



Ararat Rural City

AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 31 March 2026

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

Commencing at 6.00pm

Council:

Cr Bob Sanders (Mayor)

Cr Jo Armstrong

Cr Rob Armstrong

Cr Peter Joyce

Cr Teli Kaur

Cr Luke Preston

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 Bill Waterston be accepted.

1.4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 24 February 2026 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.

2.1.1 PETITION - COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS AT GREVILLEA COURT PARK, ARARAT NORTH

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27921

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

A petition was received for consideration at the February 2026 Council Meeting. This report provides the outcome of the consideration of the request.

DISCUSSION

The petition that was received at the February 2026 Council Meeting requested that Council consider installing a durable, weather resistant picnic table with seating and a small set of outdoor gym equipment (e.g. stepper, pull up bars, sit-up bench) suitable for community use. The petitioners stated that the inclusion of these items at the park would encourage community connection, promote health and wellbeing, inclusivity and enhance local pride.

This request has been thoroughly considered and the particulars of this matter are presented below.

Location & Current Conditions

The location of the requested new community infrastructure in a small 'pocket' park off Grevillea Court, shown in pink in the image below. This is approx. 1km north-east of the Ararat Railway Station. There is a small playground in the centre of the park, with a few mature trees. The sides of the park are mostly enclosed by corrugated metal panel fencing from the adjoining properties.



Cost Considerations

The costs involved with meeting the request from petitioners includes the capital costs for installing the new infrastructure and the ongoing maintenance costs for the assets. Based on recent rates for similar equipment and installation costs, the capital costs is estimated to be between \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Due to the location and layout of the site, there are lower levels of passive surveillance. Its location away from an activity centre and being at the end of the two small streets of Grevillea and Timmins Streets means there is lower rates of incidental foot or vehicle traffic that could observe activity within the park. The layout of the site being bounded mostly by solid metal fencing with a small opening on Smith Street also makes it difficult for any passive surveillance to occur. This increases the risk of vandalism and other

undesirable activity, which increases the ongoing maintenance costs to Council to clean and repair the new assets.

Based on these costs, this request is considered to have low value for money in terms of the broader community benefits, and this report recommends that the requested infrastructure not be installed in Grevillea Court, Ararat.

Policy considerations

There are a number of similar pocket parks in Ararat, some of which have playground equipment while others are just open space. These parks do not represent an efficient or effective means of providing recreation spaces for residents. They tend to be difficult and expensive to maintain with limited community utilisation. Council investment will have more impact in larger parks or recreation facilities. If Council chooses to fund works in this park. It may lead to pressure to further develop other, similar sites.

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.

- 6.1** Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.
- 6.2** Ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions. Council's internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk.
- 6.3** Continuously improve Council's community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making.

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications arising from the recommendation.

Policy/Relevant Law

Not applicable

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment on the requested infrastructure has been undertaken and the recommendation is that the assets are not installed.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This report responds to a petition from community.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Ararat Rural City Council does not undertake improvements to the Grevillea Court Park, Ararat North as requested in the community petition, and**
- 2. Council engages with the petitioners to discuss and identify more efficient and/or effective community infrastructure options for the site.**

ATTACHMENTS

A copy of the Grevillea Court Petition is provided as Attachment 2.1.1

SECTION 3 - REPORTS REQUIRING COUNCIL DECISION

3.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR TOWN ENTRANCES

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27922

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 recommends approval of a community engagement plan to gather community input on the upgrade of the town's eastern entrance point.

This report recommends that Council approve the proposed community engagement plan to seek community input on the upgrade of the town's Eastern entrance sign. The existing entrance signage, while functional, has become dated in appearance and no longer reflects the town's identity. The proposed engagement will be conducted via Engage Ararat.

DISCUSSION

Town entrances serve as important visual entry points, shaping the first impressions of visitors and reinforcing a sense of identity for residents. The existing eastern entrance signage has served the community for many years; however, its style and presentation no longer reflect the town's character.

The signage appears dated and lacks the welcoming presence expected of our township.

Recognising the significance of this entry point, Council has identified the need to revitalise this town entrance to better represent local identity and community pride.

It is recommended that submissions for the eastern Town Entrance sign ideas be put to public consultation via Engage Ararat which will then be presented back to Council for consideration at a future Council meeting.

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.

Budget Implications

The Community Engagement process for developing new design concepts for town entrance signage will be delivered within the existing operational resources. Should Council choose to proceed to detailed design or construction of a new entrance sign following the engagement phase, additional funding allocations will be required and will be presented for consideration as part of future budget development processes.

Policy/Relevant Law

This report aligns with the Council’s legislative obligations under the Local Government Act 2020, which requires Council to ensure meaningful and accessible opportunities for community participation in decision making.

Sustainability Implications

The engagement process presents an opportunity to incorporate durable, low-maintenance materials and environmentally conscious design elements into future town entrance concepts. The engagement process also supports social sustainability by ensuring the final designs reflect community identity and value.

Risk Assessment

The project presents a low level of risk, with the primary risks relating to community expectations and compliance with road safety or regulatory requirements. These risks will be mitigated through a transparent engagement process and clean communication about the scope and future stages of the project.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is to be undertaken through Engage Ararat and presented back to Council at a later meeting date.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council undertake public consultation for ideas for town entrance signage via engage Ararat.**
- 2. Consider any submissions received during the consultation period at a future Council meeting.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments in relation to this item.

3.2 DRAFT ARARAT RURAL CITY SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2026-36

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27923

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2025, Council began working with CommunityVibe to develop a new Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan.

After a period of extensive consultation and engagement with community and stakeholders from June to November 2025, the draft Strategy and Action Plan is presented to Council. These documents will be made available to community for final consultation and feedback before returning to a Council Meeting for final consideration.

DISCUSSION

The latest Ararat Rural City Recreation and Open Space Strategy is over 20 years old. While there have been site specific master plans, facility studies and activity specific strategies since 2003, these were no longer be contemporary and did not represent the current needs of the community. A consolidated, municipal-wide Sport, Active Recreation and Open Spaces Strategy was proposed to provide a clear roadmap for the coordinated delivery of welcoming, accessible and motivational sport and recreation infrastructure that meets present and future needs.

Council sought and were awarded grant funding from through Sport and Recreation Victoria to develop a new 10 year Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy. The process to develop the new strategy involved an assessment of Council's existing plans, strategies and documents, and analysis of demographic and physical activity trends, and community and stakeholder engagement and consultation.

The community of Ararat are passionate about their sport and active recreation, with 335 members of the community engaged in surveys (207), listening posts (81), children's drawings (47) and a written submission (1). This project engaged with 50 different stakeholders, including representatives from sports clubs, State Government, Council, and community organisations. The range and number of sport and active recreation opportunities desired by community and stakeholders was diverse and large.

The Strategy provides a framework to foster increase participation in physical activity and guide Council's investment decisions in sport and active recreation over the next 10 years. The Action Plan provides the key next steps to achieve the objectives of the Strategy.

The next step is to present the draft Strategy and Action Plan to the community for review before presenting the final documents to Council for final consideration.

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.

1.3 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.

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.

4.2 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.

5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

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

5.2 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.

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications arising from the draft Strategy and Action Plan. These documents will assist in providing the strategic frameworks for future investments by Council and potentially State and Federal Government partners.

Policy/Relevant Law

ARCC Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029

Sport and Recreation Victoria's Active Victoria 2022-2026

Various State Sporting Association strategic plans and documents

Sustainability Implications

The Sport and Action Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and the Action Plan are expected to have a positive economic, social and environmental impact in Ararat Rural City.

Risk Assessment

The extensive consultation and engagement that has been undertaken has reduced the risk that the Strategy and Action Plan will be inconsistent with the priorities of the Ararat Rural City community.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Extensive consultation and engagement has already occurred during the development of the draft Strategy and Action Plan. A final round of community review of the draft documents is proposed before the final documents are presented to Council for consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council receives the Draft Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Action Plan for community consultation; and**
- 2. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to release the draft documents for community review and feedback**

ATTACHMENTS

The Draft Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2026-36 and Draft Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy: Action Plan 2026-36 are provided as Attachment 3.2

3.3 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27924

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

It has been one year since Council adopted its 2025 Advocacy Program. This report provides highlights of the successes from the previous 2025 Advocacy Program, and provides an updated list of Priorities for 2026, which include:

- New indoor multi-sports facility at the Alexandra Oval Reserve
- A&J McDonald Centre Redevelopment
- Local roads funding
- Achieving the full extent of the Mininera Extension of the East Grampians Rural Pipeline
- Connecting Valorify to the gas grid
- A north-south heavy vehicle route for the Pyrenees Highway

DISCUSSION

At the March 2025 Council Meeting, the advocacy priorities for the Ararat Rural City were confirmed for 2025. A number of the 2025 priorities have been achieved or significantly progressed.

Several key achievements from the 2025 Advocacy Program include:

- Ararat Rural City secured over \$3.5 million from the Victorian Government's Regional Worker Accommodation Fund Round 2 in August 2025 to bring 25 new homes to Ararat.
- \$745,000 was awarded for the Jack and Jill Kindergarten Refurbishment in April 2025, and a new kindergarten has been earmarked at Ararat West Primary School in February 2026
- An additional \$15 million was announced by the State Government in July 2025 for the Mininera Extension of the East Grampians Rural Pipeline, with another \$15.6 million invested by Grampians Wimmera Mallee (GWM) Water. Council are continuing to advocate for additional funding from the Federal Government to complete the Mininera Extension.
- \$5 million in grant funding was secured in August 2025 from the Federal Governments' Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program for the Buangor-Ben Nevis Road Upgrade
- A speed reduction to 80km/hr was put in place in August 2025 on a well known narrow bridge on the Western Highway, and the upgrade has reached a major milestone with the Cultural Heritage Management Plan being approved in March 2026.

Council's advocacy priorities for 2026 will focus on six major community-shaping projects and critical local issues that urgently need government action. These high-impact initiatives will strengthen our region's economy, improve liveability and secure essential services for the future.

The 2026 Advocacy Priorities are:

NEW INDOOR MULTI-SPORTS FACILITY

New recreational facilities that are functional, accessible, and inclusive are needed. Plans feature 3 basketball courts, gymnastics facilities, a squash court, female friendly change rooms, a first aid room and more. We will be seeking \$12 million towards this project.

A&J McDONALD CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

Much of this building is not in current use due to its lack of essential infrastructure and disability access. A vast redevelopment would be delivered in partnership with Grampians Community Health. We will be seeking \$15 million towards this project.

LOCAL ROADS FUNDING

Local Roads Funding is sought to seal urban gravel roads and laneways in Ararat. We will be seeking \$1.5 million towards this project.

WATER PIPELINE

The full extent of the East Grampians Rural Water Pipeline Project is essential for rural communities and economies. A core 2026 priority is to complete the Mininera Extension of the East Grampians Rural Pipeline. Council will be advocating strongly for a further \$34 million for this project.

CONNECTING RENEWABLE GAS

Connect Valorify to the gas grid to enable green biogas to be fed directly into the existing grid, eliminating unnecessary costs and carbon emissions for transporting gas on trucks. A \$2 million contribution is sought for this project.

NORTH-SOUTH HV ROUTE

A north-south heavy vehicle route for the Pyrenees Highway is needed to remove large trucks from the Ararat CBD. Council will be advocating for \$5 million for the necessary studies and investigations.

To support Council's efforts, an Advocacy Priorities 2026 document has been prepared. The format of this document enables each priority to be presented and shared with Federal and State Governments.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan 2025-29 Strategic Objectives

The 2026 Advocacy Priorities aligns with all strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2025-29

Budget Implications

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

Policy/Relevant Law

N/A

Sustainability Implications

N/A

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

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

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Endorses the Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026**
- 2. Publishes the Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026 document on Engage Ararat, and**
- 3. Continues to advocate to State and Federal governments on the key priorities identified in the Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026 document to move them forward and achieve outcomes for the community.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Ararat Rural City Council Advocacy Priorities 2026 are provided as Attachment 3.3

3.4 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27925

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 28 February 2026.

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 \$27.434 million in revenue and \$24.667 million in expenses to 28 February 2026. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$2.767 million for the eight months ended 28 February 2026.

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 \$18.309 million has been recognised as income for the eight months ended 28 February 2026.

User fees account for 5% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26 and \$1.188 million has been received to 28 February 2026. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

Recurrent Operating Grants total \$3.833 million to 28 February 2026, including \$1.880 million from the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission for general purpose grants and \$1.220 million for the local roads grants.

Non-recurrent Operating Grants total \$1.629 million to 28 February 2026. 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	-	-	1,289
Supported Playgroups	67	46	-
Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy	-	-	36
CALD Outreach Workers Initiative	129	129	-
Tiny Towns Fund - Pomonal Community Hub	-	61	58
Natural Disaster Relief	-	158	-
Council Support Fund - Pomonal Fires	-	-	-
Council Support Fund - Streatham Fires	-	400	-
Engage - Youth Events Activities & Happenings	55	55	-
Centenary Park Dog Park	100	9	66
Queen Street Housing Program	-	486	5,211
Ararat Hills Adventure Sports Precinct	-	-	400
Early Career Educators	-	73	31
Ararat Active Bike Network	266	-	-
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting and Accessibility	-	-	504
Primary Producer Support Payment	-	125	-
Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund	-	50	-
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	37	-
	617	1,629	8,845

Non-recurrent Capital Grants total \$1.746 million to 28 February 2026, 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	-	-	50
Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Cobb & Co Stables	-	29	25
Pony Club Sports Arena	1,490	321	112
Queen Street Housing Program	-	-	1,683
Ararat Library Lighting & Exterior Upgrade	-	45	6
TAC Safe Local Roads and Streets Program	-	90	401
Jack & Jill Kindergarten Upgrade	-	75	-
Mount William Road Reconstruction	-	1,174	826
Footpath-Ararat Retirement Village & Sports Precinct	-	-	35
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	12	1
	1,490	1,746	3,189

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 surplus of \$0.085 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 eight months ended 28 February 2026 Council has incurred \$8.545 million in employee costs. These costs include several grant-funded positions not budgeted for, and organisation restructure costs.

Materials and Services account for approximately 28% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the eight months ended 28 February 2026, Council has incurred \$8.084 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 28 February 2026. Comparative figures have been provided as at 30 June 2025.

Council's current assets have increased by \$9.813 million from \$17.978 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$27.791 million as at 28 February 2026. Cash and cash equivalents have increased by \$6.076 million from \$14.841 million to \$20.917 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$3.699 million from \$3.066 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$6.765 million as at 28 February 2026.

Total liabilities have increased from \$16.464 million in 2024/25 to \$19.792 million in 2025/26. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$1.110 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$1.612 million. Unearned income/revenue increased by \$3.234 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 \$6.076 million to \$20.917 million as at 28 February 2026.

Net cash of \$10.587 million was provided by operating activities, \$4.030 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.481 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	28/02/2026
<p>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</p>	122%	154%
<p>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</p>	0.86%	0.22%
<p>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</p>	7.83%	8.47%
<p>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</p>	49.39%	71.37%
<p>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</p>	\$4,936	\$3,288
<p>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</p>	\$2,002	\$2,033

Indicator	30/6/2025	28/02/2026
<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 28 February 2026 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$5.803 million compared to \$2.466 million as at 30 June 2025, an increase of \$3.337 million. In percentage terms 72.0% of the rates raised have been collected at 28 February 2026 compared to 70.2% up to 28 February 2025. The increased percentage up to 28 February 2026 includes payments totalling \$2.489 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.</p> <p>Outstanding rates are currently charged 10% interest.</p> <p>Council issues approximately 7,900 rate notices. In 2025/26 there are 2,495 assessments paying by instalments compared with 2,653 assessments in 2024/25.</p>	87.8%	72.0%
<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%	48.76%

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.

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 28 February 2026 be received and adopted.**

ATTACHMENTS

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

3.5 PRIVACY POLICY

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27926

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 seeks Council adoption of the Council's Privacy Policy. The policy sets out how Council collects, uses, discloses, stores and manages personal information, and the rights of individuals to access and correct their personal information. Adoption supports Council's obligations under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) (where applicable), and promotes consistent, transparent and privacy-protective practices across Council services.

DISCUSSION

The Privacy Policy provides Council's overarching statement on privacy and the handling of personal information collected through Council services, programs, facilities, compliance activities, community engagement and digital channels. It describes the types of personal information Council may collect, the purposes for which it is collected, how it is used and disclosed, how it is stored and protected, and how individuals can access and seek correction of their information or make a privacy complaint.

Subject to Council's decision, the policy will be published on Council's website and communicated internally. Operational procedures, forms and staff guidance materials will be aligned to the policy as required. The policy will be reviewed periodically and updated to reflect legislative changes, organisational changes, and lessons learned from any privacy incidents or complaints.

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.

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

Budget Implications

There are no direct budget implications arising from adoption of the Privacy Policy. Implementation will be managed within existing resources, noting that any future system or process improvements identified through implementation may be considered through normal budget processes.

Policy/Relevant Law

Relevant legislation and guidance includes the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) (including the Information Privacy Principles), the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) where Council handles health information, and the Public Records Act 1973 (Vic) in relation to recordkeeping. The policy also supports Council's broader information security and governance arrangements.

Sustainability Implications

There are no direct economic, social or environmental impacts arising from adoption of the policy. Improved privacy practices support organisational sustainability by strengthening governance, reducing the likelihood of privacy incidents, and maintaining community confidence in Council services.

Risk Assessment

Adoption of the Privacy Policy reduces governance and compliance risk by setting clear expectations for handling personal information. Residual risks relate to inconsistent implementation or staff awareness; these will be managed through communication, training, and periodic review of procedures and compliance.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The updated policy has been developed as an organisational governance document. Relevant internal stakeholders (including service areas that collect personal information) will be informed as part of implementation. The policy will be made publicly available to support transparency and assist community members to understand how Council manages personal information.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council adopts the Privacy Policy**

ATTACHMENTS

The Privacy Policy is provided as Attachment 3.5

3.6 GENDER EQUALITY AUDIT & GEAP CONSULTATION

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: HUMAN RESOURCES LEAD
DEPARTMENT: HUMAN RESOURCES
REFERENCE: 27927

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 2025 Workforce Gender Audit and Progress Report provide the Gender Equality Commission with an update on Council's progress towards achieving gender equality and highlights areas requiring further attention within the confines of the seven gender equality indicators. The seven gender equality indicators are:

1. Gender composition of the workforce.
2. Gender composition of the governing body.
3. Gender pay gap.
4. Sexual harassment.
5. Recruitment and promotion practices.
6. Leave and flexible working arrangements.
7. Gendered segregation of the workforce.

Under the *Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)*, Council is required to consult with staff and Councillors when developing its Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP). Staff consultation is currently underway, and feedback from Councillors is being sought to help identify priorities and inform the development of the 2026-2030 GEAP.

Consultation supports Council to not only meet its legislative obligations, but also to ensure future actions are practical, relevant, and aligned with organisational priorities. Councillor feedback will assist in shaping a GEAP that supports an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable workplace.

DISCUSSION

Background and Purpose of Consultation

Council is required under the *Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)* to take positive action to improve gender equality in the workplace. As part of this, Council undertakes regular workforce gender audits, progress reports, and develops a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) to address any gaps or areas for improvement. The 2025 workforce gender audit builds on the audits completed in 2021 and 2023, allowing Council to review progress, identify emerging trends, and highlight areas where further work may be needed. This work then informs the development of the next GEAP.

Consultation with staff and Councillors is a required part of developing the GEAP. Seeking feedback helps ensure the GEAP reflects the experiences of our workforce and the priorities of Council. It also helps make sure the actions we develop are practical, realistic, and capable of making a meaningful difference across the organisation.

Beyond meeting legislative requirements, consultation is an important way for Council to better understand workplace experiences and identify opportunities to strengthen inclusion and equity. Involving staff and Councillors in this process supports shared ownership of gender equality outcomes and helps ensure future initiatives align with Council's broader organisational and workforce objectives.

Key Findings in Detail

1. Gender Composition

Overall, staff gender balance has improved slightly since 2023, with women representing 49.03% of employees. Senior leadership continues to show strong female representation at 60%, while the governing body remains predominantly male (70%), indicating an ongoing area for attention. Part-time roles are disproportionately filled by women, highlighting potential impacts on career progression and workforce participation.

2. Pay and Remuneration

The mean total remuneration gap across all staff is 1.34% in favour of men. At the senior leadership level, the gap is 24.12%, indicating inequality in pay that requires attention in recruitment, promotion, and remuneration policies. However, this figure is not completely reflective of the broader leadership group, as it includes the CEO's remuneration, which can skew the results. Median and base salary measures also show some persistent gaps across occupational groups.

3. Workplace Culture and Safety

Flexible work is accessed more frequently by women (22.3%) than men (13.39%), suggesting potential barriers for male staff to utilise flexible arrangements. Sexual harassment reporting remains low, with only one formal complaint in 2025. Staff consultation will provide further insight into workplace culture, perceptions of inclusion, and barriers to reporting.

4. Occupational Segregation

Some roles remain highly gendered, particularly operational positions. Administrative and community-facing roles continue to be female-dominated. Feedback from staff and Councillors will help identify practical strategies to improve representation across all roles and support equitable career progression.

Gender Equality Snapshot - Key Indicators

Indicator	2025 Position	Trend	What This Means / Considerations
Overall Workforce Gender Composition	49.03% W / 50.32% M / 0.65% SD	Improved from 2023	Balanced workforce overall, but distribution varies across roles.
Senior Leadership Composition	60% W / 40% M	Stable improvement	Strong female leadership: ongoing monitoring required.
Governing Body Composition	30% W / 70% M	Slight improvement	Remains male dominated; impacts organisational perspective.
Part-Time Workforce	32.9% W / 1.3% M	Men decreased	Flexible roles still mostly taken by women: career progression impact.
Gender Pay Gap - All Staff	1.34% (Men higher)	Improved	Low overall gap but varies by occupational group.
Gender Pay Gap - Senior Leaders	24.12% (Men higher)	Increased	Persistent inequality at senior levels.
Flexible Work Uptake	22.3% W / 13.39% M	Increased	Women still access more; consider barriers for men.
Parental Leave Uptake	100% W	Decline in average weeks	Traditional caring roles still gendered; opportunity to

			encourage shared responsibilities.
Sexual Harassment Reporting	1 report	Slight increase	Low reporting may indicate underreporting or positive culture; further insight needed.
Recruitment Gender Balance	53.66% W / 46.34% M	Improved	Recruitment practices support balance.
Promotion Balance	52.94% W / 47.06% M	Stable	Promotions appear balanced; perceptions and experience data still important.
Occupational Segregation	Some roles are highly gendered	Minor improvements	Operational roles male dominated; admin/community roles female dominated.

Next Steps

The staff survey is underway to gather feedback on the audit findings, workplace experiences, and ideas for improving gender equality. Once complete, the results will be analysed and used to help shape priorities for the 2026-2030 GEAP.

Councillors are asked to please:

- Review the key findings and trends presented in this briefing.
- Provide feedback on areas of concern or priority.
- Suggest any additional actions or considerations to strengthen gender equality across Council.

Feedback from this discussion, combined with staff input, will inform the development of a GEAP that is both practical and aligned with Council's strategic goals.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

This work supports Council's commitment to a fair, inclusive and respectful workplace and contributes to achieving Council Plan objectives relating to strong governance, workforce sustainability, and community wellbeing.

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications arising

Policy/Relevant Law

Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

There is a risk of non-compliance with the *Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)* if consultation is not undertaken or audit findings are not addressed. Engaging with staff and Councillors helps reduce this risk and supports the development of a practical and informed GEAP.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Consultation is being undertaken with staff and Councillors to ensure the GEAP reflects workforce experiences and organisational priorities. Broader community engagement will be considered as part of ongoing gender equality initiatives where appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

- 1. Note the findings of the 2025 Gender Equality Audit and Progress Report**
- 2. Provide feedback on the key trends, areas of concern, and potential priorities for the 2025-2028 Gender Equality Action Plan.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

3.7 ROAD NAMING PROPOSAL - MCADIE LANE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27928

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 received a request to formally name the unnamed laneway located between Elizabeth and McGibbony Streets, running parallel to Vincent and Palmer Streets, Ararat.

A former resident of an adjoining property has requested Council to consider the name *McAdie Lane*, in recognition of past residents associated with the site and their contribution to the local community.

This report requests Council to consider commencing the statutory consultation process to formally name the laneway.

DISCUSSION

The proposed name *McAdie Lane* seeks to recognise past residents associated with an adjoining property, who resided at the site for almost 60 years and have since passed away.

Mr Ian McAdie played an active role in several community organisations. He was instrumental in establishing the Ararat Bird Club, which held regular meetings at the nearby Anglican Church Hall. He was also involved in the Golden Gateway Parade and contributed extensively as a volunteer across a range of local facilities.

His contributions included volunteering his time at the Ararat Velodrome, where he assisted with laying concrete, as well as at the Ararat trotting track, where he regularly graded the surface between races. He was also known for operating the mobile start gates when they were first introduced.

Guidelines developed by Geographic Names Victoria provide direction to councils in relation to road naming. Preliminary checks indicate that *McAdie Lane* does not duplicate any existing road names within a 30-kilometre radius, consistent with Principle D - Ensuring Names are not Duplicated. However, the similar pronunciation to *McReady Track*, located within the Ararat Regional Park, may be considered a potential conflict. Although, the risk of confusion is considered low given the differing road types, and the fact that *McReady Track* is situated within a regional park setting rather than a town environment.

The road type "Lane" is considered appropriate, as it applies to a narrow roadway.

Council is now asked to consider whether to commence proceedings to officially name the laneway. To build awareness of the proposal and invite feedback, it is appropriate to undertake public consultation. This would include written notice to adjoining landowners, publication on Engage Ararat, and promotion through Council's social media channels. In accordance with the Naming Rules, consultation with the immediate community must be undertaken for a minimum period of 30 days.

A map showing the lane and surrounding area is provided below.



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 arising from this report.

Policy/Relevant Law

Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 1989 provides Council with the power to name roads. The Geographic Place Names Act 1998 provides for the naming and registration of place names.

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

Low.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Council's intention to name the road will be published on Engage Ararat. Abutting landowners and relevant stakeholders will also be consulted.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Advertise its intention to name the unnamed laneway located between Elizabeth and McGibbony Streets, running parallel to Vincent and Palmer Streets, Ararat, as McAdie Lane; and**
- 2. Consider any submissions received during the consultation period at a future Council meeting.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS

4.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM - FEBRUARY 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27929

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

Community Engagement Program 2025/26 is a series of quarterly engagement outreach activities that aims to provide community with opportunities to ask questions, raise concerns and meet with Councillors and key staff at the Council. This monthly report provides a regular update to issues raised or upcoming plans for engagement activities.

DISCUSSION

Council adopted the Community Engagement Program 2025/26 at the November 2025 Council Meeting. This Program outlined a schedule for engagement sessions to be held in December 2025, March and June 2026.

Council delivered the December 2025 round of engagements in Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Mininera, Moyston, Pomonal, Willaura where 49 issues were raised. Most of these have now been resolved or actioned. A small number remain pending the outcome of Council's budget process, and one outstanding matter relates to the reopening of a local pub, with Council staff continuing to work closely with the business owners to provide support.

The March 2026 round of engagement sessions is scheduled for 23 to 27 March 2026 with a focus on the Draft Budget 2026/27. The feedback on the Draft Budget will be presented after submissions close on Friday 24 April 2026.

