



Ararat Rural City

AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 28 April 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.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| SECTION 1 - PROCEDURAL MATTERS | 2 |
| 1.1 LIVE STREAMING..... | 2 |
| 1.2 TRADITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/OPENING PRAYER/COUNCILLORS PLEDGE | 2 |
| 1.3 APOLOGIES..... | 2 |
| 1.4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES | 2 |
| 1.5 DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST | 3 |
| SECTION 2 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION..... | 4 |
| 2.1 PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS..... | 4 |
| SECTION 3 - REPORTS REQUIRING COUNCIL DECISION | 5 |
| 3.1 BUANGOR AND MININERA RECREATION RESERVES - SEPTIC SYSTEMS..... | 5 |
| 3.2 COUNCILLOR CANDIDATURE POLICY - STATE OR FEDERAL | 9 |
| 3.3 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT | 11 |
| SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS..... | 17 |
| 4.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM - MARCH 2026 | 17 |
| 4.2 PRESTIGE MILL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT - MARCH 2026 UPDATE | 21 |
| 4.3 ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE (MARCH 2026) | 23 |
| 4.4 2025/2026 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - MARCH 2026 | 29 |
| SECTION 6 - INFORMAL MEETINGS..... | 41 |
| 6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS | 41 |
| SECTION 7 - NOTICES OF MOTION | 43 |
| SECTION 8 - URGENT BUSINESS..... | 44 |
| SECTION 9 - CLOSE SESSION (CONFIDENTIAL) | 45 |
| CLOSURE OF COUNCIL MEETING TO THE PUBLIC | 45 |
| OPEN COUNCIL MEETING RECOMMENCEMENT | 45 |
| LIFTING OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTIONS..... | 45 |

SECTION 1 - PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 LIVE STREAMING

Council is keen to engage with members of the community and live streams the formal Council Meetings to make them accessible. The stream is available to view on Council's Facebook page from 6pm and on Council's website following the Council Meeting.

1.2 TRADITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/OPENING PRAYER/COUNCILLORS PLEDGE

Traditional acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, and pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, we humbly ask you to help us, as elected Councillors of the Ararat Rural City Council. Guide our deliberations. Prosper what is your will for us, to your honour and glory and for the welfare and benefit of the people whom we serve in the Ararat Rural City.

Councillors Pledge

We will faithfully and impartially carry out and exercise the functions, powers, authorities and discretions invested in us under the *Local Government Act 2020* and any other Act to the best of our skill and judgement.

1.3 APOLOGIES

RECOMMENDATION

That the apology of Cr be accepted.

1.4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 31 March 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.

SECTION 3 - REPORTS REQUIRING COUNCIL DECISION

3.1 BUANGOR AND MININERA RECREATION RESERVES - SEPTIC SYSTEMS

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

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 septic tanks at the Buangor Recreation Reserve and Mininera Recreation Reserve have had continued issues associated with their age, overflow, compliance and increased use over the last few years, that has highlighted public and environmental health risks to both communities.

Land Capability Assessments (LCA) have been completed on both sites and quotations for the decommissioning and remediation of the existing units and the replacement with commercial standard systems to both recreation reserves.

This report details the new system designs and costing for the project and a recommendation for Council to allocate funds from the drainage section of the capital works program for completion of these projects.

DISCUSSION

The septic systems at the Buangor and Mininera Recreation Reserves are aging assets that for the previous few years have seen the systems fail on occasions where there is a risk to public health risk to the communities.

Due to the age of these assets, they are no longer compliant and do not meet current EPA regulations. The Mininera system is more than 50 years old and has three separate existing systems which emanates to a dam on the eastern side of the reserve. The Buangor system is in the vicinity of the Billy Billy Creek to the northeast of the reserve. Blazeaid was camped there for an extended time for the recovery of the Bayindeen fires and proved that the system could not sustain this kind of use. At the time, Council bought in additional resources to meet the demand, however the aging septic still requires an upgrade for compliance.

Following initial investigations, Alford Drainage undertook the initial land capability assessment for both the Buangor Recreation Reserve and Mininera Recreation Reserve in the winter of 2025. With these designs and quotations have been sought from Alford Drainage as the original supplier to complete the work.

The Mininera proposal considers the replacement and upgrading from the existing septic system to support the weekly wastewater load of a clubhouse containing a kitchen and an external toilet block with four toilets. Works include decommissioning of the existing septic tanks and decommissioning and backfilling of the existing dam.

The Buangor proposal considers the replacement and upgrading from the existing septic system to support the weekly wastewater load of the Cobb and Co. and the Buangor Sprots Pavillion bar, kitchen and toilets. The decommissioning of the existing unit is included as a part of this project, and the new system will be relocated to a more suitable position to provide service to both the Cobb and Co. and Sports pavilion buildings.

The estimated costs for replacement of the septic systems is a combined \$407,000, which will ensure the suitability and sustainability of the systems for both communities into the future.

The capital works program currently reflects an underspend within the drainage infrastructure. It is recommended that Council approve the reallocation of this drainage funding, together with other identified savings across infrastructure items, to facilitate the required upgrade of the septic systems at both locations. These upgrades are necessary to achieve compliance with current EPA standards and will ensure that the needs of facility users continue to be met into the future.



Figure 1 - Locality Plan - Buangor



Figure 2- Locality Plan - Mininera

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

Council has a current no budget available for the completion of these works within its current capital works budget. The funds are available from the Building Reserve.

Policy/Relevant Law

1. ARCC Procurement Policy

 - Local Government Act 2020

Sustainability Implications

The design of the project has concentrated on more sustainable and financially responsible design opportunities while still ensuring that the systems meet both EPA and community requirements.

Low Risk - Risks will be managed through project planning and management procedures and contract administration.

Collaborative Tendering Opportunity

There is no opportunity for collaborative tendering associated with this project.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Stakeholder engagement has been undertaken as a part of the development of these projects.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council approve the use of \$407,000 from the existing drainage infrastructure funding and other identified savings across infrastructure for the upgrade of the Buangor and Mininera Recreation Reserve Septic Systems.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments to this report.

3.2 COUNCILLOR CANDIDATURE POLICY - STATE OR FEDERAL

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE:

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 briefing provides Councillors with an overview of the proposed Councillor Candidature Policy – State or Federal Election which established clear guidance for circumstances where a sitting Councillor seeks nomination or election to State or Federal Parliament. The purpose of this policy is to support good governance, transparency and community confidence by clarifying expectations, managing potential conflicts of interest and ensuring continuity of Council operations during periods where a Councillor is campaigning for higher office.

DISCUSSION

Councillors are entitled to seek election to State or Federal Parliament and to participate in the democratic process. However, where a sitting Councillor becomes a prospective or nominated candidate, this may create actual or perceived risks relating to conflicts of interest, improper use of position, reputational impact, and the appropriate separation of Council business from election campaigning.

This policy has been developed to provide clear, consistent guidance for managing these risks and to ensure Council continues to operate in a transparent, lawful and impartial manner throughout election periods. The policy reflects Councillors obligations under the Local Government Act 2020, associated regulations and the Councillor Code of Conduct, particularly in relation to standards of conduct, proper use of position and avoidance of conflicts of interest.

Key elements of this policy include requirements for Councillors to formally declare their candidacy, restrictions on the use of Council resources for election purposes and clear expectations regarding conduct, media engagement, social media use and advocacy activities. These measures are designed to ensure there is not actual or perceived misuse of Council position or resources in support of a candidacy and to maintain public confidence in Council's decision-making and governance arrangements.

This policy also recognises Council's role in continuing to advocate for the community in a non-partisan manner during State or Federal elections periods, while ensuring such advocacy is clearly distinguished from individual candidacies.

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

Policy/Relevant Law

- Local Government Act 2020
- Councillor Code of Conduct (Ararat Rural City Council)
- Governance Rules (Ararat Rule City Council)
- MAV Guideline - Councillors Standing for State or Federal Elections
- Hunt & Hunt Lawyers advisory

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

There is a risk of actual or perceived misuse of Council position or resources where a sitting Councillor undertakes campaign activities while continuing to perform Council duties. Dual roles may also give rise to conflicts of interest, particularly where Council decisions, advocacy or public commentary intersects with election issues.

During election periods, Council faces heightened reputational, legal and compliance risks, including community perceptions of political bias, breaches of conduct obligations under the Local Government Act 2020, and inappropriate use of Council communication or media platforms.

There is also a potential operational risk to council continuity and effective governance where campaigning impacts a Councillor's availability, particularly where the Mayor is a candidate.

These risks are mitigated through the proposed policy by requiring formal declaration of candidacy, separation of Council and campaign activities, restrictions on use of Council resources, leave of absence arrangements and clear protocols for conduct, media engagement and advocacy.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This draft policy was taken to the Councillor briefing on the 21 April 2026

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council adopts the Councillor Candidature Policy - State or Federal Elections**

ATTACHMENTS

The Councillor Candidature Policy - State or Federal Elections is provided as Attachment 3.2

3.3 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The financial statements and performance indicators have been prepared for the period ended 31 March 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 \$29.677 million in revenue and \$27.510 million in expenses to 31 March 2026. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$2.167 million for the nine months ended 31 March 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 \$18.319 million has been recognised as income for the nine months ended 31 March 2026.

User fees account for 4.74% of the total budgeted income for 2025/26 and \$1.336 million has been received to 31 March 2026. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

Recurrent Operating Grants total \$3.862 million to 31 March 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 \$1.780 million to 31 March 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 | 52 | - |
| Ararat Rural City Sport, Active Recreation & Open Space Strategy | - | 25 | 11 |
| 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 | 23 | 52 |
| Queen Street Housing Program | - | 505 | 5,192 |
| Ararat Hills Adventure Sports Precinct | - | - | 400 |
| Early Career Educators | - | 73 | 31 |
| Ararat Active Bike Network | 266 | - | - |
| Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting and Accessibility | - | 85 | 419 |
| Primary Producer Support Payment | - | 125 | - |
| Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund | - | 50 | - |
| Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000) | - | 39 | - |
| | 617 | 1,780 | 8,702 |

Non-recurrent Capital Grants total \$2.628 million to 31 March 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 | 433 | 0 |
| Queen Street Housing Program | - | - | 1,683 |
| Ararat Library Lighting & Exterior Upgrade | - | 45 | 6 |
| TAC Safe Local Roads and Streets Program | - | 102 | 390 |
| Jack & Jill Kindergarten Upgrade | - | 75 | 0 |
| Mount William Road Reconstruction | - | 1,941 | 59 |
| Footpath-Ararat Retirement Village & Sports Precinct | - | - | 35 |
| Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000) | - | 43 | 9 |
| | 1,490 | 2,628 | 2,307 |

Note

It is important to note the following:

1. The Grants Operating (recurrent) figure in the Original Budget was \$8.909 million and in the Current Budget is recorded as \$4.721 million, as \$4.188 million was paid to Council in 2024/25 by the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission (VLGGC) for the 2025/26 financial year. Council has still received the expected VLGGC income, to be spent in 2025/26, however it will be reported over two financial years.
2. Unearned revenue received in prior years has been adjusted between the Original Budget and Current Budget with an additional \$6.659 million for Grants Operating (non-recurrent), \$0.386 million for Grants Capital (recurrent) and \$2.282 million for Grants Capital (non-recurrent) included in the Current Budget on the assumption that each of the grant projects will be completed during the 2025/26 financial year.
3. These changes in the budget, plus the note reported under expenses, create a change in the reported surplus position from a projected surplus of \$2.050 million to a surplus of \$3.028 million for 2025/26. The year-end variance is a deficit of \$0.264 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 nine months ended 31 March 2026 Council has incurred \$9.449 million in employee costs. These costs include several grant-funded positions not budgeted for, and organisation restructure costs.

Materials and Services account for approximately 36.94% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2025/26. For the nine months ended 31 March 2026, Council has incurred \$9.003 million in materials and services costs. There are a number of projects, including those carried forward from 2024/25 that are expected to be completed before the end of the financial year.

Note

It is important to note the following:

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

Balance Sheet (Attachment 2)

The Balance Sheet is one of the main financial statements and reports Council's assets, liabilities and equity at a given date, in this case 31 March 2026. Comparative figures have been provided as at 30 June 2025.

Council's current assets have increased by \$6.634 million from \$17.978 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$24.612 million as at 31 March 2026. Cash and cash equivalents have increased by \$4.703 million from \$14.841 million to \$19.544 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$1.874 million from \$3.066 million as at 30 June 2025 to \$4.940 million as at 31 March 2026.

Total liabilities have increased from \$16.464 million in 2024/25 to \$18.589 million in 2025/26. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$0.977 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$1.852 million. Unearned income/ revenue increased by \$1.699 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 \$4.703 million to \$19.544 million as at 31 March 2026.

Net cash of \$11.601 million was provided by operating activities, \$6.371 million was used in investing activities, and \$0.527 million was used in financing activities.

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

Financial Performance Indicators (Attachment 4)

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

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

| Indicator | 30/6/2025 | 31/03/2026 |
|---|-----------|------------|
| <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% | 146% |
| <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% | 0.21% |
| <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% | 8.39% |
| <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% | 67.81% |
| <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 | \$3,667 |
| <p>Indicator - Revenue level <i>Measure - Average residential rate per residential property assessment</i></p> | \$2,002 | \$2,032 |

| | | |
|--|---------|--------|
| 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 | | |
| Indicator - Percentage of total rates collected The internal audit conducted in 2019 on Rates Revenue and Rate Debtor Management found no routine or regular reporting of large and long outstanding rates debtors. The outstanding Rates Debtors is reported in the Annual Financial report. As at 31 March 2026 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$4.422 million compared to \$2.466 million as at 30 June 2025, an increase of \$1.956 million. In percentage terms 78.7% of the rates raised have been collected at 31 March 2026 compared to 76% up to 31 March 2025. Outstanding rates are currently charged 10% interest. Council issues approximately 7,900 rate notices. In 2025/26 there are 2,495 assessments paying by instalments compared with 2,158 assessments in 2024/25. | 87.8% | 78.7% |
| Indicator - Asset Renewal & Upgrade <i>Measure - Asset renewal & Upgrade compared to depreciation</i> Expected range in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 40% to 130% Assessment of whether council assets are being renewed or upgraded as planned. It compares the rate of spending on existing assets through renewing, restoring, replacing or upgrading existing assets with depreciation. Ratios higher than 1.0 indicate there is a lesser risk of insufficient spending on Council's asset base. | 100.75% | 63.48% |

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 31 March 2026 be received and adopted.**

ATTACHMENTS

Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators are provided as Attachment 3.3

SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS

4.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM - MARCH 2026

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

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.

The March 2026 round of engagement sessions was delivered between 23 to 27 March 2026 in Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Moyston, Pomonal, Tatyoon and Willaura, with a focus on the Draft Budget 2026/27. 27 people attended the engagement sessions, and 42 non-budget issues were raised or discussed (see Table 1 below), with only 1 issue waiting further clarification before it should be considered actioned.

The feedback on the Draft Budget will be presented after submissions close on Friday 24 April 2026.

Table 1. Non-budget issues raised and their progress to date.

| # | Issues Raised | Progress as of 16 April 2026 |
|---|---|--|
| | Ararat | |
| 1 | Query about what's happening with the glass house at Alexandra Gardens, Ararat | Rotary, in conjunction with Council, have completed the EOI process for the removal of the orchid glass house and are waiting for the remover to take the structure. |
| 2 | Asked if a native plant or two could be planted in the garden beds near the glass house mentioned above. | Suggestion sent to the parks and gardens team for consideration. |
| 3 | Asked if the slope on the lake side of the cafe in Alexandra Gardens can be improved. | Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate. |
| 4 | Query regarding whether Council has a building inspector for pools, and if not, whether we could get one. | Council currently does not have a building inspector for pools but is open to having one in the future. |
| | Buangor | No issues raised |
| | Elmhurst | |
| 5 | There is a dip in the road at Hillarys Road, Elmhurst, near the intersection with Pyrenees Highway, can this be filled in and levelled? | Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate. |

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| 6 | Boundary Road, Elmhurst, between the intersections with Glenpatrick Road and Pyrenees Highway also needs some maintenance work | Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate. |
| 7 | Asked for clarity on what can and cannot be taken to the Elmhurst Transfer Station when it opens, and if this can be mailed to all of the residents. | Information will be provided on what can be disposed of at the Elmhurst Transfer Station via poster/fliers, social media, etc. Unfortunately, this information cannot be sent by mail to all residents in Elmhurst due to the cost per letter. Public notification of the opening dates commenced on 15 April 2026. |
| 8 | Feedback was received that garbage truck drivers were doing U-turns in a couple of resident's driveways. | