



Ararat Rural City

AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 28 October 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 14 October 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 ASSET PLAN 2025-35

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24513

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 Local Government Act 2020 requires councils to develop or review the Asset Plan by 31 October 2025. The Asset Plan 2025-2035 is underpinned by principles of developing mechanisms for managing the tensions between community expectation, financial capacity and technical asset management practices; integrating Council systems to ensure accurate asset information is available across the decision making process; and ensuring that maximum Council resources are available for asset renewal and improvement, with a renewal/improvement to depreciation ratio of at least 110% across a rolling two-year average.

DISCUSSION

Local governments are asset-intensive entities. Their capacity to meet community expectations and service delivery obligations are largely dependent on the effective management of their physical infrastructure assets. These assets encompass a broad range of categories, including local roads, bridges, major culverts, traffic infrastructure, buildings, stormwater systems, public parks, and recreational facilities.

In accordance with the Local Government Act 2020, councils are mandated to develop an Asset Plan that articulates strategic priorities and provides a transparent framework for the prudent and efficient stewardship of these assets in service of the community. The scope of an Asset Plan is a period of at least the next 10 financial years.

Local Government Act 2020 specifies what must be included in an Asset Plan, this includes:

- (a) information about maintenance, renewal, acquisition, expansion, upgrade, disposal and decommissioning in relation to each class of infrastructure asset under the control of the Council;
- (b) any other matters prescribed by the regulations

The Asset Plan is a strategic document that informs on how the council-controlled infrastructure and other assets are to be managed to achieve the Council Plan objectives and Community Vision statement. It is not intended to be a highly technical document, rather it communicates long-term decision-making considerations to ensure that asset planning contributes to achieving the Council's strategic goals.

The Asset Plan 2025-2035 is underpinned by the following principles:

- Developing mechanisms for managing the tensions between community expectation, financial capacity and technical asset management practices
- Integrating Council systems to ensure accurate asset information is available across the decision making process

- Ensuring that maximum Council resources are available for asset renewal and improvement, with a renewal/improvement to depreciation ratio of at least 110% across a rolling two-year average

The Asset Plan 2025-2035 will comprise six key elements:

1. Engaging our community
2. System alignment and development
3. Integrated planning
4. Project funding and advocacy
5. Prioritising investment
6. Managing changing demand for asset types or classes

While the Asset Plan is informed by existing asset management systems, it is not intended to replace or duplicate asset management plans, practices and processes. Council regularly engages with and receives feedback from the community and Community Asset Committees regarding our assets, and the outcomes of these ongoing engagements have been incorporated into the development the Asset Plan 2025-35. The adopted Asset Plan 2025-2035 will be placed on Engage Ararat to enable ongoing community input into asset management issues as the Plan is delivered.

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 deliver strong public value. Existing infrastructure will be managed, renewed, and maintained to ensure that it continues to serve identified public needs.

- 4.1** Ensure that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council's Asset Plan 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 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.

Budget Implications

The existing 2025/26 Budget is aligned with this Asset Plan 2025-35, and there are no budget implications arising from this report. The Asset Plan 2025-35 will also help inform future budgets.

Policy/Relevant Law

Local Government Act 2020

Sustainability Implications

The Asset Plan aims to support economic, social or environmental sustainability and growth.

Risk Assessment

The Asset Plan is informed by the risk identification and management systems within the asset management plans. It also identifies drivers and influences that can impact on the effective implementation of the Plan.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The Asset Plan 2025-2035 has been developed over an extended period of time. User and community engagement is a key feature of current decision making over major capital works project evaluation. Engage Ararat will continue to be an important feature of ongoing engagement around development of the Asset Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council adopt the Asset Plan 2025-2035**

ATTACHMENTS

The Asset Plan 2025-35 is provided as Attachment 3.1

3.2 MUNICIPAL PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN 2025-29

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24514

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 draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 has been released for community consultation. The submissions have been considered by Council officers and changes made to the Plan in response to the feedback. This report recommends that the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 be adopted.

DISCUSSION

The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 (MPHWP) is one of Council's key strategic planning documents and describes the positive changes Council wants to bring to health and wellbeing within the community, and what Council will do to make these changes come to life.

The MPHWP includes four strategic health and wellbeing objectives for the next four years, as well as the strategic actions and measures of success to ensure monitoring occurs for these objectives. The objectives are:

1. Social Connections & Inclusion
2. Natural & Built Environments
3. Partnerships
4. Breaking the Cycle

The draft MPHWP has been presented to the community for consultation and submissions from 01 to 15 August 2025. A total of 17 submissions were received; these are provided in the attachment to this report along with responses.

To summarise the submissions, there was feedback across a broad range of topics, with general support for the four strategic objectives of the MPHWP. There were suggestions for initiatives and priorities for particular communities and cohorts, and mention of specific organisations that could be involved in delivering the objectives of the MPHWP. The draft MPHWP was modified to include a focus on improving access to health services and outreach programs for rural areas.

We thank all submitters for their feedback and suggestions.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

4. DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING KEY ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

- 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.

5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

- 5.2** Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.
- 5.3** Partner with community groups, not-for-profits, and Traditional Owner organisations to develop Ararat Rural City into a more inclusive, welcoming, tolerant and diverse community.

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

- 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 final Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 will not impact on the 2025/26 Budget. The 2025/26 Budget already contains a number of initiatives and projects that support the objectives of this Plan and once adopted, it will help inform future initiatives and projects in future budgets.

Policy/Relevant Law

- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027
- Department of Health Municipal public health and wellbeing planning 2025-2029 - Advice Note 1
- Department of Health Family violence and municipal public health and wellbeing planning: Guidance for local government, August 2024
- Climate Change Act 2017
- Gender Equality Act 2020
- Local Government Act 2020

Sustainability Implications

The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 aims to support social and environmental sustainability by focusing on social connections and inclusion, and creating natural and built environments that encourage healthy lifestyles.

Risk Assessment

The primary objective of Council is to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having regard to their long-term health and wellbeing.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 was released to the community for review and feedback in line with the Council's Community Engagement Policy. The feedback and suggestions have been reviewed and considered, with modifications made to the final Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 as summarised above.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Adopt the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029**

ATTACHMENTS

The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 and the Community Consultation Report for the Draft MPHWP 2025-29 are provided as Attachment 3.2

3.3 PITCH MUSIC FESTIVAL 2026 TOW-AWAY ZONES

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24515

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 purpose of this report is to request endorsement from Council to establish tow-away zones adjacent to the Pitch Music Festival site.

Council will work in conjunction with Pitch Music Festival (Sound Event Group) and a contractor to install and manage the installation, enforcement and removal of vehicles.

DISCUSSION

Pitch Music Festival, in conjunction with Council and VicRoads have established a tow-away zone to mitigate risks from the parking of vehicles in the road reserves adjacent to the festival site.

The risks include the following:

- Vehicles being parked over dry grass and other vegetation creating an extreme fire hazard
- Vehicles pulling over on side roads causing traffic hazards
- Restricting the carriageway width on road reserve which require unobstructed travel for the time of the festival
- Risk of pedestrian accidents while passengers are disembarking from a vehicle located along the road reserves
- Vehicles being used as camp sites during the time of the festival.

Council officers, and festival organisers believes that undertaking this action will improve safety and reduce risk to the community, road users and festival attendees during the time of Pitch Music Festival.

Having the authority to undertake the enforcement and removal of vehicles within the area of the festival provides some rigor to the process, and immediately eliminates a risk once it has been identified.

The location of the proposed two away zones are as follows:

- Moyston Dunkeld Road from White Cockatoo Road north of the Pitch Site (the Patron entry is at the intersection of Moyston Dunkeld Road and Regulating Basin Road), south to Mafeking Road
- Andrews Lane from Moyston Willaura Road to Muirhead Road
- Regulating Basin Road from Moyston Dunkeld Road to past Muirhead Road
- Mafeking Road from Moyston Dunkeld Road to Muirhead Road
- Muirhead Road from Andrews Land to Regulating Basin Road.

It is proposed that:

- Council will establish an appropriate impound area at the Council depot - to keep vehicles safe
- The release fee will comply with Road Management Act Schedule 4 clause 5(2A). It must reflect the reasonable costs of impoundment, including overhead and indirect costs.

- If a contractor is undertaking the towing, then any cost recovery fee received by the council is received as an agent for the towing company and can be paid to them.
- Council authorised officers will negotiate this payment process with event organisers. This fee will also reflect the cost associated with all aspects of management and release of impounded vehicles.
- The formal notification requirement for the tow away will be published in the Government Gazette. This cost and the cost of appropriate signage will be required to be met by the event organisers.
- Council will arrange the application through Vic Road to receive the appropriate authorities to establish and enforce the tow-away zones for the length of the festival

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

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

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications arising

Policy/Relevant Law

Road Management Act 2004

Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2022

Risk Assessment

If vehicles are allowed to park on the road reserves adjacent to the festival site, they are likely to pose a significant fire risk to the festival itself and to surrounding residents and townships. Enforcing the tow away zoned mitigate the risk to the best of Councils ability.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This has been discussed with the community at previous Community Consultation sessions. Consultation with VicRoads has also been undertaken to ensure that the appropriate processes have been followed.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Endorse the application process to gain delegation from VicRoads to establish the tow-away zone in the locality of the Pitch Music Festival for the duration of the festival each year going forward; and**
- 2. Endorses the Chief Executive Officer's actions to authorise council officers on behalf of the Pitch Music Festival event organisers to implement an appropriate process to apply fees associated with the management and enforcement of the tow-away zone for the duration of the festival.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Tow-away zone map is provided as Attachment 3.3

3.4 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24516

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 September 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 \$21.095 million in revenue and \$9.272 million in expenses to 30 September 2025. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$11.823 million for the three months ended 30 September 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 \$17.920 million has been recognised as income for the three months ended 30 September 2025.

User fees account for 5% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26 and \$0.559 million has been received to 30 September 2025. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

Recurrent Operating Grants total \$1.512 million to 30 September 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 \$0.787 million to 30 September 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	17	-
Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy	-	-	36
CALD Outreach Workers Initiative	129	129	-
Tiny Towns Fund - Pomonal Community Hub	-	31	88
Natural Disaster Relief	-	158	-
Council Support Fund - Pomonal Fires	-	-	-
Engage - Youth Events Activities & Happenings	55	55	-
Centenary Park Dog Park	100	8	17
Queen Street Housing Program	-	208	5,488
Ararat Hills Adventure Sports Precinct	-	-	400
Early Career Educators	-	38	65
Ararat Active Bike Network	266	-	-
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting and Accessibility	-	-	280
Primary Producer Support Payment	-	125	-
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	18	-
	617	787	8,867

Non-recurrent Capital Grants have not been recognised as income up to 30 September 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	-	19	31
TAC Safe Local Roads and Streets Program	-	17	451
Jack & Jill Kindergarten Upgrade	-	50	25
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	-	10
	1,490	86	2,738

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 \$0.259 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 three months ended 30 September 2025 Council has incurred \$2.790 million in employee costs.

Materials and Services account for approximately 28% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the three months ended 30 September 2025, Council has incurred \$3.461 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 30 September 2025. Comparative figures have been provided as at 30 June 2025.

Council's current assets have increased by \$15.260 million from \$17.978 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$33.238 million as at 30 September 2025. Cash and cash equivalents have increased by \$1.958 million from \$14.841 million to \$16.799 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$13.299 million from \$3.066 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$16.365 million as at 30 September 2025.

Total liabilities have increased from \$16.464 million in 2024/25 to \$17.652 million in 2025/26. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$1.676 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$0.375 million. Unearned income/revenue increased by \$2.625 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 increased by \$1.958 million to \$16.799 million as at 30 September 2025.

Net cash of \$2.858 million was provided by operating activities, \$0.724 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.176 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	30/09/2025
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%	208%
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%	9.11%
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%	85.35%
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	\$1,241
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	30/09/2025
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 September 2025 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$15.408 million compared to \$2.466 million as at 30 June 2025, an increase of \$12.942 million. In percentage terms 25.6% of the rates raised have been collected at 30 September 2025 compared to 18.1% up to 30 September 2024. The increased percentage at 30 September 2025 includes payments totalling \$2.491 million received under the Victorian Government's Drought Support Package for Primary Producer Support Payments, which represents a 40% rate reduction on farm-rated properties. Outstanding rates are currently charged 10% interest. 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.	87.8%	25.6%
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.	100.75%	26.29%

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 30 September 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 2025/2026 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - SEPTEMBER 2025

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24517

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has approved its 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 30 September 2025, 11% of the budget is expended.

Mt William has commenced works in late August, with stabilising and rock installation currently occurring. 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.

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%	
Tatyoon Oval Upgrade			\$1080		
TOTAL PROPERTY CAPITAL		\$162,960	\$1080	111%	
PLANT & EQUIPMENT					
Vehicle Purchases	\$240,000	\$196,400		82%	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		\$196,400	-	82%	
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 Sheetting, Widening & Alternative Sealing	\$1,800,000	-	\$182,620 (over spend 24/25)	30%	\$1.982m of this budget expended in 2024/2025. Approved Council Meeting 29 July 2025. Works include OTTA seal of • Nott Road, Ararat (Pyrenees Hwy end)
Transferred from other Capital Works Line Items	\$1,500,000		\$273,180		
			\$455,800		

					Sugarloaf Road
Total	\$3,300,000				
Reseal Program	\$1,000,000	-	-	100%	Fully Expended 24/25
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	-	\$46,674	5%	Works Allocated for: - 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		\$30,371	74%	Churchill Avenue final payments for maintenance between completion and sealing.
Major Patching	\$100,000	-	-	0%	
Bridges	\$0	-	\$554		Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing
Footpath Renewal Program	\$400,000	\$177,276	\$13,553	47%	Works Allocated for: - 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	-	\$7446	2%	
Remaining Budget	\$350,000				
Kerb and Channel	\$0	-	\$53,384		Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing
TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE		\$177,276	\$674,799	9%	
TOTAL CAPITAL WORKS		\$536,636	\$675,879	11%	

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. Works are currently being completed and expected to be finalised before the end of October.
Ararat Pony Club - Covered Sports Area (Play our Way Program)	\$1,490,000	\$1,490,000	Nil		\$14,270	\$435	\$14,705	1%	Project is currently out to tender and closes on 14 October 2025.
Centenary Park - Dog Park (Open Space for Everyone Program)	\$112,000	\$100,000	\$12,000		\$1,172	\$7,998	\$9,170	8%	Detailed design being completed inhouse and have been endorsed by the funding body. 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	\$2,947	\$3,250	<1%	Detailed design has been completed by Contractor. Building permit has been submitted and is awaiting approval.
Jack and Jill Kindergarten Redevelopment (Building Blocks improvement grants program)	\$750,000	\$745,000			\$26,000	\$50,000	\$76,000	10%	Documentation has been received and procurement is currently being undertaken.
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. Detailed design drawings have been endorsed and procurement is commencing.
Gordon Street Cricket Nets Upgrade (Australian Cricket Infrastructure Grant)	\$39,985	\$15,000	\$24,985		NA	\$19,218	-	48%	Orders have been completed for synthetic carpet and concrete works have been completed.

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. The preferred tenderer has been selected and will go to PCG for endorsement and approval.
Ararat Library Lighting and Exterior Upgrade. (Living Libraries Infrastructure Program 2024-25)	\$51,026	\$51,026			NA	\$19,048	\$19,048	37%	Lighting quotes have been approved.. External painting designs are being considered.

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	\$3760	\$17,582	4%	Footpath and concrete works have been completed. Services and levels are currently being set and road works will commence in 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	\$16,975	\$286,567	9%	Ecology and Vegetation 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	\$87,396	\$304,978	4%	Works commenced on site 1 September 2025. Soft Spots and culverts are currently being remediated.
Buangor Ben Nevis Road - Bridge 7001.14 Design and Construct (Roads to Recovery - 25/26)	\$1,300,000	\$1,300,000		\$68,723	\$4987	\$73,710	5%	Contract No. 731 - Awarded July 2025 \$1.109m - Road and Bridge Pty Ltd \$100,000 allowance for Permits and Vegetation offsets. Ecology and Vegetation works are currently being finalised for works to commence.
McCrows Road Bridge (Roads to Recovery)	\$350,000	\$350,000		\$17,738	\$238	\$17,976	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	\$20,988	5%	Tender documents are currently being prepared for these projects.
Banfield Street - School Crossing (Road Safety Program - School Safety Improvements 20-25)	\$19,009	\$19,009		\$8,244	\$4,369	\$12,613	66%	These works are complete.
Queen Street Housing Support Program (Housing Support Program - Community Enabling Infrastructure)	\$7,380,000	\$7,380,000		\$152,580	\$206,449	\$359,030	4%	Sub-division planning and associated reporting are still in progress before submission to Council. Demolition works are progressing.
SAFE LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS PROGRAM								
View Point, Tobin & Taylor St Intersections	\$224,000	\$224,000		\$581	\$167	\$748	<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	\$1533	\$2,133	2%	The detailed design for this project is expected to be complete by October 2025, then works will be tendered.
King Street - Raised Crossing	\$110,000	\$110,000		\$4,702	\$7,967	\$12,669	12%	Detailed design is completed and tender documents are being compiled.
View Point & High St Intersection	\$117,000	\$117,000		\$1,526	\$8,012	\$9,538	8%	Detailed design is completed and tender documents are being compiled.
Moore & Princes Street Intersection	\$131,000	\$131,000		\$145		\$145	<1%	The detailed design for this project is expected to be complete by October 2025, then works will be tendered.
Vincent Street & Alexandra Avenue - Raised Crossing	\$321,000	\$321,000		\$239	\$359	\$598	<1%	The detailed design for this project is expected to be complete in October 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	\$1007	\$2,538	<1%	The detailed design for this project is expected to be complete in October 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.
Albert Street Footpath (Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program 25/26)	\$85,000	\$42,500	\$42,500					Improving Pedestrian Accessibility to the Ararat Retirement Village and Sports Precinct - New Grant received September 2025. These designs are ready for tendering.

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%	This project has been awarded to Project Platypus and they will commence spraying and rabbit control in October.
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	\$13,423		15%	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 is 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 - September 2025 report.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item.

4.2 HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM PROJECT - SEPTEMBER 2025 UPDATE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24519

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 is progressing well, rubble has started to be moved off site for further processing. Pre-construction planning for the enabling infrastructure is continuing.

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, rubble has started to be moved off site for further processing. See images below:





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

Not applicable

Sustainability Implications

Not applicable

Risk Assessment

Demolition works are progressing in line with risk assessment and mitigation measures, ensuring that all identified hazards are being effectively managed and safety protocols are strictly followed.

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 - September 2025 Update report.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.3 ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE (SEPTEMBER 2025)

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 24521

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	3 (+2)
In progress 51-99%	4
In progress 0-50%	31 (-2)
Not Started	4
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. Council officers have engaged with the Department of Transport and Planning for alternative resources to support the commencement of the planning scheme review.
	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%	Initial draft concepts have been presented by the contractor and reviewed by Council officers.

1.2 Support innovative housing models that work to overcome market failure and create the capacity to increase the population of Ararat Rural City.	1.2.1 Deliver enabling infrastructure for well-located homes that address critical housing gaps in central Ararat, with support from the Housing Support Program: Community Enabling Infrastructure Stream.	In progress 0-50%	Pre-construction planning and design for the enabling infrastructure is underway, and demolition and site clearing is progressing. See 'Housing Support Program Project Update' report for further details.
	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 works are complete, and procurement processes have commenced.
	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 is continuing to actively engage families to facilitate, support and improve access to early childhood education. Council facilitated the ABC News video 'Willing Workers: Migrant workers embracing opportunities in Ararat', which was released on 7 September.
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	Complete	The application has been submitted for a project titled 'Celebrating Science in Rural Communities'. Outcomes are expected in March 2026 and further engagement with stakeholders will occur afterwards if funding is awarded.
	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, will continue in 2026.
2.2 Work with other levels of government, local business, and private investors to develop a	2.2.1 Work with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and private sector partners to	Ongoing	Council is working with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and a number of private sector partners to

business park within Ararat Rural City, focused on agricultural value adding and advanced manufacturing, potentially leveraging "behind the meter" power.	develop plans for the ARCC Circular Economy Precinct.		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%	The sale of bags of compost made from green waste for \$5 was trialled at the Ararat and Pomonal Markets in September with very positive results. This also provided a good opportunity to talk to local residents about what can and cannot go into the green bins. Compost can also now be purchased for \$80 per cubic metre.
	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	3.3.1 Deliver the Pomonal Community Hall Battery Project with the Central	In progress 0-50%	Tender for this project closed on 01 September 2025 and is being evaluated.

implement the Environment Strategy 2024-34, with a focus on circular economy, emissions reduction and sustainable management of Council assets.	Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and with support from the 100 Neighbourhood Batteries Grants Program		
	3.3.2 Deliver the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program	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%	Year 9 and 10 art students from Marian College visited 'Kait James: Red Flags' as research ahead of their

			term 4 art class projects. Ararat Gallery TAMA delivered activities for the spring school holidays, including the Mini Flags Workshop with Kait James and the School Holiday Drop In Session. The Gallery commenced promotion of the upcoming exhibition <i>Perpetual</i> by Tim Gresham and Artist Talk on 25 October 2025. Promotion of the Gallery's existing programs was also continued for the Analog Art Club, Life Drawing Classes, Minimakers Art Club and Stitching Circle.
	5.1.3 Investigate ways to maximise scheduling of community events at the Town Hall	In progress 0-50%	A review of the Ararat Town Hall's previous years usage and available 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 now have a new logo. They are preparing for their first event where they will be involved in running activities at the Red Basketball event on 18 October 2025 at the Ararat Fitness Centre.
	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 in early 2026.
	5.2.4 Promote the benefits and achievements of volunteers, to encourage participation	Ongoing	Council's Community Support Grants was opened from 1 to 30 September. Council also promoted various volunteer organised events and initiatives, and opportunities for recognition. This included nominations for the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll, Greater Ararat Business Network Business Breakfast, Victorian Seniors Festival events which involves our local volunteer organisations, Pomonal Native Flower Show, Australian Red Cross Lifeblood Blood Bank Bus, the interview by ABC Radio with Russ Kellett from Pomonal Men's Shed, and congratulated our local football and netball teams for their 2025 season in print newspapers and social media.
5.3 Partner with community groups, not-for-profits, and Traditional Owner	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 October

organisations to develop Ararat Rural City into a more inclusive, welcoming, tolerant and diverse community.	5.3.2 Develop the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29	Complete	Community feedback on the Draft Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 has been reviewed and the final Plan presented for adoption at the October 2025 Council Meeting.
	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. The next meeting is scheduled in December 2025
	5.3.4 Deliver multicultural events	In progress 0-50%	A special community afternoon tea for Welcoming Week was held on 21 September and this event launched our new community video, featuring welcoming messages and friendly faces. More events are being planned.
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 development of the 2026-30 GEAP in early 2026.
	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 and report issues.
	6.3.2 Develop a regular biannual program of face-to-face community engagement opportunities	In progress 51-99%	Planning for face-to-face engagement sessions is underway.

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:

- 1. Council receives the Annual Plan 2025/26 - September 2025 report**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

SECTION 5 - COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

No Committee Minutes/Reports received

SECTION 6 - INFORMAL MEETINGS

6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS

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

OFFICER'S DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

DISCUSSION

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

INFORMAL MEETINGS
Council Briefing held on 14 October 2025
Council Briefing held on 21 October 2025

Matters discussed at the briefing:

- Performance and Financial Statements
- Moorabool Shire Council - Cleanup of Industrial Waste and LG Illegal Dumping Summit
- Pitch Music Festival 2026 Tow-Away Zones
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Monthly Progress Report - Prestige Site Project Update
- Monthly Performance Report - September 2025
- Monthly Progress Report - Council Plan - Annual Plan
- Capital Works Program - September 2025
- Building approvals
- Planning approvals under delegation
- Asset Plan 2025 - 2034
- Staff Wellbeing
- Mt William Road - Stabilising and Profiling Works
- Design and Construction of New Covered Sports Arena for the Ararat Pony Club

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 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 ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making.

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 - Mt William Road - Stabilising and Profiling Works
- Item 9.2 - Design and Construction of New Covered Sports Arena for the Ararat Pony Club

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 and 9.2 not be lifted on adoption of the motion.**