



Ararat Rural City

AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 30 September 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 26 August 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 PUBLIC TRANSPERANCY POLICY

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: GOVERNANCE AND RISK LEAD
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24006

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

Under the Local Government Act 2020, Section 57, a council must adopt and maintain a public transparency policy which gives effect to the transparency principles and describes the ways in which Councils information is to be made publicly available. This is a revision of the policy which was adopted in 2020.

DISCUSSION

This policy supports Council in its ongoing drive for good governance and the importance of open and accountable conduct and how council information is to be made publicly available.

This policy meets the Act's overarching governance principle of ensuring the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information outlined in section 9, and gives effect to the Public Transparency Principles outlined in section 58.

This policy has been reviewed against the model policies from the Local Government Inspectorate, and the main changes are administrative. Some minor changes and rewording have been made to improve the updated legislation and streamline the document for better usability.

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 their centre through effective financial management, well measured risk management and implementation of effective community engagement practices

Budget implications

There are no budget implications in relation to the development of the Public Transparency Policy.

Policy / Relevant Law

Council must adopt and maintain a Public Transparency Policy under section 57 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act). This policy gives effect to the *Public Transparency Principles* outlined in section 58 of the Act

Sustainability Implications

Environmental, social and economic impacts have been considered in the development of the Public Transparency Policy.

Risk Assessment

The development of the Public Transparency Policy provides clarity and transparency for Councillors and delegated committee members.

Innovation and Continuous Improvements

The development of the Public Transparency Policy will ensure public transparency, good governance and community engagement is consistent.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This policy was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on the 9 September 2025

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council adopts the Public Transparency Policy**

ATTACHMENTS

The Public Transparency Policy is provided as Attachment 3.1.

3.2 COUNCILLOR GIFT POLICY

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: GOVERNANCE AND RISK LEAD
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24007

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

Under the Local Government Act 2020, Section 138, a council must adopt and maintain a Councillor gift policy and it must include procedures for the maintenance of a gift register and any other matters prescribed by the regulations. The Council must also review and update the gift policy. This policy was last updated in 2021.

DISCUSSION

This Policy provides guidance to Councillors and members of Delegated Committees about receiving or being offered gifts, benefits or hospitality in connection with their role as Councillor. The giving and receiving of gifts, benefits and hospitality from a person or organisation may result in a potential conflict of interest or breach of the Act. The objective of this policy is to limit the number of gifts made or accepted and to promote public confidence in the integrity of Council.

This Policy has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of section 138 of the Act. It includes procedures for the maintenance of a Councillor Gifts Register and sets out the minimum value of disclosable gifts. It has also been reviewed and benchmarked against like policies that have been put on the Local Government Inspectorate website as model policies. The main change to this policy is the use of everyday language as opposed to the last revision which quoted much of the Local Government Act 2020.

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 their centre through effective financial management, well measured risk management and implementation of effective community engagement practices.

Budget implications

There are no budget implications in relation to the development of the Councillor Gift Policy.

Policy / Relevant Law

The following sections of the Local Government Act 2020:

Section 3 - Definitions - *Gift*

Section 3 - Definitions - *Gift disclosure threshold*

Section 127 - General Conflict of Interest

Section 128 - Material Conflict of Interest

Section 128(3)h and (4) - Disclosable Gifts

Sections 132-136 - Personal Interests Returns

Section 137 - Anonymous Gift Not to be Accepted,

Section 309 - Certain Gifts Not to be Accepted.

Sustainability Implications

Environmental, social and economic impacts have been considered in the development of the Councillor Gift Policy.

Risk Assessment

Clarity and transparency of Council Policies.

Innovation and Continuous Improvements

The regular review and adoption of Council's policies will ensure that Council continues to work in accordance with its established procedures, and within legislative requirements.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This policy was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on the 9 September 2025

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council adopts the Councillor Gift Policy**

Attachments

The Councillors Gift Policy is provided as Attachment 3.2.

3.3 ARARAT TOWN HALL EXTERNAL LIGHTING POLICY

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: PERFORMING ARTS COORDINATOR
DEPARTMENT: ARTS AND CULTURE
REFERENCE: 24008

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 Ararat Town Hall External Lighting Policy sets a transparent and consistent process for managing requests to illuminate the Town Hall façade, balancing community engagement with Council priorities and operational capacity. White remains the default illumination, with alternative colours permitted for significant civic, cultural, or community events no more than once every 14 days. Requests are assessed against significance, community relevance, alignment with Council values, and operational feasibility, with approved illuminations scheduled in the Town Hall Lighting Calendar.

DISCUSSION

The Ararat Town Hall is a key civic and heritage asset. In recent years, requests to illuminate the Town Hall in colours other than white have been managed on an ad hoc basis, leading to inconsistency and uncertainty for applicants and staff. The proposed policy provides a transparent, consistent, and operationally feasible framework for managing these requests.

The policy addresses the need for fairness and transparency in approvals, maintaining operational feasibility and safety, and recognising significant civic, cultural, or community events. Limiting alternative illumination to once every 14 days and applying clear selection criteria balances community requests with Council priorities and resources. While some applicants may be disappointed if their request is not prioritised, particularly when competing with nationally or locally significant events, the weighted scoring system and published criteria ensure decisions are made consistently and transparently.

Adopting the policy provides Council with a structured approach to manage illumination requests while supporting community recognition, operational efficiency, and good governance. It removes ad hoc decision-making and ensures the Town Hall is used in a way that reflects civic and heritage values.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

2. BUILDING ROBUST LOCAL ECONOMIES

The policy indirectly contributes to economic development by promoting Ararat as a vibrant and culturally rich community. Events highlighted through Town Hall illumination can attract visitors and support local businesses, aligning with the objective to develop strong relationships that build and strengthen a diverse local economy.

5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

The policy promotes community engagement, social cohesion, and cultural recognition by enabling participation in civic and cultural events through the illumination of the Town Hall. It supports inclusivity, celebrates diversity, and strengthens community identity, directly contributing to objectives 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3.

Developing and Maintaining Key Enabling Infrastructure

The Town Hall is a key civic asset, and the policy ensures its use is managed to deliver public value. Systematic scheduling, assessment of operational feasibility, and maintenance considerations align with the objective to manage, maintain, and utilise infrastructure to benefit the community effectively.

