



Ararat Rural City

AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 27 May 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 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 29 April 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 ADOPTION OF THE ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY VISION 2035 AND COUNCIL PLAN 2025-29

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21040

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 presents the Community Vision 2035 and Council Plan 2025-29 for adoption after it has been presented to community for community consultation and engagement.

DISCUSSION

The Community Vision 2035 captures 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 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 draft Community Vision 2035 and Council Plan 2025-29 has been presented to the community for consultation and feedback. This occurred alongside the community engagement for the 2025/2026 Budget and included several mechanisms of engagement, such as:

- published on the Engage Ararat website from 28 March 2025
- distribution of copies of the draft Community Vision and Council Plan across the municipality
- face to face community consultation sessions (see table below)
- social media posts to encourage community engagement
- summaries be placed in local newspapers
- mainstream media engagement
- public submissions closed on 9 May 2025.

Community consultation sessions:

Township	Time, Date	Location
Ararat	11am - 12pm, Tuesday 29 April	Ararat Town Hall
Buangor	2pm - 3pm, Wednesday 30 April	Buangor Pavilion
Elmhurst	2pm - 3pm, Tuesday 29 April	Elmhurst Public Hall
Lake Bolac	7pm - 8pm, Thursday 01 May	Lake Bolac Golf Club
Moyston	11.30am - 12.30pm, Thursday 01 May	Moyston Hall
Pomonal	3pm - 4pm, Thursday 01 May	Pomonal Hall
Tatyoorn	7pm - 8pm, Monday 5 May	Tatyoorn Hall
Willaura	5.30pm - 6.30pm, Thursday 01 May	Willaura Memorial Hall
Drop-In Session	9am - 2pm, Friday 02 May	Ararat Rural City Council office

The following feedback and submissions were received:

Feedback for the Community Vision 2035
Promote tourism more, and improve our entrances to our city, advertise more of what we have to offer
The vision fails to acknowledge a declining population over the past 20 years and how growth will be achieved. Investment in small towns?
The draft vision seems to be very much Ararat focussed, with little to look forward to for Willaura residents.
Dear Sir/Madam, I would like to make a submission on the Community Vision 2035 and Draft Council Plan 2025-2029
There are two ways to achieve growth. The first is more of the same standard, the second is to improve the standard. Going by its current performance Council appears to favour the first which will ultimately lower the overall standard of living for Ararat Rural City residents. Liveability is a key driver for people choosing a place to live. A city's liveability is determined by access to essential services, environmental quality, safety, affordability, and the overall quality of life for residents. People won't move to Ararat if it's another Lucas or Winter Valley. Council should lead by example a develop attractive low rise housing opportunities near the CBD. Council's proposal to relocate the Ararat Fitness Centre to other sites including the outdoor pool would provide an opportunity to redevelop that site as a European style apartment block. A three story red brick building with basement carpark in a similar style to the form Terminus Hotel would complement the nearby historic building deliver much needed accommodation opportunities in central Ararat as well as create increased patronage for local businesses.
The Aradale Nurses Hostel offers a unique opportunity to create a significant number of apartments for short to medium term accommodation at minimal expense for Council. An identical facility in Beechworth now used for tourist accommodation. The Aradale institution itself is a very large area with historic buildings and grounds that include an extensive garden, large vegetable garden, golf

course, tennis courts, bowling green and swimming pool. It could become a unique lifestyle village if sympathetically developed and provide a significant benefit to the local economy.

The Ararat Bioenergy project appears to have failed and the economics of using a high cost feedstock to produce renewable methane (biogas) was always questionable Unless you have access to low or zero cost feedstock then even "behind the meter" electricity only is going to be difficult to justify the cost. Combined heat and power does stack up but you need an industry that uses more heat than power. Heat only on the other hand can be economically viable and this option has the advantage of no legal restriction to exportation of heat. Council should obtain independent advice on potential bioenergy options.

Ararat sits on the Western Highway and is the junction of four rail lines, but Council continues to ignore the potential that holds. The municipality is a significant source of primary produce and could be a major intermodal freight hub if leadership was shown. The shortage of parking at the Ararat train station is also an inhibiting factor to greater use of the available train services.

Ararat needs a long-term alternative to the Pomonal Road Landfill which is already becoming a garbage mountain. It's naive to think there's a recycling/reuse option for composite materials like furniture or floor coverings, treated pine, contaminated materials, etc. Waste to energy is the only long-term solution and an Australian company, [Wildfire Energy](#), has developed an innovative, small-scale solution that would suit a municipality like Ararat Rural City. The large amount of compost being stockpiled around the Ararat Transfer Station indicates a lack of a market for this material. It seems odd that Council would have chosen this approach when it was common knowledge that the compost market was already saturated prior to their investment in the processing system. I did a small trial for Council some time ago which involved successfully turning green waste into fuel briquettes. They have a ready market at present and would sell for \$150 to \$200 per m3.

Ararat Rural City has the potential to an attractive, highly liveable municipality but it requires vision and proactive leadership.

[Personal information removed for privacy]

Feedback for the Council Plan 2025-29

The council plan is 80% cut and paste from the previous 4 year plan.

The document doesn't indicate any infrastructure builds or renovations - what will be completed over the 4 year period? They are just high level statements talking about asset 10 year plans etc? what from the asset plan will be complete in this term? Community should be aware of deliverables in the term so there is transparency on projects priorities.

Increase the emphasis on tourism, gateway to Grampians and surrounding areas. Improve the entrances to our city, make them more aesthetic and welcoming, improve our streets especially Barkly St, more colourful plants and more small trees.

The Measures of Success says to 'Increase participation in community organisations in Ararat Rural City by 5% per annum'. This is very much needed, but it has been very challenging trying to get more people involved in their communities. How will Council achieve this measure?

On behalf of the Lake Bolac Development Association I write this letter in support of the Lake Bolac township volunteers, non-profit organisations and committees of management who tirelessly support, maintain, and improve our local community assets and events.

The following items are put forward for inclusion in the Council Draft:

Enabling Infrastructure:

Lake Bolac Peter O'Rorke Memorial Outdoor Solar Heated Pool requires the **replacement of the main circulating pump**.

Requires **replacement of the roof solar circulating pump** (stopped working in March).

Painting interior of both pools and fixing broken filters – 25m pool and Toddler's Pool
This season pool attracted over 4,000 patrons and growing every year.

Lake Bolac Soldier's Memorial Hall – **Upgrade toilets, foyer, and disability access.**

There are currently no disabled toilet facilities, no disabled access, and consequently no hiring from state or federal organisations such as the Electoral Commissions (who require disabled access as a minimum). 200 people attended our annual Anzac Service this year, and last.