Other non-budget issues will be presented in the March 2026 Report at the April Council Meeting.

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.

- 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 Community Engagement Program 2025/2026 does not have any budget implications. This Program will be delivered within the existing resources and budget. The issues arising from the engagement sessions may have budget implications, these will be assessed on a case by case basis and may be considered for future budgets.

Policy/Relevant Law

Ararat Rural City Council's Community Engagement Policy

Sustainability Implications

The community engagement sessions will aim to coincide with other community events and activities, or locate the sessions in places where people may wish to visit. This is in recognition of the value of people's time and travel costs, and enables community members to achieve multiple activities in the one journey.

Risk Assessment

The attached Community Engagement Program 2025/26 includes a risk analysis and mitigation measures. This is a low risk Program.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This Program supports stakeholder collaboration and community engagement.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council receives the Community Engagement Program February 2026 report**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

4.2 PRESTIGE MILL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT - FEBRUARY 2026 UPDATE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27930

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 a regular 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.

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 Update

Demolition works at the former Prestige Mill site have been paused after small amounts of non-friable (low-risk) asbestos was identified on site. WorkSafe Victoria and the Environment Protection Authority have been fully informed, and works will resume under strict environmental and safety regulations once site controls are in place.

What is Non-Friable (Low Risk) Asbestos?

The material identified at the former Prestige Mill site is non-friable asbestos, which is considered a low-risk form when it remains intact and is properly managed. Non-friable asbestos is asbestos that is firmly bound within a solid material such as cement sheeting, concrete, or building products. In this form, the asbestos fibres are tightly held within the product and do not become airborne unless the material is heavily damaged, cut, or crushed without controls in place.

This is different from friable asbestos, which is loose or crumbly and more easily releases fibres into the air. Friable asbestos requires more intensive control measures.

Why the Risk is Low in This Situation

- The asbestos identified is non-friable (bonded).
- It is being managed under strict regulatory controls.
- Licensed contractors are undertaking the works.
- An independent hygienist is supervising and conducting air monitoring.
- Dust suppression measures are in place.
- Any contaminated material will be transported by a licensed carrier to an approved landfill facility.

When non-friable asbestos is handled in accordance with these requirements, the risk to nearby residents is considered very low.

What This Means for Residents

There is no need for residents to take any additional precautions. The safety measures in place are designed to protect workers and the broader community. Council's priority is ensuring the site is managed safely, transparently, and in full compliance with environmental and workplace health regulations.

The engineering and civil design work for the roads, footpaths, kerb and channel, and utilities will be continuing in preparation for when the site is cleared and new infrastructure is able to be built.

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. Project updates for the broader community are provided on Council's Engage Ararat website.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council receives the Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project - February 2026 Update report.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.3 ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE (FEBRUARY 2026)

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27931

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	15 (+2)
In progress 51-99%	11 (-)
In progress 0-50%	16 (-2)
Not Started	0
Ongoing	11

Further details on each action is provided in the table below. Sections highlighted in yellow show where there has been a change or noteworthy update.

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	In progress 0-50%	Council officers are working with the Department of Transport and Planning's (DTP) Regional Planning Hub on the Ararat Planning Scheme review. An updated timeframe from the Regional Planning Hub for the completion of the Review is Oct 2026.
	1.1.2 Establish annual targets for sustainable urban growth	In progress 0-50%	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 51-99%	The second draft of the structure plan has been received and is being 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%	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%	Two homes are nearing completion of construction. Another two homes are due to commence construction, and pre-construction planning for another two homes is underway.
	1.2.3 Work with developers to submit EOI application/s to the National Housing Infrastructure Facility Crisis and Transitional Housing (NHIF CT) program	Complete	The EOI application has been submitted. This action is marked complete, however if the EOI is successful, a full application will be submitted and further updates will be provided.
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%	Refurbishment works will commence in the April school holidays. Council is working closely with Y Kinders to minimise disruptions to families as much as possible during the works.
	1.3.2 Establish a new childcare centre in Lake Bolac	In progress 0-50%	Council officers are continuing to liaise with potential childcare providers to deliver this project
	1.3.3 Deliver the CALD Outreach Initiative	In progress 51-99%	The CALD Outreach Officer is continuing to actively engage families and has recently organised cultural awareness training for early childhood educators, which was delivered on 18 March 2026.
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'. The outcome was unfortunately unsuccessful. We will consider whether there is capacity to potentially deliver a smaller scale event
	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 be recommencing on 4 March 2026.
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	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

adding and advanced manufacturing, potentially leveraging “behind the meter” power.	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.
	2.2.3 Seek funding from the Victorian Government’s \$10 million fund to unlock industrial trunk infrastructure to accelerate new industrial developments	Complete	The Trunk Infrastructure Fund opened on 13 February 2026. Council will not be submitting an application and has instead provided support to emerging industries to apply. This action is marked complete. Council will continue to advocate for funding to be awarded to projects in Ararat Rural City
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%	Investigation and development of other opportunities to produce higher value outputs from municipal waste is underway.
	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.
	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	This issue has been identified as a priority in the proposed 2026 Advocacy Priorities Council Meeting report.
3.3 Partner with local organisations and scientific experts to implement the Environment Strategy 2024-34, with a focus on	3.3.1 Deliver the Pomonal Community Hall Battery Project with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and with support from the 100	In progress 0-50%	Indigo Power have undertaken site inspections and met with community members to discuss the project and answer queries. The new battery is expected to be installed by June 2026.

circular economy, emissions reduction and sustainable management of Council assets.	Neighbourhood Batteries Grants Program		
	3.3.2 Deliver the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program	In progress 51-99%	The tender for Roadside Weeds and Pest Program has been awarded and works are 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.	Complete	The application to the Community Energy Upgrades Fund Round 2 was unsuccessful. Council will continue to liaise with interested community asset committees to explore rooftop solar and renewable energy options at community facilities.
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	Complete	The Asset Plan 2025-35 was adopted at the October 2025 Council Meeting
	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). The CHMP has been approved in March 2026.
	4.1.3 Continue to advocate for a North South Heavy Vehicle Route	Ongoing	This issue has been identified as a priority in the proposed 2026 Advocacy Priorities Council Meeting report.
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%	Revised concept drawings have been prepared for the indoor sports facility after a review of accessibility and gender impacts.
	4.2.2 Deliver the Community Road Safety Strategy	In progress 51-99%	Preparation of the final draft Strategy is in progress.
	4.2.3 Deliver the Ararat Rural City Sport and Active Recreation Strategy	In progress 51-99%	The draft Strategy and Action Plan is presented to Council, see other report.
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	Complete	This action was completed at the February 2026 Council Meeting.
	5.1.2 Increase participation in programs at Ararat Gallery TAMA	Complete	This action was completed at the February 2026 Council Meeting.
	5.1.3 Investigate ways to maximise scheduling of community events at the Town Hall	Complete	This action was completed at the January 2026 Council Meeting.
	5.1.4 Identify innovative ways to increase the promotion and reach of	Complete	This action was completed at the January 2026 Council Meeting.