Strong and Effective Governance

By establishing clear criteria, a weighted scoring system, and a transparent approval process, the policy demonstrates strong governance and risk management. It aligns with Council objectives for responsible decision-making, operational accountability, and effective community engagement, ensuring public value is delivered consistently.

Budget Implications

While the policy itself does not require a dedicated budget, approved illumination requests may incur minor operational, staffing, and maintenance costs. These costs are expected to be accommodated within existing operational budgets.

Policy/Relevant Law

None identified

Sustainability Implications

Potential negative implications of the policy are minor increases in operational costs and the risk of community dissatisfaction or technical issues if illumination requests cannot be accommodated.

Risk Assessment

A formal risk assessment is not required for this policy; however, operational, safety, and reputational risks are considered during the assessment of illumination requests and managed through standard Council procedures.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The policy introduces a structured and transparent approach to Town Hall illumination, supporting continuous improvement and enabling future adoption of energy-efficient or programmable lighting technologies.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The policy ensures transparency and fairness by allowing community groups and individuals to submit Town Hall illumination requests, with priority given to events of civic, cultural, or community significance. Internal consultation with Council teams ensures operational feasibility and OHS compliance, while collaboration with external organisations may occur for nationally or internationally recognised events.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council adopt the Ararat Town Hall External Lighting Policy, and**
- 2. Council authorise the CEO (or delegate) to assess and approve illumination requests in line with the policy criteria and operational requirements,**
or
- 3. Maintain the current ad hoc approach, noting the risk of inconsistency and perceived unfairness.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Ararat Town Hall External Lighting Policy is provided as Attachment 3.3.

3.4 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24009

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 31 August 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 \$20.296 million in revenue and \$6.647 million in expenses to 31 August 2025. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$13.649 million for the two months ended 31 August 2025.

Income

Rates and charges account for 54% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26. Rates and charges are recognised when the rates have been raised, not when the income has been received. An amount of \$17.914 million has been recognised as income for the two months ended 31 August 2025.

User fees account for 5% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26 and \$0.455 million has been received to 31 August 2025. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

Recurrent Operating Grants total \$1.400 million to 31 August 2025, including \$0.627 million from the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission for general purpose grants and \$0.406 million for the local roads grants.

Non-recurrent Operating Grants total \$0.480 million to 31 August 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 2025/26 \$'000	Income 2025/26 \$'000	Unearned Income \$'000
Ararat Housing Transition	-	-	300
Digital Twin Victoria	-	-	950
Free Public WiFi Services	-	-	1,243
Supported Playgroups	67	12	-
Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy	-	-	36
CALD Outreach Workers Initiative	129	129	-
Tiny Towns Fund - Pomonal Community Hub	-	29	91
Natural Disaster Relief	-	158	-
Council Support Fund - Pomonal Fires	-	-	-
Engage - Youth Events Activities & Happenings	55	-	-
Centenary Park Dog Park	100	-	25
Queen Street Housing Program	-	152	5,544
Ararat Hills Adventure Sports Precinct	-	-	400
Early Career Educators	-	-	103
Ararat Active Bike Network	266	-	-
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting and Accessibility	-	-	280
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	-	-
	617	480	8,971

Non-recurrent Capital Grants have not been recognised as income up to 31 August 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 2025/26 \$'000	Income 2025/26 \$'000	Unearned Income \$'000
Pedestrian Infrastructure Program	-	-	50
Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Recreation Reserve Pavillion Redevelopment	-	-	25
Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Cobb & Co Stables	-	-	30
Pony Club Sports Arena	1,490	-	433
Queen Street Housing Program	-	-	1,683
Ararat Library Lighting & Exterior Upgrade	-	-	51
TAC Safe Local Roads and Streets Program	-	-	468
Jack & Jill Kindergarten Upgrade	-	-	75
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	-	10
	1,490	-	2,825

Note

It is important to note the following:

1. The Grants Operating (recurrent) figure in the Original Budget was \$8.909 million and in the Current Budget is recorded as \$4.721 million, as \$4.188 million was paid to Council in 2024/25 by the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission (VLGGC) for the 2025/26 financial year. Council has still received the expected VLGGC income, to be spent in 2025/26, however it will be reported over two financial years.
2. Unearned revenue received in prior years has been adjusted between the Original Budget and Current Budget with an additional \$6.659 million for Grants Operating (non-recurrent), \$0.386 million for Grants Capital (recurrent) and \$2.282 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 2025/26 financial year.

3. These changes in the budget, plus the note reported under expenses, create a change in the reported surplus position from a projected surplus of \$2.050 million to a surplus of \$3.028 million for 2025/26. The year-end variance is a deficit of \$0.556 million when the actual year to date expenses are compared to the year to date budget.

Expenses

Employee Costs account for approximately 37% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the two months ended 31 August 2025 Council has incurred \$1.867 million in employee costs.

Materials and Services account for approximately 28% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the two months ended 31 August 2025, Council has incurred \$2.763 million in materials and services costs. There are a number of projects, including those carried forward from 2024/25 that are expected to be completed before the end of the financial year.

Note

It is important to note the following:

There has been an increase in expenditure on materials and services from \$9.186 million in the Original Budget to \$13.357 million in the Current Budget for 2025/26. This has resulted from a carry forward amount of \$4.171 million from the 2024/25 financial year surplus and unspent grant funds which will be used to complete the projects in 2025/26.

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 31 August 2025. Comparative figures have been provided as at 30 June 2025.

Council's current assets have increased by \$17.278 million from \$17.747 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$35.025 million as at 31 August 2025. Cash and cash equivalents have decreased by \$0.367 million from \$14.841 million to \$14.474 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$17.640 million from \$2.835 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$20.475 million as at 31 August 2025.

Total liabilities have increased from \$16.464 million in 2024/25 to \$18.263 million in 2025/26. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$1.059 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$0.119 million. Unearned income/revenue increased by \$2.845 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 \$14.841 million have decreased by \$0.367 million to \$14.474 million as at 31 August 2025.

Net cash of \$0.177 million was provided by operating activities, \$0.413 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.131 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	30/6/2025	31/08/2025
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	122%	211%
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	0.86%	0.65%
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	7.83%	9.23%
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	49.39%	88.32%
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	\$4,936	\$890
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	\$2,002	\$2,038

Indicator	30/6/2025	31/08/2025
<p>Indicator - Percentage of total rates collected</p> <p>The internal audit conducted in 2019 on Rates Revenue and Rate Debtor Management found no routine or regular reporting of large and long outstanding rates debtors.</p> <p>The outstanding Rates Debtors is reported in the Annual Financial report.</p> <p>As at 31 August 2025 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$19.336 million compared to \$2.466 million as at 30 June 2025, an increase of \$16.870 million. In percentage terms 6.6% of the rates raised have been collected at 31 August 2025 compared to 6.6% up to 31 August 2024. Outstanding rates are currently charged 10% interest.</p> <p>Council issues approximately 7,900 rate notices. In 2024/25 there were 2,158 assessments paying by instalments compared with 2,640 assessments in 2024/25.</p>	87.8%	6.6%
<p>Indicator - Asset Renewal & Upgrade</p> <p><i>Measure - Asset renewal & Upgrade compared to depreciation</i></p> <p>Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 40% to 130%</p> <p>Assessment of whether council assets are being renewed or upgraded as planned. It compares the rate of spending on existing assets through renewing, restoring, replacing or upgrading existing assets with depreciation. Ratios higher than 1.0 indicate there is a lesser risk of insufficient spending on Council's asset base.</p>	100.75%	22.83%

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 two months of the year to pay for the outstanding accounts at year end.

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 31 August 2025 be received and adopted.**

ATTACHMENTS

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

SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS

4.1 HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM PROJECT UPDATE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24010

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 provides an update on the Housing Support Program – Community Enabling Infrastructure Stream (HSP-CEIS) funded project at 87 Queen St, also known as the former Prestige Mill site. Demolition has commenced on the site and is progressing well. Clarification has been obtained on the extents of the former cemetery located on the site, and this has been accepted by Heritage Victoria. With the extents confirmed, planning for the enabling infrastructure can progress.



DISCUSSION

Recap

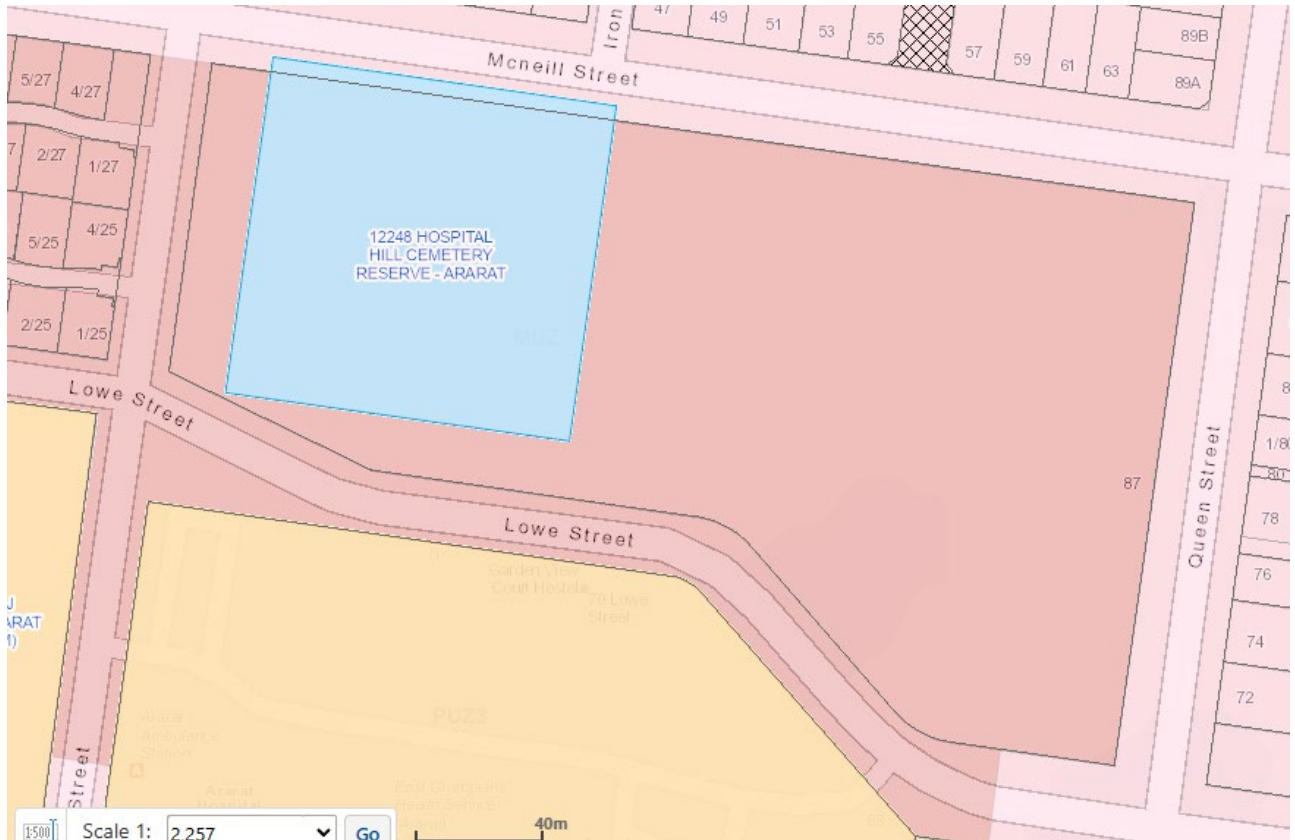
The HSP-CEIS grant helps to resolve the barriers that have previously prevented this site from being financially viable to develop into assets that could provide better value for the community, such as housing. The grant unlocks the site by funding the cost of enabling infrastructure for 90 new dwellings, including planning, detailed designs, construction costs for roads, footpaths, kerb & channel, drainage, as well as costs for utility infrastructure such as power, water, sewerage, and NBN. The grant does not fund the cost to build the homes, however with the major barriers removed, private investment into housing will become viable.

Progress to Date

Demolition and removal of the former Prestige Mill factory is well underway, see images below:

Photo taken 16 August 2024	Photo taken 10 September 2025
	
	

During the planning phase for this project, it was identified that the details available for the Victorian Heritage Inventory for the Hospital Hill Cemetery Reserve - Ararat (H7423-0068) was very limited, and this created risks for the project. A heritage investigation has been undertaken to properly map the extents of the former cemetery with a five-metre buffer, and this has now been accepted by Heritage Victoria. The extents can be viewed on VicPlan (<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan/> then turn on the heritage layers use the left-hand legend and tick on 'heritage'). This is shown in the image below:



(Image: Extent of former cemetery reserve, with a five metre buffer around the boundary. Source: VicPlan)

Planning for enabling infrastructure can now continue to progress for the areas external to the former cemetery extents.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

1. GROWING OUR PLACE

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

1.2 Support innovative housing models that work to overcome market failure and create the capacity to increase the population of Ararat Rural City.

Budget Implications

This project is funded by a \$7.3 million grant from the Federal Government's Housing Support Program: Community Enabling Infrastructure Fund.

Policy/Relevant Law

Heritage Act 2017

Sustainability Implications

Not applicable

Risk Assessment

The establishment of the former cemetery extents has removed the project risks of unintentionally disturbing burial sites at the project location during delivery of the enabling infrastructure.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Council officers have liaised closely with the site owners on this project. Opportunities for community engagement are anticipated as planning for the project progresses.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council receives the Housing Support Program Project Update report.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

4.2 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24011

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 2025/2026 Capital Works Program as a fundamental component of the current budget. With a substantial capital works investment totalling \$12.437 million, the budget primarily targets infrastructure enhancements.

Key initiatives include:

- Year two of Mount William Road Construction - supported by Federal Government funding.
- Buangor Ben Nevis Road Construction - including replacement of bridge one at the Warrak end of the project.
- The covered sports arena at the Ararat Pony Club facilities.
- 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 2025/2026 fiscal year.

DISCUSSION

Council's 2025/2026 Capital Works Program continues our shift to reintroduction of larger road and bridge construction projects post-pandemic. The program's budget has substantial state and federal funding targeting road construction works and road safety initiatives.

The focus for 2025/2026 remains on renewing and updating Council assets, leveraging in-house capabilities, and supporting local employment and contractors, and the tender of works with the expectation of possible budget savings in a softening construction market.

Key areas include:

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

Budget Status:

As of 31 August 2025, 7% of the budget is expended.

Mt William is expected to commence work in late August with final cultural heritage inductions now complete, design time frames for bridge one on Buangor Ben Nevis Road will be confirmed in coming weeks and commencement dates confirmed.

Tenders for the Ararat Pony Club and Jack and Jill Kindergarten projects are expected to go out to market by the end of August.

Final plans are being completed for the Safe Local Roads and Streets program with detailed design due to the funding body by late September with works to commence either by in-house team or tendered to the market.

**30 SEPTEMBER 2025
COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA**

The works on Webb Street funded through the Roads to Recovery Funding is commencing with services being altered and road works to commence in September with the return of better weather.

	Budget	Committed/ Contracted	Expended	%	Notes
PROPERTY - CAPITAL					
Property Capital	\$911,000				\$361,00 Council Co-Contribution added for Buangor Pavilion Redevelopment from approval at Council Meeting 29 July 2025.
Funding Property Capital Co-Contribution Allocations	-\$765,388				
Remaining Budget	\$145,612	-	-		
Mininera Recreation Reserve Toilet Upgrade		\$162,960		111%	
TOTAL PROPERTY CAPITAL		\$162,960	-	111%	
PLANT & EQUIPMENT					
Vehicle Purchases	\$240,000	\$217,490		90%	Replacement of 4 x Utilities and SUV
Major Plan Purchases	\$260,000				
Computer Equipment	\$100,000				
Book stock - Library Book Replacement	\$40,000				
TOTAL PLANT & EQUIPMENT		\$217,490	-	33%	
INFRASTRUCTURE					
Works by others					
Woorndoo Streatham Road	\$683,000	-	-		Works for this road is being undertaken by Moyne Shire. The budget amount is Council's contribution.
Roads					
Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing	\$1,800,000	-	\$438,546	29%	\$1.967m of this budget expended in 2024/2025. Approved Council Meeting 29 July 2025. Works include OTTA seal of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nott Road, Ararat (Pyrenees Hwy end) Sugarloaf Road
Transferred from other Capital Works Line Items	\$1,500,000				
Total	\$3,300,000				
Reseal Program	\$1,000,000	-	-	100%	Fully Expended 24/25

**30 SEPTEMBER 2025
COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA**

Buangor Ben Nevis Road	\$1,000,000	-	-		These works will make up part of project in Funded projects - Roads
Urban Road Gravel to Seal	\$1,000,000	-	\$17,089	2%	Works Allocated for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alexandra Avenue (in conjunction with SLRSP Funding) Coral & McNeil Stret Maude Street (in conjunction with Pony Club Project)
Road Reconstruction Program	\$2,324,000	-			
Buangor Ben Nevis Road Contribution	-\$500,000				
Mt William Road Contribution	-\$1,250,000				
Bike Network Contribution	-\$133,000				
Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing	-\$400,000				
Remaining Budget	\$41,000		\$29,688	72%	Churchill Avenue final payments for maintenance between completion and sealing.
Major Patching	\$100,000	-	-	0%	
Bridges	\$0	-	\$385	0%	Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing
Footpath Renewal Program	\$400,000	\$33,750	\$12,481	10.5%	Works Allocated for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Street (Vincent to Queen St) - Committed Taylor Street (Barkly to View Point - in conjunction with SLRSP Funding)
Urban Drainage Works	\$750,000				
Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing	-\$400,000	-	\$5706	1%	
Remaining Budget	\$350,000				
Kerb and Channel	\$0	-	\$2,941		Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing
TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE		\$33,750	\$506,836	5%	
TOTAL CAPITAL WORKS		\$414,200	\$506,836	7%	

FUNDED PROJECTS - PROPERTY CAPITAL

Current Funded Projects	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Community Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Expended (25/26)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Former Cobb & Co Staging Stables (Disaster Recovery Heritage Program)	\$60,000	\$60,000	Nil		\$1,237		\$1,237	2%	Ararat Maintenance Plumbing has commenced works on this project. Scaffolding has been erected in late August.
Ararat Pony Club - Covered Sports Area (Play our Way Program)	\$1,490,000	\$1,490,000	Nil		\$14,270	\$175.40	\$14,445	1%	Tender documents currently being compiled for design and construction of pavilion. Expected to be out to market by September 2025.
Centenary Park - Dog Park (Open Space for Everyone Program)	\$112,000	\$100,000	\$12,000		\$1,172	\$5,785	\$6,957	6%	Detailed design being completed inhouse and to be approved by funding body in September 2025. Works to commence via inhouse team by November 2025.
Buangor Sports Pavilion Redevelopment (Tiny Towns Program)	\$631,000	\$50,000	\$581,000 (\$220k Property Capital) (\$361k Property Reserve)		\$303	\$2,727	\$3,030	<1%	Detailed design currently being completed by Contractor. Funding requires building approval by September 2025.
Jack and Jill Kindergarten Redevelopment (Building Blocks improvement grants program)	\$750,000	\$745,000			\$26,000		\$26,000	3%	Documentation expected from Architect in the coming weeks and project will go to tender.
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade (Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)	\$700,000	\$560,000	\$120,000	\$20,000	NA	\$1500	-	<1%	New Grant Received July 2025. Schematic drawings to be approved and works can commence.
Gordon Street Cricket Nets Upgrade (Australian Cricket Infrastructure Grant)	\$39,985	\$15,000	\$24,985		NA		-	0%	Orders have been completed for synthetic carpet and concrete works to be undertaken.
Pomonal Hall Battery Project (Powering Resilience in the Regions Program)	\$148,760	\$141,407	\$7,353		NA	\$7,353	\$7,353	5%	Council have paid their contribution to the project. Tenders closed on 2 September 2025 with 7 submissions received. Project is currently in evaluation.

Ararat Library Lighting and Exterior Upgrade. (Living Libraries Infrastructure Program 2024-25)	\$51,026	\$51,026			NA	\$2,822	\$2,822	5%	Quotations for lighting works are currently being sought. External painting designs are being considered.
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FUNDED PROJECTS - ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Current Funded Projects	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
Webb Street Reconstruction (Roads to Recovery 24/25)	\$400,000	\$400,000		\$13,822	\$2176	\$15,998	3%	Services and levels are currently being set and road works will commence in September with the return of better weather.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road (Roads to Recovery 24/25 & 25/26)	\$3,143,000	\$1,643,000	\$500,000 (Roads Program 25/26) \$1,000,000 (ARCC Capital Works 25/26)	\$269,592	\$15,133	\$284,725	9%	Staging of works was reported and approved at Council Meeting August 2025. Final ecology works are currently being finalised for works to commence early in the new year.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road (SILRP Funding 26/26)	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000						Council contribution of \$1,250,000 required in 26/27 Budget
Mt William Road (HSVPP Funding 24/25)	\$6,250,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,250,000 (Roads Program 25/26)	\$217,582	\$31,534	\$249,116	3%	Works commenced on site 1 September 2025. Stabilising works have been undertaken in the first section of works along with tree removal and pruning.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road - Bridge 7001.14 Design and Construct (Roads to Recovery - 25/26)	\$1,300,000	\$1,300,000		\$68,723	\$2,657	\$71,380	5%	Contract No. 731 - Awarded July 2025 \$1.109m - Road and Bridge Pty Ltd \$100,000 allowance for Permits and Vegetation offsets. Works are scheduled to commence in mid October.
McCrows Road Bridge (Roads to Recovery)	\$350,000	\$350,000		\$17,738	\$34	\$17,772	5%	Budget is estimate only. Tender is being finalised to go out to market.
Ararat Active Bike Network (Active Transport Fund)	\$399,000	\$266,000	\$133,000 (Roads Program 25/26)	\$13,525	\$7,339	\$20,864	5%	Detailed designs are being finalised and tenders for the works are expected to be called in September 2025.
Banfield Street - School Crossing (Road Safety Program - School Safety Improvements 20-25)	\$19,009	\$19,009		\$8,244	\$4,085	\$12,329	65%	These works are complete.
Queen Street Housing Support Program	\$7,380,000	\$7,380,000		\$152,580	\$152,796	\$305,377	3%	Sub-division planning and associated reporting are still in progress before submission to Council. Demolition works are progressing.

(Housing Support Program – Community Enabling Infrastructure)								
SAFE LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS PROGRAM								
View Point, Tobin & Taylor St Intersections	\$224,000	\$224,000		\$581	\$50	\$631	<1%	The detailed design for this project is expected to be complete by early September 2025, then works will be tendered. This project will be run in conjunction with Footpath project for Taylor Street.
Ingor Street – Raised Crossing	\$110,000	\$110,000		\$600	\$1051	\$1,651	1%	The detailed design for this project is expected to be complete by early September 2025, then works will be tendered.
King Street – Raised Crossing	\$110,000	\$110,000		\$4,702	\$5,624	\$10,326	9%	Detailed design is nearing completion and works will be undertaken by an in-house team.
View Point & High St Intersection	\$117,000	\$117,000		\$1,526	\$6,431	\$7,957	7%	Detailed design is nearing completion and works will be undertaken by an in-house team.
Moore & Princes Street Intersection	\$131,000	\$131,000		\$145		\$145	<1%	The detailed design for this project is expected to be complete by early September 2025, then works will be tendered.
Vincent Street & Alexandra Avenue – Raised Crossing	\$321,000	\$321,000		\$239	\$50	\$289	<1%	The detailed design for this project is expected to be complete by early September 2025, then works will be tendered. This project will be run in conjunction with Gravel to Seal project for Alexandra Avenue.
Queen & Moore Street Roundabout	\$548,000	\$548,000		\$1,531	\$593	\$2,124	<1%	The detailed design for this project is expected to be complete by early September 2025, then works will be tendered.
SAFE SYSTEM PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (23/24)								
Barkly Street Raised Crossing	\$312,232	\$312,232		\$398	\$303	\$701	<1%	This project is awaiting final design approval from the department of transport for the works to commence.
High Street Raised Crossing								This project is ready to commence and will be tendered in the coming month.

