



Ararat Rural City

# AGENDA

## COUNCIL MEETING

**Tuesday 25 March 2025**

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

**Commencing at 6.00pm**

**Council:**

**Cr Jo Armstrong (Mayor)**

**Cr Rob Armstrong**

**Cr Peter Joyce**

**Cr Teli Kaur**

**Cr Luke Preston**

**Cr Bob Sanders**

**Cr Bill Waterston**

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](http://www.facebook.com/araratruralcitycouncil) into your address bar.

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

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## 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 February 2025 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 DRAFT ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY VISION 2035 AND COUNCIL PLAN 2025-29

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20129

#### **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.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The draft Community Vision 2035 and draft Council Plan 2025-29 is presented to Council for consideration before the consultation process commences.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The draft Community Vision 2035 captures ascertaining the community's aspirations for the future of the municipality over the next 10 years. The previous Community Vision was carefully reviewed and was found to still strongly reflect the best long term outcomes for the local community, and the best future scenario that we can aim to achieve for the next generation.

The key aspirations outlined in the Community Vision 2035 are:

1. Strong population growth trajectories that buck trends in rural Victoria
2. Continuous and sustainable economic development which is focused on job creation through value adding in agriculture, advanced manufacturing, and tourism.
3. Leadership in pragmatic approaches to local environmental management
4. Sustainable and effective local transport networks underpinned by careful technical and financial planning undertaken jointly between asset users and asset owners.
5. Communities that are enhanced by access to artistic, cultural, sporting and recreational opportunities that meet needs and expectations.
6. Strong and robust democratic processes underpinned by transparent governance, good financial management and organisational innovation.

The draft Council Plan 2025-29 is guided by the Community Vision 2035 and sets the strategic direction and objectives of the Council, and strategies to achieve these for the next four years. The Council Plan also includes indicators for monitoring the achievement of these objectives and descriptions of initiatives and priorities for services, infrastructure and amenity.

The Council Plan has six key strategic directions:

- 1 Growing our place
- 2 Building robust local economies
- 3 Preserving the environment
- 4 Developing and maintaining key enabling infrastructure
- 5 Enhancing community life; and
- 6 Strong and effective governance

The next step for the draft Community Vision 2035 and Council Plan 2025-29 is to present these to the community for consultation and feedback. This will occur alongside the community engagement for the 2025/2026 budget and include several mechanisms of engagement, such as:



- use of the Engage Ararat website
- distribution of copies of the draft Community Vision and Council Plan across the municipality
- face to face "town hall" meetings
- social media posts to encourage community engagement
- summaries be placed in local newspapers
- mainstream media engagement

The process will ensure maximum engagement with key geographic locations and communities of interest across the municipality. Residents and ratepayers will be encouraged to engage and to make submission on matters of interest or concern.

## 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.

### ***Budget Implications***

As this item gives effect to the next four financial years from 2025/2026, and it has no direct or significant budget implications for the 2024/2025 Budget.

### ***Policy/Relevant Law***

Sections 88 and 90 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires that Council develop or review and adopt a Community Vision is a period of at least the next 10 financial years, and a Council Plan for a period of at least the next 4 financial years in accordance with its Community Engagement Policy by the 31 October in the year following a general election.

### ***Sustainability Implications***

N/A

### ***Risk Assessment***

The primary objective of Council is to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having regard to the long term and cumulative effects of decisions. Providing the timelines for development and engagement on the key strategic documents of Council helps to ensure the long term aspirations of the community are well considered and reflected in these documents.

### ***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

This agenda item relates directly to a process of community engagement around the development of the Community Vision 2035 and Council Plan 2025-29.

## RECOMMENDATION

### **That Council:**

- 1. Endorse the draft Community Vision 2035 and Council Plan 2025-29 for community consultation; and**
- 2. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to commence the community consultation process**

## ATTACHMENTS

The Draft Community Vision 2035 and Council Plan 2025-29 are provided as Attachment 3.1



### 3.2 ADVOCACY PROGRAM 2025

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20130

#### **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.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council has identified a number of major issues and projects that require advocacy to move them forward and achieve outcomes for the community, or that require government funding or support that is beyond the scope of existing grant programs and initiatives.

This advocacy program is also timely due to the upcoming Federal Election that is due by 17 May 2025 for a term of around 3 years, and the State Election that will occur in November 2026 for a term of 4 years.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Council has identified a number of key priorities that require advocacy to achieve outcomes for the community. The process of advocating for the priorities below would involve seeking an election commitment from the major parties, with the view that the funding or initiative would be delivered in the next term of government if the relevant party that made the commitment wins the election. Therefore, these priorities are selected based on what we are aiming to accomplish over the next approx. 3-5 years.

Since the State election is not until November 2026, there is also the potential that funding could be secured prior to the election in the State Budget 2026/27, which is announced around April/May 2026.

#### **Advocacy Priorities:**

##### *Deliver the Full Extent of the East Grampians Rural Water Pipeline Project*

This project has been plagued by delays, and the extent of Construction Zone 4 has been only partially included in the delivery scope due to cost. The recent Grampians bushfires and the continuing dry conditions has created hardships that could have been avoided or alleviated if the full extent of the Pipeline had been delivered on time. These recent challenging events have also highlighted why it is so critical that the full extent of the East Grampians Rural Water Pipeline Project is delivered as soon as possible.

##### *Condemnation of the Emergency Services & Volunteers Fund (ESVF)*

While Council acknowledges the importance of adequate funding for emergency services, Council has condemned the Emergency Services & Volunteers Fund due to its disproportionate impact on primary producers, obscenely steep increase imposed onto all ratepayers, and the ongoing expectation that local councils act as the collection agency for a state-imposed tax. Council will advocate against the ESVF on behalf of our community.

##### *Deliver the Western Highway Upgrade from Buangor to Ararat*

The Western Highway from Buangor to Ararat continues to experience unacceptable levels of traffic accidents that cause fatalities, injury, disruptive road closures and detours onto rural roads. The upgrade of this key transport route is urgently needed to improve safety and transport efficiency.

#### North South Heavy Vehicle Route

The North South route of the Pyrenees Highway along Vincent St has a significant number of heavy vehicle movements which raises safety concerns and causes congestion at the Vincent St/Barkly St and Vincent St/High St intersections. A solution to this issue is to develop a heavy vehicle route for the Pyrenees Highway to the East of the Ararat township to remove heavy vehicles from these two intersections. Council will need to advocate for planning and delivery of this project with the Department of Transport.

#### Improve Mobile Phone and NBN Connectivity in Rural Areas

Many of our rural communities have reported a complete lack of service since 3G was turned off. These mobile black spots negatively impact on preparedness and response in emergencies and in the day-to-day lives of residents. Council hosted a series of Community Emergency Management Planning Workshops in late 2024-early 2025. A very clear message from these workshops was the major concerns around lack of coverage and the inability to stay up to date on the VicEmergency warnings during the recent bushfires. EFTPOS machines also regularly drop out, and the lack of reception discourages revisits by tourists.

#### Give Greater Confidence and Support to Renewable Gas

Gas will continue to be essential in a net-zero future (Annual Climate Change Statement 2024, DCCEEW). Other renewable fuel alternatives are not yet able to fully replace gas in high temperature applications in some industries, and it cannot be substituted as chemical inputs into some products such as medicines, fertilisers and cleaning products. For these industries, a renewable gas source would reduce the use of fossil fuel gas. While other States have been proactive in supporting renewable gas developments, the Victorian Government have dragged their feet with the development of roadmaps, consultation papers, policy direction papers, and more policy framework development. The Victorian Government needs to provide clear policy directions in support of renewable gas production. This will give greater confidence to accelerate Valorify's \$400 million biogas plant in Ararat and subsequent enterprises that seek to co-locate and access "behind the meter" power.

#### More Trains to Ararat

The announcement by the Victorian Government on 28 February 2025 on the two new weekend return services on the Ararat Line is a step in the right direction. Council will continue to advocate for more public transport services for Ararat.

#### Faster and Far More Streamlined Processes for Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA)

Natural disasters such as major bushfires, storms and floods are expected to become more intense and frequent. The current burdensome administrative processes for the DRFA mean that councils are left out of pocket for emergency recovery works for over 12 months per disaster event. This is very financially challenging for small rural councils and where multiple disaster events occur within a short period of time. This has been experienced by Ararat Rural City with two major bushfires in 2024 (AGRN 1108 and 1166) and major floods in 2023 (AGRN 1037).

#### Aradale Development

Activating the former Aradale site remains a priority for the Ararat Rural City. Council will continue to advocate for and work towards realising the plan laid out in the Aradale Development Strategy the Victorian Government as landowners and other government stakeholders.

#### Ararat Hills Mountain Bike Trails

This initiative will yield significant economic benefits to the community. In 2020 \$3 million in funding was provided by the Victorian State Government, through RDV, and Council to construct the track. The project was managed by Parks Vic as landowners but it has faced significant delays around planning and consent. Council will continue to advocate for the delivery of a mountain bike track in the Ararat Hills Regional Park and work with Traditional Owners and Regional Development Victoria to resolve the issues that has stalled this project.

Continued Support from State and Federal Government to Deliver More Housing

Driven by years of chronic workforce and housing shortages, Council have undertaken bold new approaches to overcome housing market failure, support local jobs and transform its community and economy. Council's partnerships with State and Federal governments, local philanthropists, reputable and capable property developers and businesses has worked to increase supply of suitable, sustainable, safe and affordable housing. Council will advocate for a continuation of State and Federal programs that have been effective in delivering more housing in the Ararat Rural City.

**Major Project Priorities:**

Buangor-Ben Nevis Road Upgrade

This road is a vital thoroughfare between the Pyrenees Highway and Western Highway, the main route for accessing the townships of Buangor, Bayindeen, Warrak and Mount Cole Creek, and it is a significant route for freight vehicles as well as local and tourist traffic, but it is currently in poor condition. Council has allocated \$2.143 million for urgent reconstruction works, and has committed a further \$1.25 million as co-contribution towards an application submitted for \$5 million from the Federal Government's Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program.

Mt William Road Stage 2

Mount William Road serves as the region's main freight route to the CHS Broadbent - Lakaput Bulk Storage Facility. The road takes heavy agricultural freight carrying wheat, barley, canola and oats from across the entire Wimmera Southern Mallee. As one of the busiest and most vitally important heavy vehicle freight links, the road is vital in supporting Victoria's agricultural economy over the harvest season. Council has invested \$1.25 million and has secured a \$5 million investment from the Federal Government's Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program to deliver Stage 1 of this project. Council seeks a further \$3 million to complete Stage 2.

Industrial Trunk Infrastructure for Ararat Renewable Energy Park

The Ararat Renewable Energy Park is the preferred site for Valorify's \$400M biogas plant, PlastOil's \$270M soft plastics recycling refinery, and other new business ventures keen to establish themselves in Ararat. But this site currently lacks trunk infrastructure connections to essential services, including water, sewer, electricity and gas. The dependency on the first business to establish themselves to cover the cost of bringing trunk infrastructure to the precinct dramatically increases startup costs for that first business, and rendering many otherwise commercially viable proposals unviable. This acts as a major barrier to development of the precinct and the resultant economic growth. Council seeks funding to deliver trunk infrastructure to the Ararat Renewable Energy Park to overcome this hurdle and speed up the creation of jobs and economic activity for the Ararat region.

Tatyoon Recreation Reserve New Pavilion

Community sporting clubs are a key part of the social fabric of rural communities. The social element helps to retain players, keeps them engaged in sport and encourages their kids and grandkids to play as well. Council will seek co-funding from the State and Federal governments and community for the development of the new pavilion and a refurbishment of the football change rooms to modernise the amenities and make them female friendly.

New Indoor Sports Complex at Alexandra Oval Precinct

The Council remains committed to delivering recreational facilities that are functional, accessible, inclusive, and that yield significant social, economic and community benefit to residents of the Ararat Rural City. The redevelopment of the existing Ararat Fitness Centre was determined to be no longer a financially sound and responsible option for achieving this outcome. Planning is underway for a new Indoor Sports Complex at Alexandra Oval Precinct. Co-funding will be sought from State and Federal Governments to deliver this project.

#### Ararat Outdoor Pool Upgrade

Planning is currently underway on an upgrade to the Ararat Outdoor Pool to enable it to be utilised all year round, rather than only in summer as it is currently. Co-funding will be sought from State and Federal Governments to deliver this project.

#### A & J McDonald Centre Redevelopment

Grampians Community Health (GCH) in partnership with Ararat Rural City Council are seeking to redevelop the A & J McDonald Centre into a community health and social hub. The McDonald Centre is a large 1950s era Art Deco building that has served as a community centre and public hall. Much of the building is not in current use due to its lack of essential infrastructure and disability access. This results in limitations with participating community health programs and support becoming dispersed across the region, and increased limitations in terms of the ability to meet needs associated with future service provision.

The proposed redevelopment, built strongly of the foundation of GCH as the lead tenant, will bring together a range of related service providers to deliver integrated, accessible services to the community from a co-located site. The facility will offer general practice, allied health, Home and Community Care services, community nursing, NDIS, health promotion, alcohol and other drugs support, family violence services, housing, mental health, maternal and child health, Aboriginal support, community care, palliative care, aged and disability services, youth mental health, My Aged Care services, carer connect and carer support services, migrant resettlement, youth services, and adult education and training

#### Grampians Wine Discovery Centre

The Grampians wine region has over 150 years of history, with some of the world's oldest vines and is one of the longest continually producing wine regions in Victoria. While our wine and food offering is growing, the Grampians struggles at times to compete with other larger wine regions because of a lack of visible presence. To help overcome this, the potential exists to develop a regional wine and produce showcase centre or emporium. A Grampians Wine Discovery Centre will drive private investment in the tourism sector in the Grampians region, as identified in the Grampians Strategic Tourism Investment Plan.

#### Kindergarten Infrastructure

The Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (KISP) 2025 modelling shows that in the Ararat SA2 (ie the suburb of Ararat), there will not be enough kindergarten places to meet demand from 2026 onwards. Council and the Department of Education have commenced discussions on planning for expansions or new kindergarten facilities in Ararat. Council will be advocating for new kindergarten facilities to meet the unmet demand as well as renewal and refurbishment of existing facilities to extend their useful life, where possible.

#### Childcare Access in Rural Areas

The Federal Government's 3-day guarantee that enables all families eligible for Child Care Subsidy to access 3 days of subsidised care for each child will have a positive impact on children and families. This will be particularly positive for women, who are the most common primary carer, and their access to employment and training. However, the availability of childcare in rural areas is limited. Council will advocate for funding models and policy settings that support the establishment of more childcare opens in areas with unmet demand and limited access to childcare, such as Lake Bolac.

#### Local Roads Funding

There are a number of State and Federal road funding programs that enable Council to maintain and renew its road network. Programs that provide recurring and upfront amounts and criteria such as Roads to Recovery and the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure fund have been valuable for enabling Council to decide which roads meet the funding criteria and local needs. There are also a number of competitive grant programs which generally require more details and a certain level of design work upfront. Smaller rural councils, who often also have the largest road network per capita, often find it challenging to dedicate resources upfront to a grant application that has risks of not being

awarded. Council will advocate to maintain and index recurring funding programs, as well as advocate for new roads funding programs that can provide longer term funding surety and have streamlined application processes.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### ***Alignment to Council Plan 2021-25 Strategic Objectives***

#### **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.

2.2 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.

#### **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.

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

#### ***Budget Implications***

The work to advocate for these priorities will be undertaken by existing resources and has no budget implications.

#### ***Policy/Relevant Law***

N/A

#### ***Sustainability Implications***

N/A

#### ***Risk Assessment***

There is little material risk in implementing the advocacy program. Failure to achieve effective progress on these key issues may impede positive economic, social and environmental outcomes for Ararat Rural City.

#### ***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

These key advocacy issues have been identified through community, stakeholder and intergovernmental engagement.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **That Council:**

- 1. Advocate to State and Federal governments to on the key priorities identified in this report to move them forward and achieve outcomes for the community.**

## **ATTACHMENTS**

There are no Attachments relating to this item

### 3.3 ORCHID GLASSHOUSE

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20131

#### **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.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Orchid Glasshouse at the Alexandra Gardens was donated by the Ararat Rotary Club in 1980 to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rotary in the area, the original feature of the glasshouse was the display of Cymbidium orchids from July to November annually.

This report discusses the future of the former orchid glasshouse.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Recent history of the glasshouse has seen significant vandalism damage and the eventual removal of all glass from the structure due to the ongoing destruction.

The current Rotary Club members have approached Council regarding the removal of the redundant structure and what the possible future use of the location may be.

Council will arrange the removal of the steel frame from the current area after consultation with Ararat Rotary Club.

Discussions related to the future use of the area have been informally had with suggestions such as a sensory garden or performance space with an electronic screen set up that can be used in various capacity throughout the year - for eg: having the cricket or tennis on through the January period where visitors can pull up a space to have a picnic and enjoy the surroundings and watch the sport that is available on free to air television, a space for weddings and receptions, school concerts and other performances. It is recommended that this future project be placed on Engage Ararat with community able to give their opinions on the suggestions above.

#### **Key Considerations**

*Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives*

**1** *Growing our Place*

#### **Budget Implications**

There are no current budget implications arising, when decisions are made for the area appropriate applications for budget will be made to the property capital line items.

#### **Policy/Relevant Law**

- Local Government Act 2020
- Ararat Rural City Council Procurement Policy

#### **Sustainability Implications**

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to the item

#### **Risk Assessment**

These works are considered low risk



***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

Community consultation is to occur with relation to the proposed uses of the current orchid glasshouse site which include a sensory garden, performance space, community area with electronic screen.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Approve the removal of the former Orchid Glasshouse in consultation with Ararat Rotary Club**
- 2. That community engagement be undertaken through Engage Ararat for suggested future use of the area, reported back to Council's May 2025 meeting.**

**ATTACHMENTS**

There are no attachments relating to this item

### 3.4 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20133

#### **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.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The financial statements and performance indicators have been prepared for the period ended 28 February 2025.

Based on the information provided by responsible officers and managers Council's overall financial performance is in line with budget.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Council must establish and maintain a budgeting and reporting framework that is consistent with the principles of sound financial management.

#### **Key Financial information:**

##### **Income Statement (Attachment 1)**

The Income Statement measures how well Council has performed from an operating nature. It reports revenues and expenditure from the activities and functions undertaken, with the net effect being a surplus or deficit. Capital expenditure is excluded from this statement, as it is reflected in the Balance Sheet.

Attachment 1 shows that Council generated \$29.628 million in revenue and \$22.173 million in expenses to 28 February 2025. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$7.455 million for the eight months ended 28 February 2025.

##### **Income**

**Rates and charges** account for 50% of the total budgeted income for 2024/25. Rates and charges are recognised when the rates have been raised, not when the income has been received. An amount of \$17.877 million has been recognised as income for the eight months ended 28 February 2025.

**User fees** account for 4% of the total budgeted income for 2024/25 and \$1.148 million has been received to 28 February 2025. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

**Recurrent Operating Grants** total \$8.295 million to 28 February 2025, including \$4.583 million from the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission for general purpose grants and \$2.975 million for the local roads grants.

**Non-recurrent Operating Grants** total \$1.170 million to 28 February 2025. Council has been successful in obtaining several grants that had not been budgeted for, as detailed in the table below. The amounts shown as unearned income will be treated as income in future accounting periods once the performance obligations of the grant have been met.

<b>Non-Recurrent Operating Grants</b>	<b>Budget 2024/25 \$'000</b>	<b>Income 2024/25 \$'000</b>	<b>Unearned Income \$'000</b>
Ararat Housing Transition	-	-	300
Digital Twin Victoria	-	5	949
Free Public WiFi Services	-	47	1,196
Supported Playgroups	65	45	-
Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy	-	-	36
CALD Outreach Workers Initiative	-	64	-
Tiny Towns Fund - Pomonal Community Hub	-	59	141
Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Recreation Reserve Pavillion Redevelopment	-	-	25
Natural Disaster Relief	-	128	-
Council Support Fund - Pomonal Fires	-	750	-
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	72	-
	<b>65</b>	<b>1170</b>	<b>2647</b>

**Non-recurrent Capital Grants** total \$0.225 million to 28 February 2025, as detailed in the table below. The amounts shown as unearned income will be treated as income in future accounting periods once the performance obligations of the grant have been met.

<b>Non-Recurrent Capital Grants</b>	<b>Budget 2024/25 \$'000</b>	<b>Income 2024/25 \$'000</b>	<b>Unearned Income \$'000</b>
Mt William Road reconstruction	5,000	-	-
Buangor-Ben Nevis Road reconstruction	843	-	-
Pedestrian Infrastructure Program	-	-	70
Tatyoan Oval Upgrade Grant	-	225	-
	<b>5,843</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>70</b>

#### Note

It is important to note the following:

1. Unearned revenue received in prior years has been adjusted between the Original Budget and Current Budget with an additional \$2.936 million for Grants Operating (non-recurrent), \$0.366 million for Grants Capital (recurrent) and \$0.070 million for Grants Capital (non-recurrent) included in the Current Budget on the assumption that each of the grant projects will be completed during the 2024/25 financial year.
2. These changes in the budget, plus the note reported under expenses, create a change in the reported surplus position from a projected surplus of \$8.163 million to a surplus of \$9.205 million for 2024/25. The year-end variance is a deficit of \$1.513 million when the actual year to date expenses are compared to the year to date budget.

#### Expenses

**Employee Costs** account for approximately 40% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2024/25. For the eight months ended 28 February 2025 Council has incurred \$8.028 million in employee costs, which includes additional wages for emergency management relief and recovery and organisation restructure costs. Workcover premiums have increased by \$0.104 million compared to 2023/24.

**Materials and Services** account for approximately 29% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2024/25. For the eight months ended 28 February 2025, Council has incurred \$7.202 million in materials and services costs. There are a number of projects, including those carried forward from 2023/24 that are expected to be completed before the end of the financial year.

**Depreciation** totals \$6.486 million to 28 February 2025. The higher than budgeted depreciation has resulted from increased asset valuations being received as at 30 June 2024 after the budget was finalised.

**Note**

It is important to note the following:

There has been an increase in expenditure on materials and services from \$8.259 million in the Original Budget to \$10.589 million in the Current Budget for 2024/25. This has resulted from a carry forward amount of \$2.330 million from the 2023/24 financial year surplus and unspent grant funds which will be used for additional activity in 2024/25.

**Balance Sheet (Attachment 2)**

The Balance Sheet is one of the main financial statements and reports Council's assets, liabilities and equity at a given date, in this case 28 February 2025. Comparative figures have been provided as at 30 June 2024.

Council's current assets have increased by \$6.741 million from \$11.732 million as at 30 June 2024 to \$18.473 million as at 28 February 2025. Cash and cash equivalents have increased by \$7.324 million from \$3.049 million to \$10.373 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$2.754 million from \$5.212 million as at 30 June 2024 to \$7.966 million as at 28 February 2025.

Total liabilities have increased from \$8.777 million in 2023/24 to \$8.827 million in 2024/25. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$0.178 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$1.162 million. Unearned income/revenue decreased by \$0.655 million, which includes grants received by Council, where in accordance with accounting standards, they are held as a liability until grant-related performance obligations have been met.

**Statement of Cash Flows (Attachment 3)**

The Statement of Cash Flows shows how changes in the Statement of Financial Position and Income Statement affect Cash and Cash Equivalents, and breaks down the analysis to operating activities, investing activities and financing activities.

The Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the financial year of \$3.049 million have increased by \$7.324 million to \$10.373 million as at 28 February 2025.

Net cash of \$11.900 million was provided by operating activities, \$4.222 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.354 million was used in financing activities.

Investing activities includes payments for property, plant and equipment, and infrastructure.

**Financial Performance Indicators (Attachment 4)**

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework requires Councils to report various performance indicators at the end of each financial year.

A full list of financial performance indicators is included in Attachment 4.

Indicator	30/6/2024	28/02/2025
<p><b>Working capital</b>  <i>Measure - Current assets compared to current liabilities.</i>                      Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework 100% to 400%                      Indicator of the broad objective that sufficient working capital is available to pay bills as and when they fall due. High or increasing level of working capital suggests an improvement in liquidity</p>	162%	255%

Indicator	30/6/2024	28/02/2025
<p><b>Loans and borrowings</b>  <i>Measure - Loans and borrowings compared to rates.</i>                      Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 0% to 70%                      Indicator of the broad objective that the level of interest-bearing loans and borrowings should be appropriate to the size and nature of a council's activities. Low or decreasing level of loans and borrowings suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations</p>	1.71%	1.08%
<p><b>Indebtedness</b>  <i>Measure - Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue</i>                      Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 2% to 70%                      Indicator of the broad objective that the level of long-term liabilities should be appropriate to the size and nature of a Council's activities. Low or decreasing level of long-term liabilities suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations</p>	7.49%	8.09%
<p><b>Rates concentration</b>  <i>Measure - Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue</i>                      Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 30% to 80%                      Indicator of the broad objective that revenue should be generated from a range of sources. High or increasing range of revenue sources suggests an improvement in stability</p>	73.82%	60.85%
<p><b>Expenditure level</b>  <i>Measure - Expenses per property assessment</i>                      Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework \$2,000 to \$10,000                      Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of expenditure suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency</p>	\$4,592	\$2,977
<p><b>Indicator - Revenue level</b>  <i>Measure - Average residential rate per residential property assessment</i>                      Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - \$700 to \$2,000                      Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of rates suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency</p>	\$1,993	\$2,002

Indicator	30/6/2024	28/02/2025
<p><b>Indicator - Percentage of total rates collected</b></p> <p>The internal audit conducted in 2019 on Rates Revenue and Rate Debtor Management found no routine or regular reporting of large and long outstanding rates debtors. The outstanding Rates Debtors is reported in the Annual Financial report.</p> <p>As at 28 February 2025 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$6.016 million compared to \$2.320 million as at 30 June 2024, an increase of \$3.696 million. In percentage terms 70.2% of the rates raised have been collected at 28 February 2025 compared to 37.0% up to 31 January 2025.</p> <p>Outstanding rates are currently charged 10% interest. Council issues approximately 7,900 rate notices. In 2024/25 there are 2,158 assessments paying by instalments compared with 2,640 assessments in 2023/24.</p>	88.1%	70.2%
<p><b>Indicator - Asset Renewal &amp; Upgrade</b></p> <p><i>Measure - Asset renewal &amp; Upgrade compared to depreciation</i></p> <p>Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework – 40% to 130%</p> <p>Assessment of whether council assets are being renewed or upgraded as planned. It compares the rate of spending on existing assets through renewing, restoring, replacing or upgrading existing assets with depreciation. Ratios higher than 1.0 indicate there is a lesser risk of insufficient spending on Council's asset base.</p>	124.63%	102.37%

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework provides “Expected ranges” for each indicator. The framework has been developed to consider results at the end of the financial year so some results during the year are outside the expected range due to the timing of receipts and payments.

Explanations are provided in Attachment 4 for those indicators that are outside the “expected ranges”.

### 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 financial performance is in line with expectations. Council's cash position was expected to reduce in the first half of the year, and then increase in the third quarter with many ratepayers electing to pay their rates in full due 15 February 2025 and the third instalment due 28 February 2025.

### Policy / Relevant Law

Section 97 - Quarterly Budget Report of the Local Government Act 2020 states:

1. As soon as practicable after the end of each quarter of the financial year, the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that a quarterly budget report is presented to the Council at a Council meeting which is open to the public.
2. A quarterly budget report must include–
  - a. a comparison of the actual and budgeted results to date; and
  - b. an explanation of any material variations; and

- c. any other matters prescribed by the regulations.
3. In addition, the second quarterly report of a financial year must include a statement by the Chief Executive Officer as to whether a revised budget is, or may be, required.

***Sustainability Implications***

This report does not raise any sustainability implications.

***Risk Assessment***

Council is required to establish and maintain a budgeting and reporting framework that is consistent with the principles of sound management and this report assists Council in meeting that requirement.

***Innovation and Continuous Improvements***

The content of the Quarterly report is continually reviewed to ensure meaningful data is provided.

***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

Council's financial performance reports will now be published monthly.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That the:**

1. **Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 28 February 2025 be received and adopted.**

**ATTACHMENTS**

Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators are provided as Attachment 3.4



### 3.5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR GOVERNANCE RULES

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20134

#### **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.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) requires all Councils in Victoria to adopt and maintain documents to give effect to good governance and transparency principles.

In accordance with section 60 of the Act, Council is required to adopt and keep in force Governance Rules.

This report outlines the feedback from the community engagement process and adoption of the governance rules.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Council adopted its Governance Rules on 27 September 2022.

The Governance Rules set out how Council meetings are conducted and how Council decisions are made. Council bases its Governance Rules on templates provided by Maddocks Lawyers which provide a "Standard" form of Governance Rules that are capable of satisfying the requirements of s60(1) of the Local Government Act 2020.

Amendments made to this version of Governance Rules were around the wording of the rules so they read more clear and concise.