	performances at the Town Hall		
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 51-99%	The first meeting of the 2026 YEAH Crew was held on 25 February with a new group of young people from across the municipality.
	5.2.2 Deliver young people's programs across schools, largely through the Crazy Ideas College	In progress 51-99%	[update pending]
	5.2.3 Work with community groups to deliver an annual Volunteer Expo	In progress 0-50%	Planning for the National Volunteer Week celebrations in May are underway
	5.2.4 Promote the benefits and achievements of volunteers, to encourage participation	Ongoing	Applications to join Council's volunteer team have opened. The application form and Frequently Asked Questions are available via Engage Ararat.
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 first meeting of the Disability Action Plan Working Group was held on 21 January 2026, with passionate input from members about what is needed. The next meeting is scheduled for 25 March 2026.
	5.3.2 Develop the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29	Complete	The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-29 was adopted at the October 2025 Council Meeting.
	5.3.3 Hold quarterly meetings of the Child Friendly Cities and Communities Working Group	In progress 51-99%	The first meeting of the 2026 CFCC Working Group was held on 18 March with a great mix of experiences, capabilities and enthusiasm.
	5.3.4 Deliver multicultural events	Complete [will be complete by the Council Meeting]	Council partnered with many local community organisations for Harmony Day, held on Saturday 21 st March 2026 at the Ararat Town Hall. This was the 2 nd of two events budgeted, so this action is marked complete.
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	Complete	This action was completed at the January 2026 Council Meeting.
	6.1.2 Undertake a review of Council's insurance coverage and policies to ensure they continue to provide value for money	Complete	This action was completed at the November 2025 Council Meeting.
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 51-99%	IT infrastructure and systems upgrades are underway
	6.2.2 Undertake the Strategic Internal Audit Program - 5 years.	In progress 51-99%	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)	In progress 51-99%	Development of the 2026-30 GEAP is well underway

	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	This action was completed at the August 2025 Council Meeting.
	6.3.2 Develop a regular biannual program of face-to-face community engagement opportunities	Complete	This action was completed at the November 2025 Council Meeting.

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 - February 2026 report

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.4 2025/2026 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - FEBRUARY 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27932

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. The program's budget has substantial state and federal funding targeting road construction and 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 28 February 2026, 42% of the budget is expended which is an increase of 13% since 31 January 2026. A further 50% of the budget is committed with works expected to be completed by 30 June 2026.

Stage two of Mt William Road is currently underway with stabilising works progressing well. Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge Reconstruction is expected to reopen to traffic before the end of March. Bridge strengthening works at McCrows Road are due to commence on 30 March 2026 and Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge Strengthening (Buangor end over Billy Billy Creek) due to commence on 9 April 2026. Jack and Jill Kindergarten will commence in the last week of April with Council staff helping with removal of furniture and equipment and works to commence onsite from 6 April 2026.

PROPERTY CAPITAL PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Community Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended (25/26)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Property Capital General	\$166,000		\$166,000				\$86	\$86		
Minirera Recreation Reserve Toilet Upgrade						\$48,325	\$121,195	\$169,520		Works have commenced onsite.
Tatyoan Oval Upgrade							\$11,393	\$11,393		Works are completed with some final issues to be rectified before final completion is issued
Video Cameras/Security - Ararat Skate Park							\$6,421	\$6,421		These have been installed.
Video Camera/Security - Ararat Fitness Centre							\$13,203	\$13,203		These have been installed.
Lake Bolac Club Rooms - Roof Upgrade						\$23,400		\$23,400		Works to be completed by 30 June 26
Alexandra Oval - Hot Water Service Replacements						\$22,854		\$22,854		Works to be completed by 30 June 26
Former Cobb & Co Staging Stables <i>(Disaster Recovery Heritage Program)</i>	\$60,000	\$60,000			\$1,237		\$29,137	\$30,374	50%	Ararat Maintenance Plumbing has completed works on this project & and acquitted.
Ararat Pony Club - Covered Sports Area <i>(Play our Way Program)</i>	\$1,490,000	\$1,490,000			\$14,270	\$1,052,637	\$320,918	\$1,387,825	93%	The design and construction of the undercover arena has been awarded to MKM Constructions works are to commence 16 February 2026. Lighting installation has been awarded to Matt Peel Electrical - this includes the installation of 3-phase power. Power Upgrade not expected until mid year with Powercor.
Centenary Park - Dog Park <i>(Open Space for Everyone Program)</i>	\$112,000	\$100,000	\$12,000		\$1,172	\$63,590	\$8,961	\$73,723	66%	Works are commencing in February, all equipment and fencing is ordered and Parks & Gardens team to undertake installation.

PROPERTY CAPITAL PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Community Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended (25/26)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Buangor Sports Pavilion Redevelopment <i>(Tiny Towns Program)</i>	\$631,000	\$50,000	\$581,000 ((\$220k Property Capital) (\$361k Property Reserve)		\$303	\$542,738	\$87,567	\$630,608	100%	Building Permit has been approved and works are expected to commence in February.
Jack and Jill Kindergarten Redevelopment <i>(Building Blocks improvement grants program)</i>	\$745,000	\$745,000			\$26,000	\$539,734	\$82,735	\$648,469	86%	Works for this project have been awarded to: Renovation Works - ISJ Building Painting Works - Grampians Painting and Decorating Flooring - Choices Ararat Switchboard Upgrade - CHS Electrical Works to commence week of 5 April 2026
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade <i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i>	\$700,000	\$560,000	\$120,000	\$20,000	NA	\$403,550	\$3,914	\$407,464	58%	Tenders for Civil, Lighting and Fencing have been awarded under Council Delegation. Civil works are expected to commence on 7 April 2026 by SHS Civil.
Gordon Street Cricket Nets Upgrade <i>(Australian Cricket Infrastructure Grant)</i>	\$39,985	\$15,000	\$24,985		NA		\$35,301	\$35,301	88%	Synthetic carpet is being installed in February and concrete works have been completed, netting is the final works to be completed.
Pomonal Hall Battery Project <i>(Powering Resilience in the Regions Program)</i>	\$148,760	\$141,407	\$7,353		NA		\$7,353	\$7,353	100%	Council have paid their contribution to the project. Indigo Power have been awarded this project - any further expenditure will be paid by CVGA.
Ararat Library Lighting and Exterior Upgrade. <i>(Living Libraries Infrastructure Program 2024-25)</i>	\$51,026	\$51,026			NA		\$45,196	\$45,196	88%	External Painting and lighting have been completed.
TOTAL - PROPERTY CAPITAL	\$4,550,771	\$3,212,433	\$1,318,338	\$20,000	\$42,982	\$2,696,828	\$773,380	\$3,513,190		

PLANT & EQUIPMENT	Budget	Committed/ Contracted	Expended 25/26	%	Notes
Vehicle Purchases	\$240,000		\$204,131	85%	Replacement of 4 x Utilities and SUV
Major Plant Purchases	\$260,000		\$113,000		New reach mower
Fixtures, Fittings & Furniture	\$100,000	\$61,128	\$15,990		Town Hall - New Speaker IT Capital - Core Switch and WiFi Replacement
Book stock - Library Book Replacement	\$40,000		\$33,497	60%	
TOTAL - PLANT & EQUIPMENT		\$61,128	\$366,618	66%	

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
Works By Others <i>Woorndoo Streatham Road - Completed by Moyne Shire</i>	\$683,000		\$683,000	NA	\$683,000		\$683,000	100%	Works for this road is being undertaken by Moyne Shire. The budget amount is Council's contribution
Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing	\$1,500,000		\$1,500,000	NA		\$359,475	\$359,475	24%	\$1.5m budget reallocated from other line items. Additional OTTA Seal works include: - Nott Road, Ararat (Pyrenees Hwy End) - Sugarloaf Road
Reseal Program				NA		\$33,824	\$33,824		Reseal Program Completed in 24/25, current charge to this item is linemarking that was invoiced late and has been allocated to 25/26 budget.