Recreation, Safety and Tourism:

Commence first stage **Walking Track around Lake Bolac.** A key activity to keep building on in coming years.

Infrastructure for Families:

Build Family Day Care facilities. Four places for College staff children are not enough.

Please consider all the municipal rural townships carefully when allocating ARCC resources, as they feed and support and contribute rates generously to the ARCC.

We look forward to council's co-operation to achieve our joint community goals.

Kind Regards,

Karen McIntyre, President
Lake Bolac Development Association
8 May 2025

Responses to the Feedback

- There is a strong commitment to supporting and promoting tourism. This is stated in the Council Plan 2025-29 with the strategic objective '2.3 Engage with Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism and local businesses to improve the quality of experience and drive growth in high yield tourist outcomes'. This commitment is also already reflected in the Draft Budget 2025/26. We will be contributing \$75,000 to Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism who deliver coordinated marketing campaigns for this region.
- Improvements to the entrances of townships and service centres, as well as the Lake Bolac Pool and Memorial Hall facilities will be considered as part of the capital works planning process for the annual budgets.
- The population of Ararat Rural City has increased from 11,075 in 2001 to 11,880 in 2021 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data. However, we recognise that we need more population growth to remain viable as a municipality, hence the opening sentence of the Community Vision 2035 'Strong population growth that buck trends in rural Victoria'.
- The Community Vision describes the community's aspirations for the future of the municipality, while the Council Plan describes the 'how'.
- Every part of the Community Vision 2035 is about the aspirations of the whole municipality, not just the suburb of Ararat. For example, value adding in agriculture and tourism supports the social and economic development of townships like Willaura. The waste-to-energy power generation provides secondary income opportunities for agricultural producers in rural areas. Transport networks, artistic, cultural, sporting and recreational opportunities are also critical for rural communities.
- Organisations that are effective and delivering outcomes for their stakeholders do not drastically change their strategic directions, objectives and strategies every four years. Each and every word of the Council Plan 2021-25 was reviewed and considered in the development of the draft Council Plan 2025-29 and most of it is still relevant now.
- There are initiatives and priorities for services, infrastructure and amenity listed in the Draft Council Plan 2025-29. Examples include '1.1 Develop a strategic land use planning framework with annual targets to support sustainable urban growth', '2.1 Partner with Federation

University to deliver the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct with a focus on engaging local agribusiness, industry and community', and so forth.

- The specific infrastructure projects and initiatives that are aligned to the strategic directions and delivered each year are captured in the Annual Action Plan. This is prepared once the Council Plan 2025-29 is adopted.
- Increasing volunteering and participation in community organisations is not something Council can achieve on its own. Each community has their own character and opportunities and the exact way this will be achieved will depend on each community and community organisation. Council plans to work with local communities to achieve this outcome.
- Council are currently liaising with private and not-for-profit sectors to deliver a new childcare centre in Lake Bolac.

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

One of the six strategic directions in the Council Plan 2025-29 is focused on preserving our environment and increasing our sustainability.

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. Adopt the Community Vision 2035 and Council Plan 2025-29**

ATTACHMENTS

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

3.2 ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT FINANCIAL PLAN 2025-35

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: FINANCE COORDINATOR
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21041

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

Section 91 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to prepare and adopt a Financial Plan (the Plan) by 31 October 2025, for a period of at least ten financial years.

This report presents the draft Financial Plan 2025-2035 for adoption after it has been presented to community during the community consultation and engagement phase.

DISCUSSION

The Financial Plan 2025-2035 provides a financially sustainable projection to effectively support implementation of the Council Plan, and to achieve the Community Vision.

The Plan outlines the assumptions, policy and decisions of Council used to determine the allocation and management of Council resources over the next 10 years.

No changes have been made to the draft Financial Plan 2025-35 since it was released to for public consultation (see below).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The Financial Plan aligns with the Draft Council Plan 2025-29 in the following areas:

- 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

The Plan will support Council in meeting its obligations of economic sustainability and ongoing financial viability in accordance with Section 91 of Local Government Act 2020. Once adopted the Financial Plan will be used to guide the development of future budgets of Council.

Policy/Relevant Law

This proposed policy meets Council's legislative requirement within the Local Government Act 2020, Section 91.

Sustainability Implications

In developing the Financial Plan, all sustainability impacts have been considered.

Risk Assessment

Council must implement the principles of sound financial management, which includes managing financial risks faced by Council and ensuring that decisions are made and actions taken having regard to their financial effects on future generations.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The Financial Plan 2025-35 was presented alongside the Draft Budget 2025/26 at the community consultation sessions in the table below. It was also made available on the Engage Ararat website from 11 April 2025 for community review and feedback. Public submissions closed on 9 May 2025.

Community consultation sessions:

Township	Time, Date	Location
Ararat	11am - 12pm, Tuesday 29 April	Ararat Town Hall
Buangor	2pm - 3pm, Wednesday 30 April	Buangor Pavilion
Elmhurst	2pm - 3pm, Tuesday 29 April	Elmhurst Public Hall
Lake Bolac	7pm - 8pm, Thursday 01 May	Lake Bolac Golf Club
Moyston	11.30am - 12.30pm, Thursday 01 May	Moyston Hall
Pomonal	3pm - 4pm, Thursday 01 May	Pomonal Hall
Tatooon	7pm - 8pm, Monday 5 May	Tatooon Hall
Willaura	5.30pm - 6.30pm, Thursday 01 May	Willaura Memorial Hall
Drop-In Session	9am - 2pm, Friday 02 May	Ararat Rural City Council office

One submission was received for the Financial Plan 2025-2035, this is provided below:

"127.8 full-time equivalent staff employed by the council. The cost for this amount of staffing is \$13M and counting. Rates are forecast to increase by 2.5% in 2026/2027 onwards per year to cover staffing and other identified costs.

To service Ararat at that cost is not acceptable.

Alternatives to release staffing resources have to be proposed and implemented. What automation has been implemented to assist in releasing staffing resources?

What activities can be outsourced to private enterprise?

Has there been a cost-benefit analysis done to address outsourcing some activities performed by current staff?

Thanks

Rate Payer

Happy to provide my name and address upon request."

Council thanks everyone who reviewed the Financial Plan 2025-35 and provided feedback. Council's response to this feedback is:

- The forecast rate increase of 2.5% per annum is indicative only and enables Council to model its long-term financial sustainability. The Financial Plan does not commit Council to adopting this rate in future financial years. Ararat Rural City Council has delivered a net 0% rate increase over the previous seven budget cycles.
- Ararat Rural City Council is one of the most efficient councils in Victoria. Other similar sized councils in Victoria have more full time equivalent (FTE) staff, Northern Grampians Shire Council for example had 212.94 FTE staff in their 2024/25 Budget. The Northern Grampians Shire Council's Draft 2025/26 Budget does not appear to have been released at the time of this briefing report. Central Goldfields Shire Council has 157 FTE staff in their Draft Budget 2025/26.
- Outsourcing has been tried in the past and it has been found to be less cost effective and lower quality than delivering activities directly. Examples of services that had previously been outsourced include kerbside waste collection and the Ararat Fitness Centre. These waste and

recreational facility services are now delivered by Council staff and the Customer Satisfaction Survey results for these individual service areas went from 'significantly lower than state-wide average' in 2017 to 'significantly higher than the state-wide average' in 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Adopt the Financial Plan 2025-35

ATTACHMENTS

The Financial Plan 2025-35 is provided as Attachment 3.2

3.3 ADOPTION OF THE RATING AND REVENUE PLAN 2025-29

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: FINANCE COORDINATOR
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21042

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

Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to prepare and adopt a Revenue and Rating Plan (the Plan) by 30 June 2025, for a period of at least four financial years.

This report presents the final Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-29 for adoption after it has been presented to community during the community consultation and engagement phase.

DISCUSSION

The Revenue and Rating Plan outlines the assumptions, policy, and decisions of Council in relation to generating the required income to effectively support implementation of the Council Plan and budget for a 4-year period.

Whilst the Plan covers all sources of income it also sets out decisions that Council has made in relation to rating options available to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of rates across property owners.

The Plan does not set revenue targets for Council, it outlines the strategic framework and decisions that informs how Council will calculate and collect its revenue.

A key change from the Rating and Revenue Plan 2021-2025 is the inclusion of a new Trust for Nature rebate on the area of land protected under the Trust for Nature conservation covenant on their property.

Minor amendments to the number of assessments, CIV and rates figures in Appendix 3 have been made since the Draft Rating and Revenue Plan 2025-29 was released for public consultation as a result of updated valuation information from the Valuer-General Victoria Office. These amendments do not have an impact on the Rating and Revenue Plan itself, only the demonstration of the Plan in Appendix 3.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The Revenue and Rating Plan aligns with the Draft Council Plan 2025-29 in the following areas:

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

The Plan will support Council in meeting its obligations of economic sustainability and ongoing financial viability in accordance with Section 9(2)(c) and (g) of Local Government Act 2020. Once adopted the Revenue and Rating Plan will be used to guide the development of future budgets of Council.

Policy/Relevant Law

This proposed policy meets Council's legislative requirement within the Local Government Act 2020, sections Section 9(2)(a) and Section 93.

Sustainability Implications

In developing the Revenue and Rating Plan, all sustainability impacts have been considered.

Risk Assessment

Council must implement the principles of sound financial management, which includes managing financial risks faced by Council and ensuring that decisions are made and actions taken having regard to their financial effects on future generations.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-29 was presented alongside the Draft Budget 2025/26 at the community consultation sessions in the table below. It was also made available on the Engage Ararat website from 11 April 2025 for community review and feedback. Public submissions closed on 9 May 2025.

Community consultation sessions:

Township	Time, Date	Location
Ararat	11am - 12pm, Tuesday 29 April	Ararat Town Hall
Buangor	2pm - 3pm, Wednesday 30 April	Buangor Pavilion
Elmhurst	2pm - 3pm, Tuesday 29 April	Elmhurst Public Hall
Lake Bolac	7pm - 8pm, Thursday 01 May	Lake Bolac Golf Club
Moyston	11.30am - 12.30pm, Thursday 01 May	Moyston Hall
Pomonal	3pm - 4pm, Thursday 01 May	Pomonal Hall
Tatyoan	7pm - 8pm, Monday 5 May	Tatyoan Hall
Willaura	5.30pm - 6.30pm, Thursday 01 May	Willaura Memorial Hall
Drop-In Session	9am - 2pm, Friday 02 May	Ararat Rural City Council office

Council thanks everyone who reviewed the Rating and Revenue Plan 2025-29. No feedback was received directly relating to the Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-29.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Adopt the Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-29**

ATTACHMENTS

The Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-29 is provided as Attachment 3.3

3.4 ADOPTION OF THE ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL DRAFT BUDGET 2025/2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21043

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

In accordance with Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020, Council is required to prepare a budget for each financial year and the subsequent 3 financial years by 30 June each year, or any other date fixed by the Minister by notice published in the Government Gazette.

Section 96 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to develop the budget in accordance with the financial management principles and its community engagement policy.

This report presents the Budget 2025/26 for adoption after it has been presented to community for community consultation and engagement.

DISCUSSION

Council's 2025/26 Draft Budget represents a continuation of Council's fiscally responsible approach that has been in place over the past seven budget cycles. The headlines of the 2025/26 Budget continue to revolve around returning an efficiency dividend to the community through a minimal rate rise and an ongoing dedication to renewing the community's assets through a \$12,437,000 investment in capital works.

Council will ensure strong financial management, high-quality services, and on-time completion of projects through focusing on service delivery and capital works programs, and on in-house service provision.

Council's commitment to ensuring financial sustainability of the municipality is illustrated through delivering a budget result that projects a comprehensive operating surplus of \$2,050,000, an underlying operating surplus of \$560,000 and a net cash increase of \$588,000 for 2025/26.

Key Budget Influences include:

- a. Ararat Rural City Council's 2025/26 Budget has a 1.5 percent rate rise, which is half the rate cap for 2025/26 of 3 percent and the first net increase in seven years.

By contrast, had Council increased rates to the level allowable under the State Government's Fair Go Rates System over the eight-year period including 2025/26, this would have increased the total burden to ratepayers by 19.25% during that same period.

- b. In July 2022, Council adopted key drivers of financial sustainability, which form the basis for developing the 2025/2026 Budget. These drivers of financial sustainability are:

Rating

Maintenance of the "pie model" to provide some form of long-term rating equity and reduce rate shock across rating sectors based on annual valuation fluctuations.

Debt

Debt is only used to fund strategic infrastructure outcomes with an emphasis on intergenerational equity.

Asset Preservation

Maintain the asset renewal and upgrade ratio to at least 110% of depreciation.

Surplus Budgets

Maintain cash and operating surpluses in each financial year.

Managing Expenditure

Managing expenditure is a key driver of financial sustainability at Ararat Rural City Council.

Rate Rises

Rate rises will be kept to a minimum based on seeking organisational efficiency. These efficiencies will be returned to the ratepayer as a dividend through lower rate rises or rate cuts.

Service Standards

Expenditure savings and ratepayer dividends will not come at the price of lower service standards.

Key elements of Council's 2025/2026 Budget are:

- \$1,490,000 secured in grant funding for a new covered sports arena for the Ararat Pony Club
- \$683,000 contribution towards the Woorndoo-Streatham Road reconstruction project
- \$500,000 contribution to an ongoing partnership commitment to Ararat Housing Enterprise P/L.
- \$148,760 Pomonal Community Hall Battery Project, supported by the 100 Neighbourhood Batteries grants program
- \$133,000 Council contribution towards a \$399,000 upgrade of the Ararat Active Transport Bicycle Network
- \$100,000 for young people's programs across schools, largely through the Crazy Ideas College
- \$100,000 for Community Support Grants
- \$100,000 for the successful business Façade Improvement and Kick Start Grants Programs
- \$100,000 towards planning for a new indoor sports facility and the outdoor pool upgrade
- \$100,000 of grant funding secured for a new dog park in Ararat
- \$60,000 secured for repair works to the former Cobb & Co Staging Stables in Buangor
- \$1,000,000 to reconstruct a section of Buangor - Ben Nevis Road, on top of the \$2,143,000 previous reconstruction works on this road
- \$1,800,000 renewing rural gravel roads through resheeting or sealing treatments such as OTTA Seal
- \$750,000 to fund Year 4 of Council's five-year commitment to improve urban drainage systems
- \$400,000 to upgrade footpath network
- \$312,232 secured in grant funding for pedestrian safety upgrades in the Ararat CBD
- \$300,000 to renew kerb and channel assets
- Continuing to fund free access to Outdoor Pools
- Continuing the delivery of the \$6.25 million Mount William Road reconstruction major infrastructure initiative

Revenue

Council's first considerations in framing the 2025/2026 Budget are on the revenue side. Key considerations are:

- returning efficiency dividends to the community through a 1.5 percent rate rise

- ensuring a commitment to maintaining relativities in rating burden by each identified rating sector
- attempting to ease the impact of rates rises on individual ratepayers
- avoiding where possible "rate shock" experiences of large and unexpected rate increases.

It is proposed that the best mechanism for ensuring this is to propose a rating approach in 2025/2026 that, as far as possible, provides similar revenue outcomes across each sector as 2024/2025. Council believes that the approach taken is perfectly consistent with Section 101 (1) (c) where *"the financial policies and strategic plans, including the Revenue and Rating Plan, must seek to provide stability and predictability in the financial impact on the municipal community"*.

In the 2025 valuation there have again been some shifts in valuations across the classes of properties, although these have not been as significant as 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. The 2025 valuation has again yielded some asymmetry in valuations compared to the previous year. The table below demonstrates the nature of this uneven distribution of revaluations between 2024 and 2025:

Rates Sector	Total 2024 CIV	Total 2025 CIV	Increase/Decrease in CIV - 2024 to 2025	Average % change in CIV
General	\$2,056,802,000	\$2,011,804,000	-\$44,998,000	-2.19%
Commercial	\$155,895,000	\$159,240,000	\$3,345,000	2.15%
Industrial	\$51,370,000	\$51,378,000	\$8,000	0.02%
Farm	\$4,484,775,000	\$4,324,012,000	-\$160,763,000	-3.58%
Total	\$6,748,842,000	\$6,546,434,000	-\$202,408,000	-3.00%

If the current 0.385 farm differential rate and 1.4 commercial/ industrial differential rates are maintained there will be a change in relativities in rates burden between farm, commercial/industrial and general rates between 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 (assuming a 1.5% rate cap increase), as shown in the table below.

Rates Sector	Rating Differential	2024/2025	2025/2026
General	1.00	51.8%	51.9%
Commercial	1.40	5.3%	5.6%
Industrial	1.40	1.8%	1.8%
Farm	0.385	41.1%	40.7%

The mechanism for maintaining relativities in rate burden between rating sectors, created through asymmetries in valuation movement is through alteration of rating differentials. The table below demonstrates the impact of a movement in farm rate differential from 0.385 to 0.39 and a movement in commercial/industrial rate from 1.40 to 1.35 on adjusting the relative rate burden.

Rates Sector	Rating Differential 2024/2025	2024/2025 Rates Burden	Rating Differential 2025/2026	2025/2026 Rates Burden
General	1.00	51.8%	1.00	51.8%
Commercial	1.40	5.3%	1.35	5.4%
Industrial	1.40	1.8%	1.35	1.7%
Farm	0.385	41.1%	0.39	41.1%

Council is proposing a change in the farm rate differential from 0.385 to 0.39 and a change in the commercial/industrial differential from 1.40 to 1.35 in order to ensure relative burden between rating sectors is maintained from 2023/2024 to 2025/2026.

Minor amendments to the number of assessments, CIV and rates figures in Section 4.1.1 have been made since the Draft Budget 2025/2026 was released for public consultation as a result of updated valuation information from the Valuer-General Victoria Office. These amendments have also resulted in changes to some indicators in Section 5.

A 1.5 percent rate increase in 2025/2026

Council has budgeted for a 1.5 percent increase to rates in 2025/2026, which is half the rate cap of 3 percent, in order to ensure that the community receives a dividend for improved organisational efficiency and cost savings

Expenditure

The key driver of the 2025/2026 Draft Budget expenditure is to continue to deliver long-term, sustainable value to the Ararat Rural City community. This will be achieved by focussing on the following key areas:

- strategic renewal of Council's key assets
- driving organisational effectiveness through managing performance and efficiency
- implementing a digital transformation program
- implementation of key projects contained in Council's adopted advocacy program
- ongoing commitment to service review

The proposed Ararat Rural City Council Budget 2025/2026 document outlines the key expenditure areas, which are informed by Council's operational activity, key projects and the Council Plan 2025-2029.

Other considerations

The waste management kerbside collection charges for residential properties will increase by approximately 1.7%, with fees rounded up to the nearest dollar, to contribute to increased costs for waste management services.

The Municipal Charge will be fixed at \$96 for 2025/2026.

The budgeted operating result for 2025/2026 is a surplus of \$2.050 million, compared to a budgeted result of \$8.163 million surplus in 2024/2025.

The budgeted cash flow statement indicates an increase in cash & cash equivalents of \$0.588 million.