Following endorsement by Council of the revised Governance Rules at the Council Meeting on the 25 February 2025, a community engagement process was undertaken in accordance with section 60(4) of the Act.

A total of two submissions were received via Engage Ararat. No other submissions were received. The contents of the two submissions covered other areas of interest. The two submissions were carefully considered and no further changes were required to be made to the Governance Rules.

#### **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; we measured risk management and implement of effective community engagement practices.

##### ***Budget Implications***

There are no budget implications arising in relation to development of the revised Governance Rules

**Policy/Relevant Law**

Council must develop, adopt and keep in force Governance Rules in accordance with section 60 of the Act

In accordance with section 60 (2) of the Act, the Governance Rules must provide for Council to:

- a. Consider and make decisions on any matter being considered by the Council fairly and on the merits;
- b. Institute decision making processes to ensure that any person whose rights will be directly affected by a decision of the Council is entitled to community their views and have their interest considered.

A community engagement process was undertaken in relation to the revised Governance Rules in accordance with section 60(4) of the Act.

**Sustainability Implications**

Environmental, social and economic impacts have been considered in the development of the revised Governance Rules.

**Risk Assessment**

The development of the revised Governance Rules will ensure that Council meets its legislative requirements

**Innovation and Continuous Improvements**

The revised Governance Rules meet the requirement of the Act

**Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

The Chief Executive Officer and Councillors discussed the revised Governance Rules at the briefing held on the 19 February 2025 and at the Council meeting held on the 25 February 2025  
Community consultation was conducted by Engage Ararat from the 26 February 2025 to 19 March 2025.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That:**

- 1. Council adopts the Governance Rules**
- 2. On adoption of the Governance Rules, that they are placed on the Council website.**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The Governance Rules and community submissions are provided as Attachment 3.5

### 3.6 COMPLIANCE POLICY AND FRAMEWORK

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20135

#### **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.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This Policy provides a rational and framework for an equitable, transparent and consistent approach to compliance activities undertaken by Ararat Rural City Council so the community can be assured that standards are met.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Council is committed to developing and maintaining a culture of effectively managing its compliance obligations. It will do this by:

- Displaying its commitment to effective compliance management through the adoption of this policy
- Implementing a compliance management program that assists staff in meeting compliance obligations and achieving desired behaviours.

Ararat Rural City Council has a responsibility to identify and comply with a range of legislative and regulatory requirements. This policy has been prepared with reference to the Australian Standard guidelines and Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2020 require Council to , in the performance of its role, give effect to the overarching governance principles.

These principles required Councillors and Council staff to avoid conflicts on interest, act honestly, lawfully, impartially, with integrity and accountability; respect other peoples beliefs and opinions; exercise reasonable care and diligence; to use public resources and manage financial risks prudently; consider the effect of decisions on future generations and ensure accurate and timely disclosure of financial information.

The framework outlines managers and leaders duty to maintain and monitor compliance within their area of responsibility, and to ensure that their staff have the necessary training to be aware of relevant legislative requirements.

#### **Key Considerations**

*Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives*

6. Strong and effective Governance

6.2 Ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions. Council's internal function is applied to areas or perceived risk.

#### **Budget implications**

There are no budget implications arising

#### **Policy / Relevant Law**

Local Government Act 2020

***Sustainability Implications***

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to the item

***Innovation and Continuous Improvements***

The Compliance Policy can be a driver of innovation and continuous improvement by fostering a proactive and adaptable approach to effectively manage our compliance obligations.

***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

This policy was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on the 4 March 2025

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Adopt the Compliance Policy**
- 2. Adopt the Compliance Framework**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The Compliance Policy and Framework are provided as Attachment 3.6

## SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS

### 4.1 PROGRESS REPORT - CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES WORKING GROUP

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** SUPPORTED PLAYGROUP FACILITATOR/PRE-PREP PROJECT  
COORDINATOR & STRATEGIC PROJECT LEAD  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20137

#### **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.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At the July 2024 Council Meeting, ARCC adopted the motion to become a signatory to the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFCC) Charter. The motion also moved to establish a new CFCC Working Group and that 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.

This report outlines the formation and objectives of a newly established Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFCC) Working Group. The CFCC Working Group has been formed to focus on enhancing the principles of the Victorian CFCC Charter (The Charter). The goal is to transform our townships and communities into more child-friendly spaces. The CFCC Working Group seek to accomplish this by sharing ideas, best practices, and successful examples from other communities that have created meaningful opportunities for young citizens to engage and thrive.

Through this collaborative effort with Council, the CFCC Working Group hope to foster environments where children can fully participate in the civic life of their communities, ensuring that they have a voice in the public policies and initiatives that directly impact them. To support Council's status as a signatory to The Charter, this report includes the Meeting Minutes and the Terms of Reference of Ararat Rural City Council's first CFCC Working Group.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The establishment of the involved an open Expressions of Interest (EOI) process which opened in August 2024 and closed in October 2024. The EOI was promoted on the Council's Engage Ararat website and social media channels. Invitations were also sent via email to community organisations, health services and early years services.

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2025 marked the inaugural meeting of the CFCC Working Group, a significant step forward in Council's ongoing commitment to strengthening child participation within local communities and ensuring that children's voices, needs, priorities, and rights are embedded within public policies, as well as child- and youth-focused events and programs.

During its inaugural meeting, the group examined the Charter's purpose as well as Terms of Reference. The CFCC Working Group will work in an advisory capacity to the CEO and to provide advice and guidance to Council, ensuring that the principles outlined in The Charter are consistently upheld and advanced. This advisory role is crucial in embedding a child-centered approach in local governance and in shaping policies and initiatives that directly affect children and youth.

Through these meetings, the CFCC Working Group aim to foster a deeper understanding of how communities can better meet the needs of their youngest residents and ensure that their voices are not only heard but integrated into decision-making processes.

As the CFCC Working Group progresses, the outcomes and recommendations of these discussions will be formalised and presented to Council. These recommendations will inform and guide actions that support The Charter's principles, with a specific focus on creating environments that are safe, accessible, and empowering for every child.

The CFCC Working Group will serve as a driving force in ensuring that our townships and communities continue to evolve into spaces where children thrive, and their contributions are recognised.

## 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***

The administration of the CFCC 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***

Child Safety Policy & Procedure, Community Engagement Policy, Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), Commission for Children and Young People - Victorian Child Safe Standards, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

### ***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***

Risks associated with the operational requirements of the CFCC Working Group will be managed in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Framework. All staff who are engaged in child-related work are required to hold a Working with Children Check. All staff have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if they have a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred. The Child Safety Procedure contained in the Child Safety Policy and Procedure provides the reporting procedure.

### ***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

Effective stakeholder collaboration and community engagement are integral to the success of the CFCC Working Group. To create environments that are truly child-friendly, it is essential to build strong partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders, including Councillors, community organisations, schools, service providers, and, most importantly, the children and youth within our communities. The CFCC Working Group aims to establish collaborative relationships that foster open dialogue, sharing of ideas, and a shared commitment to the values outlined in The Charter. Through ongoing collaboration with key stakeholders, we ensure that the voices of children, families, and local community members are central to our discussions and decisions.

Our approach to community engagement will focus on the following:

1. **Inclusive Participation:** We will ensure that children, young people, and their families are not only consulted but actively involved in the decision-making process. This may involve organising forums, workshops, and surveys to gather input from young residents, ensuring that their ideas and concerns are given attention in the development of public policies and programs.
2. **Strengthening Partnerships:** Collaboration with a variety of organisations, such as schools, advocacy groups, and community service providers, will be key to maximising the impact of our efforts.
3. **Strengthening Communication:** Transparent, ongoing communication will be encouraged with all stakeholders to ensure everyone remains informed and aligned with the goals of the CFCC initiative. This will include regular updates through quarterly CFCC Working Group meetings with joint action plan sessions to identify areas where progress can be made.
4. **Sustaining Engagement:** Ongoing community engagement with an aim to create long-term, sustainable engagement with community members and stakeholders to ensure that the child-friendly initiatives continue to evolve and adapt to changing community needs.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That:**

1. **the Progress Report for the Child Friendly Cities and Communities Working Group be received.**

## **ATTACHMENTS**

The Minutes from the Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFCC) Working Group Meeting (14/02/2025) and the Child Friendly Cities & Communities Working Group: Terms of Reference are provided as Attachment 4.1



#### 4.2 2024/2025 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - FEBRUARY 2025

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20138

#### **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.

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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 roads reseal program.
- Urban drainage improvements
- Footpath network upgrades
- Major urban road gravel to seal program
- Stage two of Mt William Road Reconstruction
- Roads to Recovery funded projects (Webb Street & McCrows Road Bridge)

#### **Budget Status:**

As of 28 February 2025, 40% of the budget is expended.

Buangor Ben Nevis Road plans are complete, and commencement of stage two of Mt William Road are ready to commence, pending cultural heritage and flora and fauna reports.

With the Yarram Gap Road fires it is likely that our capital works budget will again be affected with emergency works being a priority in early 2025. Construction on Churchill Avenue is continuing with utilities and service provision being undertaken and footpath works ongoing.

	Budget	Committed/ Contracted	Expended	%	Notes
<b>PROPERTY CAPITAL</b>					
Property Capital	<b>\$270,000</b>		\$235,730	88%	Works have been completed for the resurfacing of the Pomonal Tennis Courts, replacement of windows at the Town Hall in the Arts & Crafts Room, painting of the Maroona Rec Reserve and new touch screen kiosks. Upgrade of the circulating pumps at the indoor pool was completed in January 2025.
Ararat Library Upgrade	<b>\$200,000</b>	\$82,875	\$117,957	59%	Works have been completed with final invoicing to be received.
Tatyoan Oval, Drainage, Irrigation & Resurfacing	<b>\$83,500 Council</b> <b>\$250,000 CFNP</b>		\$315,744	96%	Aqualines Irrigation Pty Ltd have completed the works with the new pump connections to the reservoir to be completed before commencement of the football season.
<b>TOTAL PROPERTY</b>		<b>\$82,875</b>	<b>\$669,431</b>	<b>84%</b>	
<b>PLANT &amp; EQUIPMENT</b>					
Book stock - Library Book Replacement	<b>\$40,000</b>		\$41,261	103%	Fully expended for 2024/2025
<b>TOTAL PLANT &amp; EQUIPMENT</b>			<b>\$41,261</b>	<b>103%</b>	
<b>ROADS</b>					
Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing	<b>\$1,800,000</b>	-	\$1,496,040	83%	Resheeting, widening and alternative seal works have been completed on a number of roads including:  Tatyoan North Road Mt William Road Webbs Road Rockies Hill Road Coopers Road Astons Road (Shoulders) Tunnel Road Tobacco Road Cherrytree Road Moyston Township
Reseal Program	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	-	\$892,546	89%	Reseal works are 89% complete for the current financial year, with line marking the only outstanding works.
Mt William Road (24/25 - HSVPP Funding)	<b>\$6,250,000</b>	-	\$2,329	-	These works will commence on receipt of final cultural heritage management plan. Final

					meetings with Traditional Owners are imminent. The EMAC CHMP has been received for works over Fiery Creek.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road	<b>\$2,143,000</b>	\$68,522	\$111,935	5%	Plans and technical reporting have been completed. Council is working with Australian Cultural Heritage Services to complete CHMP. Finalisation of the native vegetation offsets is underway.
Weighbridge Place, Lake Bolac		\$74,900	\$825		Asphalting works at Weighbridge Place have been completed with final invoicing to be received. The intersection with Mortlake Ararat Road was in poor condition and required the upgrade to withstand the heavy vehicle use in the industrial area.
Churchill Avenue, Ararat	<b>\$800,000</b>		\$75,447	9%	Works have commenced on site with footpath works and service/utility proofing. Works are to be completed by 30 June 2025 in line with LRCI funding.
Webb Street, Ararat	<b>\$700,000</b>	\$3,700	\$11,803	2%	Works will be undertaken in conjunction with works on Churchill Avenue.
Urban Road Gravel to Seal	<b>\$700,00</b>		\$975,006	139%	Works for this year's program have been completed at Bailey Lane Currajong Ave/McLellan Street ROW Dawson/High Streets Mulcahy Road Young Street.  Multiple design works are being finished for the coming years programs which will be prioritised by a matrix to be presented to Council soon.
Major Patching	<b>\$100,000</b>	\$	\$68,858	69%	Priority works have been completed in November 24. Other works are currently being prioritised.
Bridges	<b>\$80,000</b>	\$10,727	\$95,287	119%	Investigations into the works required for the Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge 1 project are underway. These works include McCrows Road Bridge which will be undertaken with Roads to

					Recovery funding as approved in January 2025. Other bridge strengthening works are being investigated and estimated for upcoming programs.
Footpath Renewal Program	<b>\$400,000</b>		\$397,160	99%	Council's footpath program has been completed with Barkly/Queen Street Asphalt Path, and Maude Street finished in January 2025. Other costs within this budget include works on Tunnel Track, Pomonal which was a funded project.
Urban Drainage Works	<b>\$750,000</b>		\$368,195	49%	Drainage works are progressing with works currently completed at Ararat Cemetery and Thompson and Kneale Street and Queen Street Stormwater. Works on the main drain are being compiled for completion.
Kerb and Channel	<b>\$239,000</b>		\$159,494	67%	Works on the Walkerville and Wileman Street project in Willaura have been completed.
Miscellaneous			\$133,162		These works include finalisation of works at Gordon Street Reserve and small projects carried over from previous years.
<b>TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	<b>\$157,850</b>	<b>\$5,553,126</b>		37%	
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL WORKS</b>	<b>\$240,725</b>	<b>\$6,263,817</b>		40%	

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	Total Expended	%	Notes
Mt William Road	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	\$313,911		\$531,135	85%	Work commenced in late May 2024. The works have been set out, tree and stabilising works have been completed. There were significant soft spots found within the area and these have been remedied. Final works include class A stone and sealing works.
Buangor Recreation Reserve Kitchen Extension		\$53,849		\$303		The project has been out to the market and came in with a significant price difference between the cost plan and the

						<p>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. Council is currently undertaking quotation works with a local commercial builder to try to progress these works with alternative design options to provide better value to the community.</p>
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**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.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That**