FUNDED PROJECTS - MISCELLANEOUS

Current Funded Projects	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Expended (25/26)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Roadside Weeds and Pest Program 25/26 (Funding of the same name)	\$74,135	\$74,135		NA		-	0%	The tenders have closed for this project and is currently being evaluated.
Sport & Active Recreation Strategy (Local Sports Infrastructure Funding 23/24)	\$55,000	\$40,000	\$15,000	\$12,452		\$12,452	23%	CommunityVibe is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been undertaken and draft reporting is underway.
Community Road Safety Action Plan (TAC Local Govt Funding)	\$49,540	\$59,540		\$437	\$454	\$891	1%	DWB Engineering is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been completed and draft reporting is being compiled
Unlocking Ararat North East (Streamlining for Growth 22/23)	\$85,000	\$85,000		NA	\$4,578		5%	Beveridge Williams is undertaking the works for this project. They are working with our Planning Department and Strategic Project Lead to progress the outcomes of the funding.
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade - Participation Initiative. (Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)	\$50,000	\$50,000		NA			0%	This grant was received in July 2025 and will run in conjunction with the infrastructure project for Sports Lighting and accessibility upgrades.
Lake Bolac Kindergarten Carpark (YMCA received funding for work)	\$80,339	\$80,339		\$61,358	\$12,200	\$73,558	91%	Funding was received by the YMCA to undertake the carpark works at Lake Bolac Kindergarten. Council procured the contractor and project managed the works with the funding amount being paid to Council on completion of the works. Work are now complete.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The key financial drivers align strongly with the thrust of the Council Plan 2025-2029, particularly the following:

- 4.1** Ensure that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council's Asset Plan 2025-2035.
- 4.2** Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.
- 4.3** Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic are mindful of intergenerational equity and enhance community wellbeing and safety. These approaches will explore strategic use of debt to fund long-term assets and ensure Council's financial sustainability.
- 6.1** Deliver responsible budget outcomes, linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation, and rating fairness.

Budget Implications

The 2025/2026 Capital Works Program represents a significant element of Council's 2025/2026 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 2025/2026 Capital Works Program complies with the program funded in the 2025/2026 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 2025/2026 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 2025/2026 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 2025/2026 Capital Works Program has been developed as an element of the 2025/2026 Budget. There was extensive community engagement undertaken prior to adoption.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

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

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

4.3 ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE (AUGUST 2025)

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24012

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 Plan 2025-29 contains 53 actions to be undertaken during the 2025/2026 (Year 1) financial year under the strategic objectives:

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

These actions are provided in the Annual Plan 2025/26 and their progress is reported monthly at Council Meetings.

DISCUSSION

The Annual Plan 2025/26 contains 53 actions. Progress on these actions are summarised below, with the change from the previous monthly report shown in brackets.

Status	Number of Actions
Completed	1
In progress 51-99%	4 (+2)
In progress 0-50%	33
Not Started	4 (-2)
Ongoing	11

Further details on each action is provided in the table below.

Council Plan Objectives	Actions	Progress	Officer Comment
1.1 Develop a strategic land use planning framework with annual targets to support sustainable urban growth.	1.1.1 Complete a review of Council's Planning Scheme as required under Section 12B of the Planning Environment Act 1987	Not Started	The Planning Practice Note for 'Review of Planning Schemes' is currently being reviewed by the Victorian Government. The review will commence once the Planning Practice Note is updated.
	1.1.2 Establish annual targets for sustainable urban growth	Not Started	This action is closely linked to action 1.1.1 and will occur concurrently.
	1.1.3 Complete the 'Unlocking Ararat North East' Structure Plan project	In progress 0-50%	A site walk-through with the contractor has occurred in early August, and initial concept development has commenced.
1.2 Support innovative housing models that work to overcome market failure and create the	1.2.1 Deliver enabling infrastructure for well-located homes that address critical housing	In progress 0-50%	Pre-construction planning and design for the enabling infrastructure is underway, and demolition and site clearing is progressing. Heritage

capacity to increase the population of Ararat Rural City.	gaps in central Ararat, with support from the Housing Support Program: Community Enabling Infrastructure Stream.		investigations for the former cemetery area has been undertaken.
	1.2.2 Continue to develop the Ararat Housing Enterprise P/L, delivering another four houses in Ararat during 2025/2026.	In progress 0-50%	Pre-construction planning for the four homes is underway or complete. Two more homes are currently under construction.
	1.2.3 Work with developers to submit EOI application/s to the National Housing Infrastructure Facility Crisis and Transitional Housing (NHIF CT) program	In progress 0-50%	Consultations between developers and potential crisis and transitional housing providers is underway.
1.3 Work with other levels of government, business, educational institutions and not-for-for profits to develop programs to increase in-migration to Ararat Rural City to grow our population.	1.3.1 Complete the Jack and Jill Kindergarten Refurbishment, with support from the Building Blocks Improvement Grant	In progress 0-50%	Specifications and designs for tender are being prepared.
	1.3.2 Establish a new childcare centre in Lake Bolac	In progress 0-50%	Council officers are continuing to liaise with developers and potential childcare providers to deliver
	1.3.3 Deliver the CALD Outreach Initiative	In progress 0-50%	The CALD Outreach Officer has actively engaged families and a range of health and support services to facilitate, support and improve access to early childhood education.
2.1 Partner with Federation University Australia to deliver the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct with a focus on engaging with local agribusiness, industry and community.	2.1.1 Build stronger connections between AJTP and local industry, including promotion of industry internships for research students.	Ongoing	The AJTP Advisory Group and the Future of the Regions group are focused on industry and stakeholder engagement. As PhD students commence their research projects the level of industry engagement is increasing.
	2.1.2 Work with Federation University, community and industry stakeholders to apply for a grant for National Science Week in August 2026	In progress 0-50%	National Science Week grant applications have opened and are due by 29 September. Engagement to develop the program of activities for National Science Week 2026 has commenced.
	2.1.3 Continue to support the delivery of TAFE courses at the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct	Ongoing	Cert 3 in Early Childhood Education and Care courses are continuing at the Precinct. The Ararat Best Start Workshop Series, supported by a Dept. Education Innovation Grant, held its first face to face session at the Precinct on 12 August 2025.
2.2 Work with other levels of government, local business, and private investors to develop a business park within Ararat Rural City, focused on agricultural value adding and advanced manufacturing, potentially leveraging "behind the meter" power.	2.2.1 Work with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and private sector partners to develop plans for the ARCC Circular Economy Precinct.	Ongoing	Council is working with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and a number of private sector partners to make a case for a state significant circular economy hub in Ararat
	2.2.2 Continue to support Valorify P/L to develop a biogas plant in Ararat which uses straw as the major input.	Ongoing	Council continues to strongly support Valorify P/L. An engagement session was held in Ararat on 7 August 2025 to provide an update to stakeholders.

	2.2.3 Seek funding from the Victorian Government's \$10 million fund to unlock industrial trunk infrastructure to accelerate new industrial developments	In progress 0-50%	Regional Development Victoria and the Department of Transport and Planning have been engaged on our industrial trunk infrastructure needs.
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.	2.3.1 Deliver the Ararat Hills Outdoor Adventure Precinct Feasibility Study	In progress 0-50%	The establishment of the Project Control Group is underway.
	2.3.2 Partner with local hospitality, accommodation, food and wine industry to develop an annual fine wine and food event within the municipality.	In progress 0-50%	The Economic Development team is continuing to liaise closely with the local industry to identify potential opportunities for an annual fine wine and food event.
	2.3.3 Work with operators and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism to deliver 4 star and above accommodation	In progress 0-50%	Council is supporting the development of a range of accommodation businesses in the municipality.
3.1 Position Ararat Rural City Council as a prime mover in driving circular economy policy in waste management, including local processing and management of recyclables, and in use of renewable energy for Council purposes.	3.1.1 Develop and adopt an ambitious business based on key partnerships and production of higher value outputs, that views municipal "waste" as an economic resource.	In progress 0-50%	Council are reviewing the Compost Project with Gaia EnviroTech to make smaller orders feasible, enabling more people to purchase smaller amounts. Options for selling mulch are also being investigated.
	3.1.2 Continue to support PlastOil to develop a plastics recycling facility in Ararat	Ongoing	Council continues to strongly support PlastOil through the Economic Development team.
3.2 Develop innovative energy solutions utilising locally produced waste	3.2.1 Continue to support Valorify P/L to develop a biogas plant in Ararat which uses straw as the major input.	Ongoing	Council continues to strongly support Valorify P/L. An engagement session was held in Ararat on 7 August 2025 to provide an update to stakeholders.
	3.2.2 Work with Federal and State Government and private sector partners to plan, fund and develop a circular economy industrial precinct.	In progress 0-50%	Council is working with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and a number of private sector partners to make a case for a state significant circular economy hub in Ararat.
	3.2.3 Continue to advocate for greater policy confidence and support for renewable gas generation	Ongoing	Council issued a statement in July 2025 calling for the Victorian Government to provide clear policy direction and greater support for renewable gas production.
3.3 Partner with local organisations and scientific experts to implement the Environment Strategy 2024-34, with a focus on circular economy, emissions reduction and sustainable management of Council assets.	3.3.1 Deliver the Pomonal Community Hall Battery Project with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and with support from the 100 Neighbourhood Batteries Grants Program	In progress 0-50%	Tender for this project closed on 01 September 2025 and is being evaluated.
	3.3.2 Deliver the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program (subject to State Government funding)	In progress 0-50%	State funding has been confirmed. Planning is now underway.

	3.3.3 Explore a model for collaborating with community asset committees to use rooftop solar to increase use of renewable energy at community facilities.	In progress 0-50%	An application to the Community Energy Upgrades Fund Round 2 was submitted in June 2025 and we are awaiting the outcome.
4.1 Ensure that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council's Asset Plan 2025-2035.	4.1.1 Develop the Asset Plan 2025-35	In progress 0-50%	Drafting of the Asset Plan 2025-35 is underway
	4.1.2 Continue to advocate for the Western Highway Upgrade from Buangor to Ararat	Ongoing	Advocacy efforts are ongoing with the Western Highway Action Committee (WHAC), and with support for a Motion to the MAV State Council
	4.1.3 Continue to advocate for a North South Heavy Vehicle Route	Ongoing	This initiative is included in the Advocacy Program 2025 and will be discussed with key stakeholders at the next available opportunity.
4.2 Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.	4.2.1 Progress plans and costings for a new indoor sports facility and the outdoor pool upgrade	In progress 0-50%	Gender Impact Assessments are in progress.
	4.2.2 Deliver the Community Road Safety Strategy	In progress 51-99%	Contractor was engaged and community consultation undertaken in 2024/25. Preparation of the draft Strategy is in progress.
	4.2.3 Deliver the Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy	In progress 51-99%	Contractor was engaged and community consultation undertaken in 2024/25. Preparation of the draft Strategy is in progress.
4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, are mindful of intergenerational equity and enhance community wellbeing and safety. These approaches will explore strategic use of debt to fund long-term assets and ensure Council's financial sustainability.	4.3.1 Deliver the 2025/26 Capital Works Program	In progress 0-50%	Refer to the Capital Works report.
5.1 Open up Council's arts and culture assets to greater community participation, ownership and engagement in decision-making	5.1.1 Deliver artist and community group exhibits in the Barkly St Laneway and Community Wall within the Ararat Gallery TAMA	In progress 0-50%	Expressions of Interest (EOIs) closed in June 2025. The Visual Arts Coordinator is liaising with the applicants to schedule their exhibitions, or facilitating group exhibitions where appropriate. The full 2026 community program schedule will be released in due course
	5.1.2 Increase participation in programs at Ararat Gallery TAMA	In progress 0-50%	Ararat Gallery TAMA hosted Marian College, Ararat College and St Patricks College (Ballarat) VCE Art Making and Exhibition classes to talk about artwork presentation, conservation and care. School groups are very welcome at the Gallery, and with notice a staff member can welcome and host a class.
	5.1.3 Investigate ways to maximise scheduling of	In progress 0-50%	A review of the Ararat Town Hall's previous years usage and available

