (1)	\$1,100,000	\$8,580	\$3,967	<1%	Level three bridge reporting has been undertaken on the bridge. In conjunction with the Buangor Ben Nevis Road Cultural Heritage Assessment this area will also be prioritised. This project will be tendered as a design and construct project.
Urban Road Gravel to Seal	\$700,000	\$169,649	\$3,003	24%	Works are currently being completed at various urban locations with kerb and channel and drainage being installed. Works in Baileys Lane have been contracted with works due to be complete by 31 October 2024.
Major Patching	\$100,000				Works have not commenced.
Bridges	\$80,000		\$25		This is to be used for bridge replacement planning works.
Footpath Program Renewal	\$400,000	\$15,500	\$1,699	4%	Council's footpath program has commenced with a footpath section in Elizabeth Street being completed in relation to a customer request. Tenders for Asphalt Path in Barkly Street and Queen Street are currently out and due to close on 1 August 2024.
Urban Drainage Works	\$750,000	\$30,287	\$4,879	4%	Drainage works have commenced with the purchase of pipe and required reporting for specific works.

					Ararat Cemetery Drainage is expected to be complete by the end of August 2024.
Kerb and Channel	\$239,000	\$3,700	\$202	1%	Project plans for the replacement of kerb and channel are being scoped with plans for a section of George Road opposite the Ararat West Primary School nominated as a preference.
TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE		\$320,116	\$19,593	2%	
TOTAL CAPITAL WORKS		\$425,342	\$28,736	2%	

There are also projects that were funded in the 2023/2024 budget that have extended beyond the single financial year. The committed expenditure includes contracts entered for construction of various elements of the projects. The table below provides a summary of these projects:

	Budget	Previously Expended Funds	Committed/Contracted	Expended	%	Notes
Mt William Road	\$1,000,000	\$274,143		\$58,442.68	33%	Work commenced in late May 2024. The works have been set out, tree and stabilising works have been completed. There was significant soft spots found within the area and these have been remedied. Stone is currently being installed on site and pavement works commencing.
Buangor Recreation Reserve Kitchen Extension		\$53,849				The project has been out to the market and came in with a significant price difference between the cost plan and the pricing received from the tenderers. Funding has been received as part of the Tiny Towns Funding Program which will help progress Stage 1 of this project.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The key financial drivers align strongly with the thrust of the Council Plan 2021-2025, particularly the following:

- 4.1 Ensure that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council's Asset Plan 2021-2031.
- 4.2 Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.
- 4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, promote community wellbeing and safety and align with Council's financial sustainability.
- 6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes, linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation, and rating fairness.

Budget Implications

The 2024/2025 Capital Works Program represents a significant element of Council's 2024/2025 Budget. In the current civil construction market, it is essential that Council manages capital works expenditure carefully to ensure budget outcomes are met.

Policy/Relevant Law

The 2024/2025 Capital Works Program complies with the program funded in the 2024/2025 Budget.

Sustainability Implications

There are no environmental sustainability implications. Council is mindful of considering new innovative approaches to improve its sustainability and environmental footprint as a part of the Capital Works program.

Risk Assessment

The 2024/2025 Capital Works Program was developed as a mitigation of the financial risks associated with market volatility currently being experienced in the civil and building construction sectors.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Development of the 2024/2025 Capital Works Program represented an agile response to market conditions. A capacity to rework strategy based on a changing environment is a critical element in developing an innovative organisation.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The 2024/2025 Capital Works Program has been developed as an element of the 2024/2025 Budget. There was extensive community engagement undertaken prior to adoption.

RECOMMENDATION

That

Council receive this information report.

SECTION 5 – COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

No Committee Minutes/Reports received

SECTION 6 – INFORMAL MEETINGS

6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS

AUTHOR'S TITLE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 13039074

OFFICER'S DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Governance Rules state that if there is a meeting of Councillors that:

1. is scheduled or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of *Council* or briefing Councillors;
2. is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
3. is not a *Council meeting*, *Delegated Committee meeting* or *Community Asset Committee meeting*, the *Chief Executive Officer* must ensure that a summary of the matters discussed at the meeting are:
 - a. tabled at the next convenient *Council meeting*; and
 - b. recorded in the minutes of that *Council meeting*.

DISCUSSION

As a requirement of the Governance Rules, a summary of matters discussed at the Council Briefings held since the last Council Meeting are presented to Council and will be recorded in the minutes.

INFORMAL MEETINGS
Council Briefing held on 16 July 2024

Issues discussed at the briefing:

- Safe Local Roads and Streets Program
- Leisure Centre Development
- Landfill remediation
- Rates arrears recovery
- Year 4 Annual Plan
- CEO Leave 2024
- CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee Independent Chair Appointment
- Building and Planning Reports
- Audit & Risk Committee – appointment of new independent member
- Banking changes
- Innovation and Economic Development Strategy
- Compliance issues
- Commercial vacancies
- Child Safe City program

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The report supports the strategic objective of the Council Plan 2021-2025:

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at the centre through effective financial management; well measured risk management; and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

- 6.3 Continuously improve Council's community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while acknowledging the need for a range of different techniques to ensure effective engagement.

Financial

There are no financial impacts for the receiving of Informal Meetings of Councillors.

Policy/Relevant Law

Reporting of Informal Meetings is in line with the requirements of the Governance Rules.

Risk Assessment

Following the requirements of the Governance Rules will ensure that Council meets its legislative requirements.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

A summary of matters discussed at the Council Briefings are presented for community information.

RECOMMENDATION

That

the Informal Meetings of Councillors Report be received.

ATTACHMENTS

The Summary of Council Briefings are provided as Attachment 6.1.

SECTION 7 – NOTICES OF MOTION

A notice of motion must be in writing signed by a Councillor and be lodged with or sent to the *Chief Executive Officer* no later than 12.00pm (noon) and at least six (6) days prior to the Council Meeting to allow sufficient time for the *Chief Executive Officer* to include the *notice of motion* in agenda papers for a *Council meeting*.

SECTION 8 – URGENT BUSINESS

Items cannot be admitted as urgent business other than by resolution of *Council* and only then if it:

- 1 relates to or arises out of a matter which has arisen since distribution of the *agenda*; and
- 2 cannot safely or conveniently be deferred until the next *Council meeting*.

SECTION 9 – CLOSE SESSION (CONFIDENTIAL)

In accordance with section 66(2)(a), 3(1) *Confidential Information* (a) of the Local Government Act 2020, the following agenda items are listed for consideration in the confidential section:

- Item 9.1 – CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee Independent Chair Appointment
- Item 9.2 – Contract No. 727 – Tatyoon Oval – Drainage, Irrigation and Resurfacing

CLOSURE OF COUNCIL MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

The Open Council Meeting will now be closed, but members of the public are welcome to rejoin the Council Meeting following the recommencement of the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That the meeting be closed to members of the public pursuant to section 66(2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 to consider confidential reports.

OPEN COUNCIL MEETING RECOMMENCEMENT

RECOMMENDATION

That the Open Council Meeting recommence.

Gallery invited to return to Council Chamber.

LIFTING OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTIONS

RECOMMENDATION

That the:

1. **Decision in relation to Confidential Agenda Item 9.1 and 9.2 be lifted on adoption of the motion; and**
2. **The Report of Confidential Agenda Item 9.1 and 9.2 not be lifted on adoption of the motion**