**1. Council receive the Capital Works Program - February 2025 report.**

**ATTACHMENTS**

There are no attachments relating to this item

**4.3 ROAD SAFETY FUNDING AND WORKS**

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20139

**OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**  
 Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

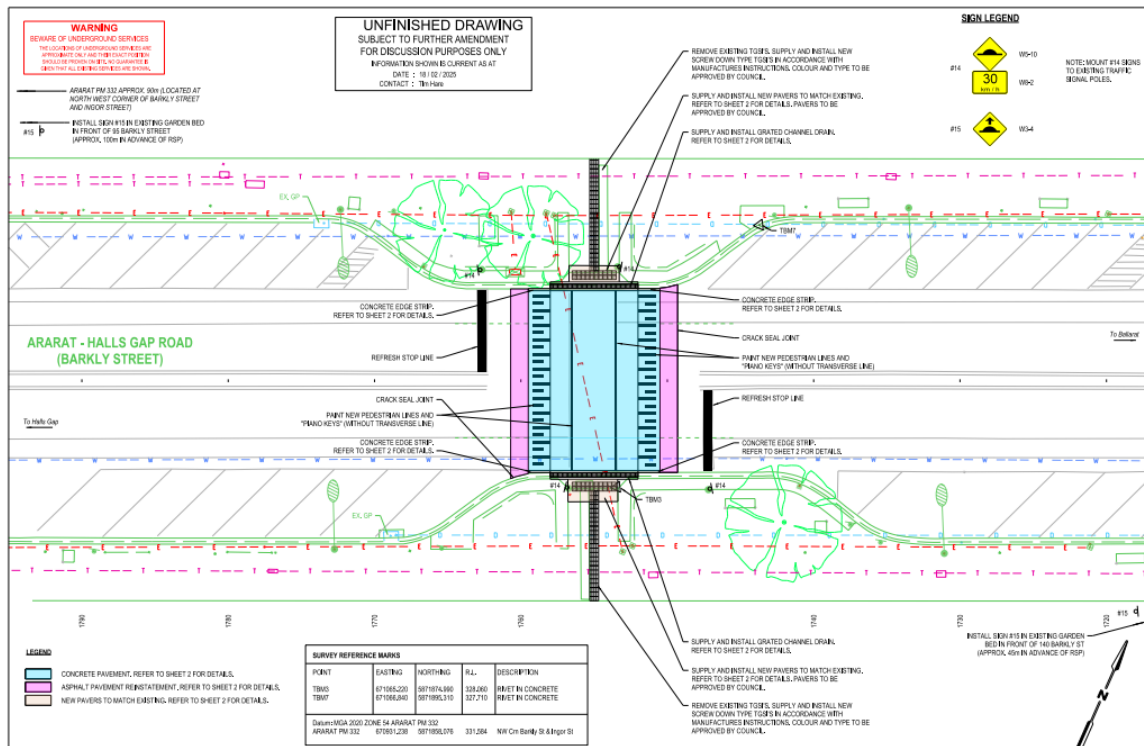
No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council is actively implementing various initiatives to improve road user and pedestrian safety throughout the municipality focusing on enhancing infrastructure in high risk areas. Current funding includes the following:

**Safe System Pedestrian Infrastructure Program**

These works are at detailed design phase awaiting final approval from the department of Transport. The works are installation of a wombat crossing in Barkly Street at Pedestrian Crossing in front of the Ararat Café Bar and a wombat crossing in High Street connecting Medical Centre and Kmart precincts.

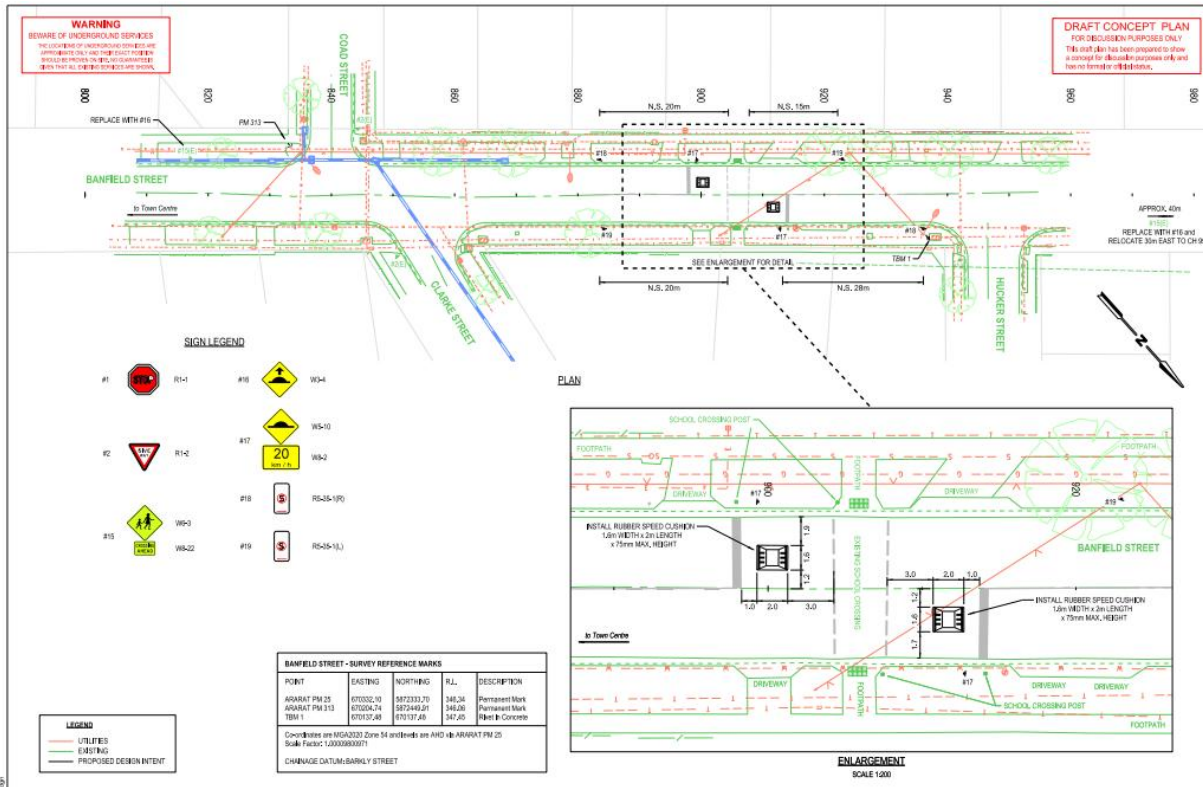


**Road Safety Program (School Safety Improvement)  
 Banfield Street, Ararat (Ararat West Primary School)**

Council received funding to upgrade the safety of the School Crossing in Banfield Street, Ararat which connects to Ararat West Primary School. The functional design for this work has been received for the



implementation of speed cushions and new signage which will be completed by Council's infrastructure team.



**Road Safety Program (School Safety Improvement)  
Campbell Street, Ararat (Ararat North Primary School)**

Funding for the Campbell Street crossing that connects to Ararat North Primary School is in the second stage of evaluation, with the work being on an arterial road (owned by VicRoads) being a pre-requisite for this funding.

**Transport Accident Commission - 2026-2030 Community Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan**

In late 2024, Council received approval for funding of a new Community Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan, this work is being undertaken by DWB Engineering in Geelong. Stakeholder engagement will make up an important part of this strategy and help direct council in making future infrastructure works decisions.

**Active Transport Fund Program**

Council received \$266,000 (1:3) as a part of the Active Transport Funding Program for the design and upgrade of approx. 9.85km of key bicycle routes as identified in the Ararat on the Move – Active Transport and Lifestyle Strategy. The project aims to connect local residents and visitors to key places of employment, schools, community organisations, public transport and the Ararat CBD.

**Safe Local Roads and Streets Program**

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.

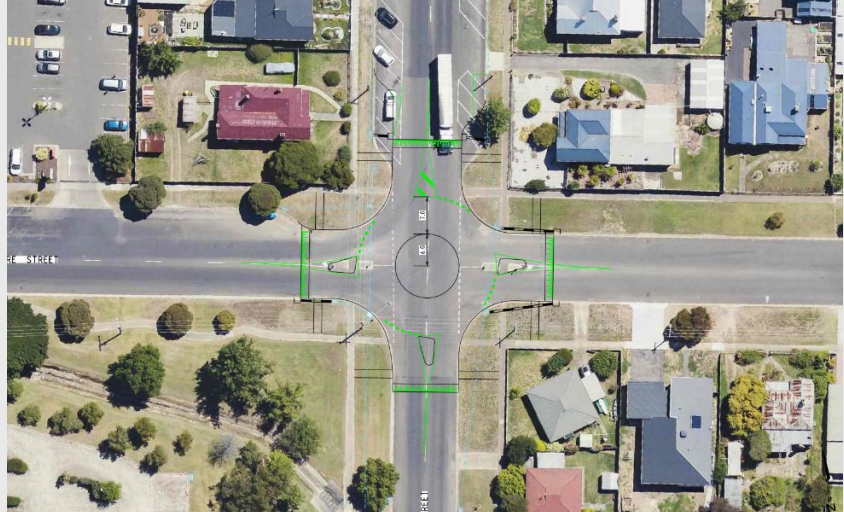



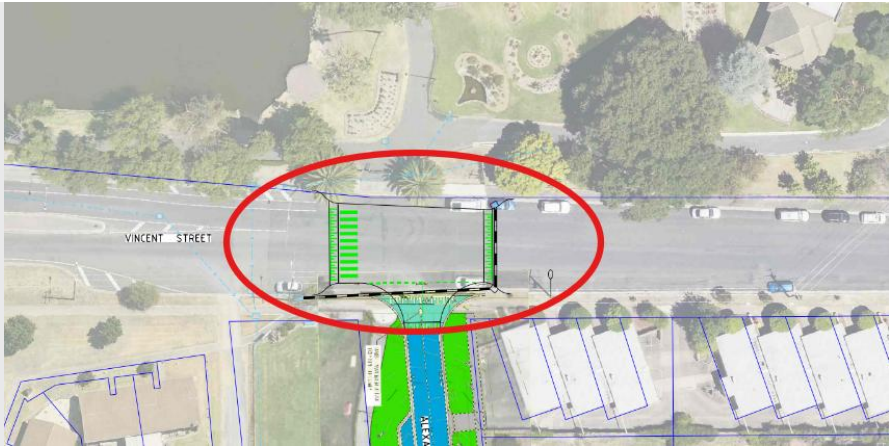

Under this program, each council can apply for an initial funding amount of \$2 million from a total pool of \$200 million. There is also the possibility of securing additional funding for high-value or innovative projects. Notably, there is no co-contribution requirement from the Council. Councils are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

The program helps 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.

There is a possible second round of this funding for projects that do not make the first cut through Road Safety Audits.

Projects in the round one proposal for Ararat Rural City Council are:

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

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



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

### **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.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That**

- 1. Council receive the Road Safety Funding and Works Report**

### **ATTACHMENTS**

There are no attachments relating to this item

#### 4.4 COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS - JANUARY 2025

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT:** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20140

#### 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 received 8 applications for the January 2025 round of Community Support Grants. An assessment panel comprising of two community members and the Chief Executive Officer assessed the applications and agreed to fund 6 of the applications, all to the full requested amount. The rejected applications were due to the following reasons:

1. Provided in kind Sponsorship instead for the use of Council Facilities
2. The organisation has received a grant in a recent round of Council's Community Grants

#### DISCUSSION

Community organisations are required to provide matching funding based on cash or in-kind contributions to support their project or event. Infrastructure projects are not included in the new funding guidelines.

Council received 8 applications for the January 2025 round of Community Support Grants. An assessment panel comprising of two community members and the Chief Executive Officer assessed the applications and agreed to fund 6 of the applications, all to the full requested amount.

The successful grants were as follows:

COMMUNITY ORGANISATION	PURPOSE	AMOUNT
Ararat & District Historical Society	School's Engagement Project - "Linking our Future and our Past"	\$2000.00
Ararat Railway Heritage Association	To purchase a display showcase for the museum to house donated memorabilia	\$2240.00
Ararat Rifle Club	Installation of Stage 2 of Target Marking System	\$5000.00
Elmhurst Fire Brigade	To purchase Expandable temporary safety barriers for members to undertake training on the service road	\$540.00
Pomonal Primary School	2025 Pomonal Art Show	\$3000.00
Ace Panel Worx	Western Highway Shootout Show & Shine free Community Event to provide relief to the community post the regions bushfires	\$5000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$17,780.00</b>

### **Key Considerations**

*Alignment to Council Plan 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

#### **Budget implications**

The grants were all made within existing budgetary allocations

#### **Policy / Relevant Law**

Community & Event Support Guidelines

#### **Sustainability Implications**

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to the item

#### **Risk Assessment**

Risks have been assessed and understood by the grants committee. No unmanaged risks identified at this time.

#### **Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement**

The outcome of each grant was made in conjunction between the two external panel members and the Chief Executive Officer.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That**

- 1. Council receive the Community Support Grants - January 2025 Report**

### **ATTACHMENTS**

There are no attachments relating to this item



## SECTION 5 - INFORMAL MEETINGS

### 5.1 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.

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#### 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 11 March 2025
Council Briefing held on 18 March 2025

#### Matters discussed at the briefing:

- New budget initiatives
- Active Transport and Road Safety
- Orchid Glasshouse
- Economic Development Update
- Child Friendly Cities Progress Report
- Advocacy Projects
- Prestige Site Update
- Grants update
- Customer Request Management System Update
- Library Façade Upgrade
- Compliance Policy and Plan
- Revenue and Rating Strategy
- Community Support Grants - January 2025
- Capital Works - February 2025
- Building Approvals
- Planning approvals under delegation

## 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 5.1.

## SECTION 6 - COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

### 6.1 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

**AUTHOR'S TITLE:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**DEPARTMENT** CEO'S OFFICE  
**REFERENCE:** 20141

#### 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.

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on the 4 March 2025.

#### DISCUSSION

Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee meetings are provided to Council at the first available opportunity after clearance by the Audit and Risk Committee Chairperson. The report contains the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 4 March 2025.

Council Committees	Councillor representative	Current meeting (as presented)	Next scheduled meeting/s
Audit and Risk Committee	Cr Jo Armstrong	04 March 2025	03 June 2025
Audit and Risk Committee	Cr Bob Sanders	04 March 2025	03 June 2025

#### 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

##### **Budget Implications**

No budget impact for the receiving of minutes.

##### **Policy/Legal/Statutory**

Section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020* states that Council must establish an Audit and Risk Committee.

Section 6.1 of the *Audit and Risk Committee Charter* states that minutes of Committee meetings will be provided to Council at the first available opportunity after clearance by the Committee Chairperson following each Committee meeting.

##### **Risk Assessment**

Council needs to be aware of issues raised in the minutes.

##### **Stakeholder Consultation and Communication**

Audit and Risk Committee members.  
Councillor representation on Council Committees.  
Chief Executive Officer and relevant Council officers.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That**

- 1. the Minutes from the March 2025 Audit and Risk Committee meeting be received**

**ATTACHMENTS**

The Audit and Risk Committee Minutes 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:

**No Confidential Agenda Items**