	community events at the Town Hall		days to identify future scheduling opportunities is in progress.
	5.1.4 Identify innovative ways to increase the promotion and reach of performances at the Town Hall	In progress 0-50%	A grant application has been submitted to Creative Australia's Playing Australia Audience Development Multi-Year Investment Program 2026-2028, and the outcome is pending.
5.2 Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.	5.2.1 Deliver the first of three years of the Youth Events, Activities and Happenings (YEAH) Crew	In progress 0-50%	The YEAH Crew have started working on a new logo.
	5.2.2 Deliver young people's programs across schools, largely through the Crazy Ideas College	In progress 0-50%	The Ararat Youth Activators program 2025 is underway.
	5.2.3 Work with community groups to deliver an annual Volunteer Expo	Not Started	National Volunteer Week will be celebrated from 19-25 April 2026. Planning for the Ararat Volunteer Expo will commence towards late 2025.
	5.2.4 Promote the benefits and achievements of volunteers, to encourage participation	Ongoing	On 15 August, Council extended a special thank you to the animal rescue groups that volunteer their time to help animals find new homes in conjunction with our Ararat Animal Shelter team.
5.3 Partner with community groups, not-for-profits, and Traditional Owner organisations to develop Ararat Rural City into a more inclusive, welcoming, tolerant and diverse community.	5.3.1 Develop the Disability Action Plan	In progress 0-50%	The draft Terms of Reference and indicative meeting schedule is being prepared. An EOI for the Working Group will open in September
	5.3.2 Develop the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29	In progress 51-99%	Public submissions for the Draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 have closed and is being reviewed.
	5.3.3 Hold quarterly meetings of the Child Friendly Cities and Communities Working Group	In progress 0-50%	A quarterly meeting of the CFCC Working Group was held on 20 August 2025.
	5.3.4 Deliver multicultural events	In progress 0-50%	Staff have participated in event management training in August 2025 and planning is underway.
6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.	6.1.1 Deliver operational efficiencies to reduce avoidable overtime and improvements in casual staff rostering	In progress 0-50%	Some efficiencies in casual staffing arrangements have been identified and implemented. Further efficiencies will continue to be found.
	6.1.2 Undertake a review of Council's insurance coverage and policies to ensure they continue to provide value for money	In progress 51-99%	An analysis of the existing insurance coverage and opportunities for reducing insurance risks is underway.
6.2 Ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions. Council's internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk.	6.2.1 Deliver organisational efficiencies and improvements through IT infrastructure and systems upgrades	In progress 0-50%	IT infrastructure and systems upgrades are underway
	6.2.2 Undertake the Strategic Internal Audit Program – 5 years.	In progress 0-50%	Progress is being made on the items in the Strategic Internal Audit Program.

	6.2.3 Develop the 2026-2030 Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)	Not Started	Council officers are finalising reporting on the 2021-2025 GEAP before commencing the 2026-30 GEAP.
	6.2.4 Ensure appropriate analysis of all inquiry and investigation reports relevant to Council operations are examined and recommendations implemented.	Ongoing	Each external enquiry and investigation undertaken in the local government sector is examined and appropriate actions undertaken. Significant issues and remedies are reported to the audit and risk committee.
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.	6.3.1 Deliver a new Customer Request Management System (CRMS) integrated with the Snap Send Solve app	Complete	The new CRMS and integration with the Snap Send Solve app is now complete. Council officers will continue to encourage residents to install the app.
	6.3.2 Develop a regular biannual program of face-to-face community engagement opportunities	In progress 0-50%	Planning for face-to-face engagement sessions has commenced.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The Annual Plan 2025/26 aligns with all strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2025-29

Budget Implications

The Annual Plan 2025/2026 does not have any additional budget implications. All actions in the Annual Plan have been budgeted in the 2025/2026 Budget or have no additional resourcing requirements.

Policy/Relevant Law

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

Sustainability Implications

The Annual Plan provides specific actions that will be undertaken for the key theme 5. Preserving Our Environment.

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Stakeholders and community groups will be engaged during the development and delivery of the actions, where applicable.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- Council receives the Annual Plan 2025/26 - August 2025 report**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

SECTION 5 - COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

5.1 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING

AUTHOR'S TITLE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24013

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

This report contains the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on the 9 September 2025.

DISCUSSION

Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee meetings are provided to Council at the first available opportunity after clearance by the Audit and Risk Committee Chairperson. The report contains the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 9 September 2025

Council Committees	Councillor representative	Current meeting (as presented)	Next scheduled meeting/s
Audit and Risk Committee	Cr Jo Armstrong	Apology	02 December 2025
Audit and Risk Committee	Cr Bob Sanders	09 September 2025	02 December 2025

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The report supports the strategic objective of the Council Plan 2025 - 2029:

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

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

Budget Implications

No budget impact for the receiving of minutes.

Policy/Legal/Statutory

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

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

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Consultation and Communication

Audit and Risk Committee members.

Councillor representation on Council Committees.

Chief Executive Officer and relevant Council officers.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. the Audit and Risk Committee Meetings minutes of 09 September 2025 be received**

ATTACHMENTS

The Audit and Risk Committee minutes as listed above are provided as Attachment 5.1.

SECTION 6 - INFORMAL MEETINGS

6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS

AUTHOR'S TITLE: ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24015

OFFICER'S DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

DISCUSSION

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

INFORMAL MEETINGS
Council Briefing held on 16 September 2025

Matters discussed at the briefing:

- 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan
- Asset Plan
- Housing Support Program Project Update
- Draft Public Transparency Policy
- Draft Councillor Gifts Policy
- Financial Hardship Application - Rates Arrears
- Monthly Performance Report - August 2025
- Monthly Progress Report - Council Plan - Annual Plan
- Capital Works Program - August 2025
- Building approvals
- Planning approvals under delegation

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

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

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

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

Financial

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

Policy/Relevant Law

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

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

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

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. the Informal Meetings of Councillors Report be received.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Summary of Council Briefings are provided as Attachment 6.1.

SECTION 7 - NOTICES OF MOTION

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

SECTION 8 - URGENT BUSINESS

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

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

SECTION 9 - CLOSE SESSION (CONFIDENTIAL)

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

- Item 9.1 - Rates Arrears - Financial Hardship Applications

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 and decision in relation to Confidential Agenda Item 9.1 not be lifted on adoption of the motion.**