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
Urban Road - Gravel to Seal	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000	NA		\$48,980	\$48,980	5%	Works Allocated for: - Alexandra Avenue (in conjunction with SLRSP Funding) - Coral & McNeil Street - Maude Street (in conjunction with Pony Club Project)
ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM									
Buangor Ben Nevis Road <i>(Roads to Recovery 24/25 & 25/26)</i>	\$3,143,000		\$2,143,000 (24/25)	\$269,592		\$52,382	\$321,974		Stage One of Road works are expected to commence in the coming months inline with the bridge works, to be undertaken by internal crew
Buangor Ben Nevis Road - Bridge Strengthening			\$1,000,000 (25/26)		\$308,862	\$3,550	\$312,412		Bridge Strengthening has been awarded West Pacific Group and is to commence around April 2026
Buangor Ben Nevis Road <i>(SILRP Funding 25/26)</i>	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000							Council contribution of \$1,250,000 required in 26/27 Budget
Mt William Road <i>(HSVPP Funding 24/25)</i>	\$6,250,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,250,000	\$217,582	\$869,268	\$1,379,880	\$2,466,730		Stage 1 of the works are complete with sealing finalised in December 25. Stage 2 will commence at the conclusion of harvest. All works must be complete by 30 June 2026.
Webb Street Reconstruction <i>(Roads to Recovery 24/25)</i>	\$400,000		\$400,000	\$13,822		\$152,093	\$165,915	100%	Works have been completed with sealing of the road expected in late January, early February.
Churchill Avenue Reconstruction			\$30,371			\$30,371	\$30,371		Final invoices for works completed in June 26.
Ararat Active Bike Network <i>(Active Transport Fund)</i>	\$399,000	\$266,000	\$133,000	\$13,525	\$175,202	\$18,009	\$206,736	52%	Tenders have been awarded for linemarking, and shoulder sealing under the CEO's delegation

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
Buangor Ben Nevis Road - Bridge 7001.14 Design and Construct <i>(Roads to Recovery - 25/26)</i>	\$1,300,000		\$1,300,000	\$68,723	\$223,699	\$903,347	\$1,195,769	92%	Contract No. 731 - Awarded July 2025 \$1.109m - Road and Bridge Pty Ltd \$100,000 allowance for Permits and Vegetation offsets. Works commenced onsite on 12 January 2026. Construction timeframe through until mid March 2026.
McCrows Road Bridge <i>(Roads to Recovery - 24/25)</i>	\$350,000		\$350,000	\$17,738	\$392,974	\$2,547	\$413,259		Works awarded to Waratah Constructions - work to commence early April 26. Additional cost to be paid from savings on Webb St Roads to Recovery costs.
Major Patching	\$100,000		\$100,000			\$61,911	\$61,911	61%	
Bridges	\$0					\$869	\$869		Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing
Footpath Renewal Program	\$400,000		\$400,000		\$101,420	\$208,220	\$309,640		
Albert Street Footpath <i>(Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program 25/26)</i>	\$85,000	\$42,500	\$42,500 taken from Footpath Renewal Program above		\$48,621	\$2,044	\$50,665	57%	Improving Pedestrian Accessibility to the Ararat Retirement Village and Sports Precinct - New Grant received September 2025. This project is currently out to tender.
Urban Drainage Works	\$350,000					\$34,077	\$34,077	6%	Savings from Gravel to Seal and Footpath Construction line items to pay for septic units at Buangor and Mininera
Mininera Recreation Reserve - Septic Upgrade			\$206,000		\$139,000	\$67,000	\$206,000		Works to be undertaken by Alford Drainage. Money from Building Reserve

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
Buangor Recreation Reserve - Septic Upgrade			\$201,000		\$134,000	\$67,000	\$201,000		Works to be undertaken by Alford Drainage, commencing week of 23 February 2026. Money from Building Reserve
Kerb and Channel	\$0					\$95,917	\$95,917		Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing Final payment for works on George Rd, carried over from 24/25.
Lake Bolac Kindergarten Carpark <i>(YMCA received funding for work)</i>	\$80,339	\$80,339		\$61,358		\$12,559	\$73,917	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.
Banfield Street - School Crossing <i>(Road Safety Program - School Safety Improvements 20-25)</i>	\$19,009	\$19,009		\$8,244		\$4,369	\$12,613	66%	<i>These works are complete.</i>
Queen Street Housing Support Program <i>(Housing Support Program - Community Enabling Infrastructure)</i>	\$7,380,000	\$7,380,000		\$152,580		\$492,546	\$645,126	9%	<i>Planning Permit application has been approved.</i>

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
SAFE LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS PROGRAM									
View Point, Tobin & Taylor St Intersections	\$224,000	\$224,000		\$581		\$10,232	\$10,813	5%	The detailed design for this project is complete, and lighting design is being finalised, with procurement commencing in February 2026. This project will be run in conjunction with the Footpath project for Taylor Street.
Ingor Street - Raised Crossing	\$110,000	\$110,000		\$600		\$13,380	\$13,980	12%	The detailed design for this project is complete, and procurement commencing in February 2026.
King Street - Raised Crossing	\$110,000	\$110,000		\$4,702	\$41,000	\$11,619	\$57,321	52%	Tenders have been received for this project and will be awarded in mid-January 2026.
View Point & High St Intersection	\$117,000	\$117,000		\$1,526	\$64,500	\$12,724	\$78,750	67%	Tenders have been received for this project and will be awarded in mid-January 2026.
Moore & Princes Street Intersection	\$131,000	\$131,000		\$145		\$5,543	\$5,688	4%	The detailed design for this project is complete, and procurement will commence in February 2026.
Vincent Street & Alexandra Avenue - Raised Crossing	\$321,000	\$321,000		\$239		\$20,545	\$20,784	6%	The detailed design for this project has been received; some alterations are being requested to make the works more amenable to the location. This project will be run in conjunction with the Gravel to Seal project for Alexandra Avenue.