Community Consultation Summary

The Draft Budget 2025/26 was presented at the community consultation sessions in the table below. These sessions spread throughout the municipality between the period from Tuesday 29 April to Monday 5 May 2025. Commencement times for the sessions varied from 11am to 7pm to provide different options for people to be able to attend around personal and work commitments. The sessions were 1 hour in duration to provide adequate time for discussion. The Draft Budget 2025/26 was also made available online on the Engage Ararat website from 11 April 2025 for community review and feedback. Public submissions closed on 9 May 2025.

Community consultation sessions:

Township	Time, Date	Location
Ararat	11am - 12pm, Tuesday 29 April	Ararat Town Hall
Buangor	2pm - 3pm, Wednesday 30 April	Buangor Pavilion
Elmhurst	2pm - 3pm, Tuesday 29 April	Elmhurst Public Hall
Lake Bolac	7pm - 8pm, Thursday 01 May	Lake Bolac Golf Club
Moyston	11.30am - 12.30pm, Thursday 01 May	Moyston Hall
Pomonal	3pm - 4pm, Thursday 01 May	Pomonal Hall
Tatyoorn	7pm - 8pm, Monday 5 May	Tatyoorn Hall
Willaura	5.30pm - 6.30pm, Thursday 01 May	Willaura Memorial Hall

Drop-In Session	9am - 2pm, Friday 02 May	Ararat Rural City Council office
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Council thanks everyone who reviewed the Draft Budget 2025/26 and provided feedback.

Summary of the Submissions

A total of 44 people engaged with Council on the Budget 2025/26 during the community consultation period. This included 24 attendees at the face-to-face community consultation sessions, phone conversations with 2 people, 9 submissions online via Engage Ararat, 8 emails and 1 note received at the Council office.

The closure of the Elmhurst, Moyston, Pomonal and Willaura Transfer Stations was discussed during the community consultation sessions at these four locations. Of the 20 people who phoned, made online submissions via Engage Ararat, emailed or wrote a note, 10 were related to Elmhurst Transfer Station and 5 were related to the Moyston Transfer Station.

Queries and suggestions on a range of other issues were also received or discussed at the consultation sessions, including regarding the future of the A&J McDonald Centre, the Cobb & Co building in Buangor, major road projects, supporting the arts sector, more community spaces and maintenance of facilities and community assets.

Details of the submissions is provided in the attachment to this report.

Discussion on Waste-Related Submissions

There were queries on why there is a rate increase if there is a reduction in transfer station services. The usage of the transfer stations has been declining since the introduction of the rural kerbside bin collection service. It has reached a point where keeping the Elmhurst, Moyston, Pomonal and Willaura Transfer Stations open no longer made financial sense. For example, the Elmhurst Transfer Station had a net loss of \$16,698 in the previous 12 month. This site had 53 customer visits over 12 months and received a total tonnage of waste of 3.62 tonnes. On a per person basis, based on the population of Elmhurst of 185 at the 2021 ABS Census, this net loss costs each resident approx. \$90 per year.

In terms of the 1.5% rate increase, the reason is that, even though Council has made every effort to find efficiencies and keep costs down, the costs to run Council's other core services and keep on top of the infrastructure needs of the Ararat Rural City are still increasing. The savings from the closure of the four transfer stations does not cover the increased costs of operation and a 1.5% rate increase is required to cover these rising costs. The rate increase that would be required to keep all four transfer stations open is estimated to be 2.5%.

Some community members used the transfer stations because they regularly had more waste than the bins were able to cater for. It was suggested that these residents opt to have a second bin of the type that they regularly filled. This would reduce the need for them to put the waste into the car and travel to a transfer stations. This waste can instead be collected as part of the kerbside bin collection. The costs for an additional kerbside bin is provided below and this can be arranged by filling in the Additional Waste Services Request Form on Council's [website](https://www.ararat.vic.gov.au/website), or contacting Council on (03) 5355 0200 or council@ararat.vic.gov.au

Ararat Rural City Council 2025/26 rates for additional kerbside bins:

Type of Bin	Rate Per Annum
Additional 140 litre Garbage (red)	\$165
Additional 240 litre Recycling (yellow)	\$142
Additional 240 litre Organics (green)	\$142
Additional 80 litre Glass (purple)	\$24

Some residents in the Elmhurst region live in the Pyrenees Shire where the rural general waste (red-lidded) bins are 240L and collected fortnightly, whereas the Ararat Rural City general waste bins are 140L and collected weekly. Pyrenees Shire Council also has the option to have additional kerbside bins. Pyrenees Shire residents can find out more information on the Pyrenees Shire Council's [website](#).

Challenges around larger general waste items and other items that could not go into the general (red) waste kerbside bins were mentioned in multiple submissions and during consultations. The frequency of these types of wastes was identified as infrequent and not a weekly requirement. The height of the skip bins at the four transfer stations was also raised as an issue for people who were unable to lift their waste into the bins. The Ararat and Lake Bolac Transfer Stations were suggested as better locations for this purpose since these sites have ramps that provide better ergonomics for disposing of very large items.

Concerns were raised regarding the disposal of damaged items after an emergency or natural disaster event, such as bushfire or flood. In these instances, provisions for waste disposal and clean up will be made so that they are designed specifically for the disaster event, such as providing options for disposing of damaged assets at sites close to the disaster and in liaison with affected landowners.

Compromise suggestions were made to have the transfer stations opened less frequently rather than closed altogether. Council has considered this suggestion and estimated the costs for running the transfer stations in various different arrangements, such as one day per week, fortnight, month, and per quarter. The costs to run all four transfer stations on this less frequent basis would still require an increase in revenue (ie rates) to cover the costs.

The Elmhurst and Moyston Transfer Stations can be opened twice a year to enable the disposal of items that cannot go into the kerbside bins. The gross cost for this biannual arrangement for two transfer stations is estimated to be approx. \$6,400, which would be reduced by fees and charges 'at the gate' and should be able to be managed within the existing Draft Budget 2025/26. Residents are still encouraged to utilise the kerbside bins where possible and request an additional bin if they require it. The Elmhurst and Moyston Transfer Stations would be open on a weekday and a weekend day during the same week every approx. six months, the days will be confirmed and communicated with local residents. The opening hours on those days will increase from the existing 2.5-3 hours per day to 6 hours per day. The fees and charges will be the same as the Ararat and Lake Bolac Transfer Stations. Section 2.3.1 of the Draft Budget 2025/26 has been updated to reflect this change to these services.

One of the issues that was unique to Elmhurst was that there had been a number of other service closures in the town in recent years and there are deeper concerns around the viability of the town if the transfer station were to close as well. The level of engagement from the Elmhurst community suggests there is a lot of potential for the Elmhurst community to work together to create a thriving town. Council encourages the people of Elmhurst to continue to talk to each other and pursue ideas. The Elmhurst Public Hall can be used as a venue for meetings and gatherings. The Hall is managed by the Elmhurst Public Hall Community Asset Committee and locals are encouraged to reach out to the Committee. The Draft Budget 2025/26 provides an increase of funding to the Community Asset Committees from \$4,400 per annum to \$6,600 per annum to support their activities.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

This report aligns with the Draft Council Plan 2025-29 in the following areas:

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at their 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 ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making.

Budget Implications

The Draft Budget has been prepared within the following parameters:

- The Draft Budget proposes the following differential rates - general rate - 100%, commercial and industrial rate - 135% of the general rate and farm rate - 39% of the general rate
- A 1.5% increase in the total amount received from general rates and charges;
- No increase in the Municipal Charge which will remain at \$96 per rateable property in 2025/2026;
- A balanced budget in terms of a cash result and an operating surplus of \$2.050 million in terms of an accrual accounting result;
- A net increase in cash and cash equivalents of \$0.588 million;
- A capital works program of \$12.437 million;
- No new loan borrowings; and
- Capital budgets have been prepared in accordance with good asset management principles.

More detailed information is contained in the Budget document.

Policy/Relevant Law

Council is required under Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020 to prepare a budget for each financial year. The budget contains the Financial Statements, a description of services and initiatives to be funded in the budget, service outcome indicators, and major initiatives to be undertaken during the financial year and the performance measures in relation to each major initiative.

Sustainability Implications

In developing the Draft Budget 2025/2026 all environmental, social and economic impacts have been considered.

Risk Assessment

Council must implement the principles of sound financial management, which includes managing financial risks faced by Council and ensuring that decisions are made and actions taken having regard to their financial effects on future generations.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

A summary of the engagement process and the submissions received is presented above.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council, having considered the Draft Budget 2025/2026 and having distributed the budget for community consultation, resolves as follows:

- 1 To adopt the Budget 2025/2026, comprising the 2025/2026 financial year plus the subsequent three financial years 2026/2027 to 2028/2029, pursuant to Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020**
- 2 To declares Rates and Charges for the 2025/2026 financial year as follows**

- a. **An amount of \$17,657,218 be declared as the amount which Council intends to raise by General Rates, Municipal Charge and Annual Service Charges which amount is calculated as follows:**

	Amount
General Rates	
Residential	\$7,329,002
Commercial	\$783,142
Industrial	\$252,677
Farm	\$6,144,421
Municipal Charge	\$643,104
Annual Service Charges	
Kerbside Collection Charges	\$2,504,872
TOTAL	\$17,657,218

- b. **A general residential rate of 0.3643 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value be declared for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026**
- c. **A commercial/industrial differential rate of 0.4918 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value be declared for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026**
- d. **A farm differential rate of 0.1421 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value be declared for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026**
- e. **Council resolves to adopt a municipal charge of \$96 per rateable assessment for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026**
- f. **Annual Service Charge be declared for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 on properties where the service is provided, as follows:**
- i. **Kerbside collection - 4 bin system \$470**
- ii. **Kerbside collection - 3 bin system \$417**
- iii. **Kerbside collection - additional 140 litre garbage \$165**
- iv. **Kerbside collection - additional 240 litre recycling \$142**
- v. **Kerbside collection - additional 240 litre organics \$142**
- vi. **Kerbside collection - additional 80 litre glass \$24**
- 3 To declare the Fees and Charges for the 2025/2026 financial year, contained in Section 6- Schedule of Fees and Charges of the Budget document.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Ararat Rural City Council Budget 2025/26 is provided is Attachment 3.4a

The Budget 2025/26 Community Consultation Summary is provided as Attachment 3.4b

3.5 CHANGES TO MEETING DATE - JUNE 2025

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21044

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 Statutory Meeting held on 12 November 2024, Council resolved that the Council Meetings be held on the last Tuesday of each month.

This report outlines a proposed change to the meeting date of the June 2025 Council Meeting, due to the National General Assembly falling on the last Tuesday of the month.

DISCUSSION

It is proposed to change the date of the June 2025 Council Meeting, as the National General Assembly is being held the same week.

Proposed changes to the current schedule are as follows:

- June 2025 Council Meeting will be set one week earlier to 17 June 2025

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

Advertising of Council Meeting dates is allocated in the Annual Budget

Policy/Relevant Law

Schedule set for Council Meetings, meetings advertised and placed on Council website as required under the Governance Rules.

Risk Assessment

None identified.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The change of Council Meeting dates was discussed at the Council briefing held on Tuesday 20 May 2025

Following adoption of this report an advertisement will be placed in a local newspaper and on Council's website advising the community of the changes to Council Meeting schedule for 2025

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Adopts the revised Council Meeting dates for 2025 as follows: 6.00pm - Tuesday 17 June 2025; and**
- 2. Advertises the dates and times of the Council Meeting dates for 2025 in a local newspaper and on Council's website.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments in relation to this item.

3.6 J-WARD LEASE EXTENTION

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: GOVERNANCE AND RISK LEAD
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21045

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

J-Ward was originally the Ararat County Gaol and later a psychiatric facility for the criminally insane. J-Ward officially closed in 1991 and in 1993 was opened as a museum providing tours. J-Ward is staffed by volunteers which form the committee known as Friends of J-Ward. Council currently has a lease with the Friends of J-Ward.

DISCUSSION

Friends of J-Ward are a group of dedicated volunteers who promote the rich history of the Gaol in our region. Council has had a lease in place with the Friends of J-Ward, for the use of J-Ward as a museum since 2005. The initial lease was for 15 years with an option of 2 further five-year leases.

The Friends of J-Ward have completed the original 15 years and acted on their first 5-year option that was from 2020 to 2025. This 5-year option is about to expire on the 8 June 2025. Council has received a letter from the Friends of J-Ward wishing to act on their second 5-year option that will see the current lease conclude on the 7 June 2030.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

- 2.3 Engage with Grampians and Local businesses to drive growth in high yield tourist outcomes.
- 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.

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications arising

Policy/Relevant Law

Lease agreement between Council and Friends of J-Ward

Sustainability Implications

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

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Friends of J-Ward

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council endorses Friends of J-Ward request to act of their second 5 year lease option**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

3.7 DISABILITY DROP OFF ZONE IN BARKLY STREET, ARARAT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21046

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

Ensuring accessibility for all members of the community is a fundamental aspect of an inclusive and functional public space. Establishing a designated disability drop-off area in Barkly Street is crucial for improving safety, convenience, and accessibility for individuals with disabilities and their carers. This report outlines the key reasons for implementing such a space and the benefits it will provide.

At the Council meeting of 25 February 2025 the disability drop off zone was approved to go out to community consultation through the Engage Ararat website. This report details the response from the community.

DISCUSSION

A designated area for disability vans and maxi taxis to safely unload their clients is essential for reducing hazards associated with on-street drop-offs. Without a dedicated space, vehicles may be forced to stop in unsafe locations, creating potential risks for passengers, pedestrians, and other road users. The report of 25 February 2025 suggests the implementation of a designated disability drop-off area at the bend outside Quinn & Co Eyewear in Barkly Street, Ararat.

Community engagement through the Engage Ararat website received five (5) responses as follows:

1. Great idea, not a good option on the corner. I can't remember the last time I saw a taxi parked in the taxi zone next to the pedestrian crossing. I believe this would be a better location.
2. Silly place to put it.
3. I am a motorcyclist and often use this park. There wasn't any consultation before this change was made. I note that it is used by vans dropping off goods to the businesses nearby. The other motorcycle parking at the pedestrian crossing will only cater for a single bike.
4. Great idea.
5. This will help a lot of people.

A better option for consideration by Council is the creation of dual use parking zones from the existing parallel loading zones in Barkly St. This would provide safe egress, away from traffic, for wheelchairs, with the added benefit of having multiple drop off locations along Barkly St.

The dual use zone would maintain existing loading zones for commercial vehicle use, while providing a ten-minute disability drop off zone to improve safety and access. This option will seamlessly integrate into the current parking layout in the CBD with no need for alterations. In addition to this Council proposes to undertake a review of the current adequacy of disability parking in Barkly Street to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the community.

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 service identified public needs.

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

There are no budget implications arising.

Policy/Relevant Law

- Road Management Plan
- Fair Access Policy
- Universal Design Process
- ARCC – Local Laws
- VicRoads Parking Standards

Sustainability Implications

This will provide greater accessibility to the CBD for people with accessibility requirements providing safety for all users.

Risk Assessment

Low risk – further assessment and mitigation will be undertaken as a part of the project development.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Community engagement through Engage Ararat website has been undertaken as part of this project.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. Council approves the creation of dual use parking zones from the existing parallel loading zones in Barkly St. The dual use zone would maintain existing loading zones for commercial vehicle use, while providing a ten-minute disability drop off zone to improve safety and access
2. Council approves a review of disability parking in Barkly Street, Ararat, CBD area in the 25/26 financial year.

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

3.8 KOKODA PARK TENNIS COURTS BUILDING

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: MAJOR PROJECTS LEAD
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21047

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 Kokoda Park Tennis Courts facility has been disused for a number of years and is falling into a state of disrepair with graffiti, rubbish and vandalism being reported by residents in the area.

This report discusses the options for the removal of the small site building at the location.

DISCUSSION

The Kokoda Park Tennis Courts are a facility no longer used for their intended purpose by the local community. The fencing and in particular the small building located next to the tennis courts are becoming an area for damage, vandalism, graffiti and a regular late night meeting place for people in the area.

Council has received complaints and customer requests from various residents in the area, relating to the ongoing issues with a request for the unused building to be demolished and removed.



Council's Building Works Coordinator and Civil Works Coordinator have both visited the site and advised that demolition is a simple job that can be undertaken internally.

It is recommended for the safety of the community that the tennis court building at Kokoda Park be demolished.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

- 4. Developing and Maintaining Key enabling Infrastructure.
- 4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, promote community wellbeing and safety, and align with Council's financial sustainability.

Budget Implications

Cost of demolition will come under the building maintenance budget.

Policy/Relevant Law

ARCC Asset Management Policy

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

Works are considered low risk

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Customer requests have initiated these works.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council approve the demolition of the small building and any ancillary assets related to the tennis courts at Kokoda Park Ararat.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

3.9 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21048

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 financial statements and performance indicators have been prepared for the period ended 30 April 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 \$30.707 million in revenue and \$28.005 million in expenses to 30 April 2025. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$2.702 million for the ten months ended 30 April 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 \$17.912 million has been recognised as income for the ten months ended 30 April 2025.

User fees account for 4% of the total budgeted income for 2024/25 and \$1.469 million has been received to 30 April 2025. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

Recurrent Operating Grants total \$8.362 million to 30 April 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 \$1.274 million to 30 April 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.

Non-Recurrent Operating Grants	Budget 2024/25 \$'000	Income 2024/25 \$'000	Unearned Income \$'000
Ararat Housing Transition	-	-	300
Digital Twin Victoria	-	5	949
Free Public WiFi Services	-	47	1,196
Supported Playgroups	65	55	-
Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy	-	-	36
CALD Outreach Workers Initiative	-	64	-
Tiny Towns Fund - Pomonal Community Hub	-	83	117
Natural Disaster Relief	-	160	-
Council Support Fund - Pomonal Fires	-	750	-
Centenary Park Dog Park	-	25	-
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	85	-
	65	1,274	2,598

Non-recurrent Capital Grants total \$0.474 million to 30 April 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.

Non-Recurrent Capital Grants	Budget 2024/25 \$'000	Income 2024/25 \$'000	Unearned Income \$'000
Mt William Road reconstruction	5,000	-	-
Back Bolac Road reconstruction	-	229	-
Churchill Avenue reconstruction	843	-	-
Pedestrian Infrastructure Program	-	20	50
Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Recreation Reserve Pavillion Redevelopment	-	-	50
Tatyoan Oval Upgrade Grant	-	225	-
Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Cobb & Co Stables	-	-	30
Pony Club Sports Arena	-	-	447
	5,843	474	577

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 \$1.235 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 ten months ended 30 April 2025 Council has incurred \$9.750 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 ten months ended 30 April 2025, Council has incurred \$9.580 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 \$8.099 million to 30 April 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 30 April 2025. Comparative figures have been provided as at 30 June 2024.

Council's current assets have increased by \$2.493 million from \$11.732 million as at 30 June 2024 to \$14.225 million as at 30 April 2025. Cash and cash equivalents have increased by \$5.818 million from \$3.049 million to \$8.867 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$0.073 million from \$5.212 million as at 30 June 2024 to \$5.285 million as at 30 April 2025.

Total liabilities have decreased from \$8.777 million in 2023/24 to \$8.062 million in 2024/25. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$0.024 million and trust funds and deposits have decreased by \$0.137 million. Unearned income/revenue decreased by \$0.197 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 \$5.818 million to \$8.867 million as at 30 April 2025.

Net cash of \$11.079 million was provided by operating activities, \$4.810 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.451 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	30/04/2025
Working capital <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	162%	219%
Loans and borrowings <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	1.71%	0.86%
Indebtedness <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	7.49%	7.97%
Rates concentration <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	73.82%	59.33%
Expenditure level <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	\$4,592	\$3,761
Indicator - Revenue level <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	\$1,993	\$2,002

Indicator	30/6/2024	30/04/2025
Indicator - Percentage of total rates collected 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. As at 30 April 2025 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$4.490 million compared to \$2.320 million as at 30 June 2024, an increase of \$2.170 million. In percentage terms 77.7% of the rates raised have been collected at 30 April 2025 compared to 78.9% up to 30 April 2024. 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.	88.1%	77.7%
Indicator - Asset Renewal & Upgrade <i>Measure - Asset renewal & Upgrade compared to depreciation</i> Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework – 40% to 130% 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.	124.63%	90.79%

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 Feb 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

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

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.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Council's financial performance reports will continue to be published monthly.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. The Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 30 April 2025 be received and adopted.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators are provided as Attachment 3.9

SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS

4.1 2024/2025 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - APRIL 2025

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 21049

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 Council has approved its 2024/2025 Capital Works Program as a pivotal component of the current budget. With a substantial capital works investment totalling \$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 for approximately 1.5 kilometres
- 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 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 30 April 2025, 47% of the budget is expended.

Buangor Ben Nevis Road plans are complete and the Cultural Heritage Management Plan has been received, and stage two of Mt William Road is expected to commence once the CHMP is received which is expected by the end of May 2025.

Additional resealing and OTTA seal works commenced in April 2025.

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
PROPERTY CAPITAL					
Property Capital	\$270,000		\$241,628	91%	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. .
Ararat Library Upgrade	\$200,000		\$226,496	113%	Works have been complete.
Tatyoan Oval, Drainage, Irrigation & Resurfacing	\$333,500 \$83,500 Council \$250,000 CFNP		\$339,437	103%	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.
TOTAL PROPERTY			\$807,924	101%	
PLANT & EQUIPMENT					
Book stock - Library Book Replacement	\$40,000		\$41,261	103%	Fully expended for 2024/2025
TOTAL PLANT & EQUIPMENT			\$41,261	103%	
ROADS			-	-	
Gravel Road Sheetting, Widening & Alternative Sealing	\$1,800,000	-	\$1,863,703	104%	Resheetting, widening and alternative seal works have been completed on a number of roads including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alexandra Oval resheetting Geelong Road Shoulders Bowen Place (OTTA) Railway Road (OTTA) Greenhill Drive (OTTA) Warrayatkin Road (OTTA) Nott Road (OTTA) Leach Road (OTTA) Grahams Road (OTTA) Tunnel Road (OTTA) Sugarloaf Road (OTTA) Tatyoan North Road (OTTA) Old Brewery Road (OTTA)
Reseal Program	\$1,000,000	-	\$899,219	90%	Reseal works are 90% complete for the current financial year, additional works bought forward

					from the 25/26 program is currently underway.
Mt William Road (24/25 - HSVPP Funding)	\$6,250,000	-	\$156,193	2%	These works will commence on receipt of final cultural heritage management plan which is expected by the end of May 2025. The EMAC CHMP has been received for works over Fiery Creek.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road	\$2,143,000	\$68,522	\$159,289	7%	Plans and technical reporting have been completed. The cultural heritage management plan has been received. Finalisation of the native vegetation offsets is progressing.
Weighbridge Place, Lake Bolac			\$134,772		Asphalting works at Weighbridge Place have been completed. 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	\$800,000	\$338,450	\$263,311	33%	Concrete footpaths are complete, road surface removal has been undertaken, stabilisation is commencing and kerb and channel works are underway. Works are to be completed by 30 June 2025 in line with LRCI funding.
Webb Street, Ararat	\$700,000		\$12,419	2%	Works will be undertaken in conjunction with works on Churchill Avenue.
Urban Road Gravel to Seal	\$700,00		\$995,992	142%	Works for this year's program have been completed at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	\$100,000	\$	\$72,421	72%	Priority works have been completed in November 24. Other works are currently being prioritised.

Bridges	\$80,000	\$10,727	\$98,274	123%	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	\$400,000		\$443,531	111%	Council's footpath program has been fully expended. Other costs within this budget include works on Tunnel Track, Pomonal which was a funded project and make up part of the overrun.
Urban Drainage Works	\$750,000		\$387,255	52%	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	\$239,000	\$84,500	\$309,106	129%	Committed works for Kerb and Channel in George Road is due for completion by 30 June 2025.
Miscellaneous			\$367,326		These works include finalisation of works at Gordon Street Reserve and Wilson Street construction and small projects carried over from previous years.
TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE		\$502,199	\$6,162,811	40%	
TOTAL CAPITAL WORKS		\$502,199	\$7,011,996	47%	

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	\$1,000,000	\$313,911		\$313,911	69%	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		<p>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.</p> <p>Funding has been received as part of the Tiny Towns Funding Program which will help progress Stage 1 of this project.</p> <p>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>

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:

- 1. That Council receive the Capital Works Program - April 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.

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 21 May 2025

Matters discussed at the briefing:

- Draft Budget Submissions
- Budget 2025/26
- Revenue and Rating Strategy
- Financial Plan
- Community Vision 2035 and Council Plan 2025-2029 Community Feedback
- Disability Parking Space - Dual use loading zone
- JWard Lease extension
- ESVF
- Change of June Council meeting date
- Kokoda Park Tennis Court Facilities
- Hooklift Truck
- Land Sale
- Capital Works Program
- Monthly Performance Report
- Audit & Risk Committee Appointment
- CEO Employment and Remuneration Chair Appointment
- 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

No Committee Minutes/Reports received

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 – Audit and Risk Committee Independent Member Appointment
- Item 9.2 – CEO Employment and Remuneration Chair Appointment
- Item 9.3 – Supply and Delivery of one new Hooklift Truck
- Item 9.4 – Sale of Industrial Land

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:

- 1. The confidentiality of the report in relation to Item 9.1 and 9.2 not be lifted on adoption of the motion**
- 2. The confidentiality of the decision in relation to Item 9.1 and 9.2 be lifted on adoption of the motion**
- 3. The confidentiality of the report and decision in relation to Confidential Agenda Item 9.3 and 9.4 not be lifted on adoption of the motion.**