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended 25/26	Overall Total	%	Notes
Queen & Moore Street Roundabout	\$548,000	\$548,000		\$1,531		\$20,268	\$21,799	4%	The detailed design for this project is complete, and the lighting design is being finalised, with procurement commencing in February 2026.
SAFE SYSTEM PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (23/24)									
Barkly Street Raised Crossing	\$312,232	\$312,232		\$398	\$153,156	\$2,990	\$260,272	83%	This project has been awarded to Enoch Civil and commenced on 17 March 2026..
High Street Raised Crossing					\$99,750	\$3,978			This project has been awarded to SHS Civil and is complete except for final painting.
TOTAL - ROADS CAPITAL	\$30,312,580	\$19,661,080	\$10,639,371	\$832,886	\$3,434,452	\$4,132,249	\$8,399,587		

FUNDED PROJECTS - MISCELLANEOUS (NOT CAPITALISED)	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended (25/26)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Roadside Weeds and Pest Program 25/26 <i>(Funding of the same name)</i>	\$74,135	\$74,135		NA	\$36,312	\$28,687	\$65,000	0%	This project has been awarded to Project Platypus, and they have commenced spraying and rabbit control in October.
Sport & Active Recreation Strategy <i>(Local Sports Infrastructure Funding 23/24)</i>	\$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.

FUNDED PROJECTS - MISCELLANEOUS (NOT CAPITALISED)	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (25/26)	Expended (25/26)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Community Road Safety Action Plan <i>(TAC Local Govt Funding)</i>	\$49,540	\$49,540		\$437		\$39,709	\$40,146	81%	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 <i>(Streamlining for Growth 22/23)</i>	\$85,000	\$85,000		NA	\$13,888	\$34,827	\$48,715	57%	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. <i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i>	\$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.

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 - February 2026 report.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

4.5 COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS - FEBRUARY 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 27933

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any Conflict of Interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a Conflict of Interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council received 15 applications for the February 2026 round of Community Support Grants. An assessment panel comprising two community members and the Deputy CEO assessed the applications and agreed to fund 10 of the applications, to the full requested amount with the exception of two applicants receiving a reduced amount. 1 additional applicant is successful pending clarification on budgetary items. If clarified, the successful number of applicants will be 11. The rejected applications were due to the following reasons:

1. No clear existing connection to Ararat.
2. Ineligible sole trader
3. No cash co-contribution shown in application. Encouraged to apply in a later round of Community Grants once engagement of the groups members support their idea further
4. Does not fit Community Support Grants Criteria

DISCUSSION

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

Council received 15 applications for the February 2026 round of Community Support Grants. An assessment panel comprising two community members and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer assessed the applications and agreed to fund 10 with a possible 11th applicant being successful pending further information. Of these applications, all except for two were granted the full amount.

The successful grants were as follows:

Community Organisation	Purpose	Amount
Ararat and District Eight Ball Association	Purchase of second-hand bus to be used to travel for tournaments which encourages players who don't have access to vehicles to participate	\$3000
Ararat & District Historical Society	To replace outdated computer at the Museum which will alleviate vulnerability for records being hacked. The computer is used for membership details and banking tasks	\$1533
Ararat Basketball Association	iPad Replacement - used for official legal scoring on PlayHQ. The current iPads are having difficulties due to their age	\$1174
Ararat City Band Inc	Bandroom signage - to clearly identify the building along with enhancing recognition of the band within the community	\$396
Ararat Legacy Club	Ararat RSL for a Celebration Luncheon and the launching of an Anniversary Keepsake Book - Most of what was requested is outside the scope of the grant program, for example, paying for meals for members of a group is similar to paying for general admission,	\$1000 (reduced amount - requested \$2353)

	which is ineligible. We will however support the Anniversary Keepsake Book if 2 copies were donated to the Langi Morgala Museum as a historical record that is available for the public to view. For this we'll grant \$1000.	
Ararat Neighbourhood House Inc	Purchasing two new sewing machines and an overlocker for the ANH's sewing group	\$2500 (reduced amount - requested \$3750)
Ararat Pistol Club Inc	Purchase of a ride-on lawn mower and build two garden beds with a small water tank for watering and drinking water	\$3000
Ararat Motorcycle Club/Australian Ariel Register	Hosting the Australian Ariel Register's annual National Ariel Rally on the 1st to the 4th of May 2026	\$2000
Grampians United Football Club	GUFC relaunch and renewal	\$3000 pending clarification
Green Hill Lake Development Board	Construction of a birdhide on Green Hill Lake Foreshore	\$3000
Wickliffe Lake Bolac Football Netball Club	Social rooms upgrade - new fridge and air conditioner	\$5000

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

5 ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

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

Budget implications

The grants were all made within existing budgetary allocations

Policy / Relevant Law

Community & Event Support Guidelines

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The outcome of each grant was made in conjunction between the two external panel members and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. A Conflict of Interest was noted by one of the panel members for one of the applications, therefore was not involved in the decision.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. That Council receive the Community Support Grants - February 2026 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: 27934

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 3 March 2026.

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 3 March 2026

Council Committees	Councillor representative	Current meeting (as presented)	Next scheduled meeting/s
Audit and Risk Committee	Cr Bob Sanders	03 March 2026	02 June 2026
Audit and Risk Committee	Cr Peter Joyce	03 March 2026	02 June 2026

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 03 March 2026 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: 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 17 March 2026
Council Briefing held on 24 March 2026

Matters discussed at the briefing:

- Draft Budget 2026/27
- CEO Employment & Remuneration Committee
- Town Entrances
- Petition for Community Improvements at Grevillea Court, Ararat North
- Gender Equality and GEAP Consultation
- Road Naming Proposal - McAdie Lane
- Privacy Policy
- Draft Sports Strategy
- Advocacy Priorities
- Monthly Performance Report - February 2026
- Queen Street Housing - Contractor termination
- Impact of potential fuel pricing on operations
- Gravel to Seal - Alexandra Avenue
- Gravel to Seal - Coral & McNeil Streets
- Monthly Community Engagement Report
- Monthly Performance Report - Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project Update - January 2026
- Monthly Progress Report - Council Plan - Annual Plan

- Community Grants - February 2026
- Capital Work Program - February 2026
- Building approvals
- Planning approvals under delegation

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:

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

SECTION 9 - CLOSE SESSION (CONFIDENTIAL)

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

- Item 9.1 - CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee update
- Item 9.2 - Councillor - Request for leave of absence
- Item 9.3 - Gravel to Seal - Alexandra Avenue, Ararat
- Item 9.4 - Gravel to Seal - Coral & McNeill Street, Ararat
- Item 9.5 - 87 Queen Street, Ararat - Demolition Works & Site Clearing Works

CLOSURE OF COUNCIL MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

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

RECOMMENDATION

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

OPEN COUNCIL MEETING RECOMMENCEMENT

RECOMMENDATION

That the Open Council Meeting recommence.

Gallery invited to return to Council Chamber.

LIFTING OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTIONS

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. The confidentiality of the report in relation to Confidential Agenda Items 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4 and 9.5 not be lifted on adoption of the motion.**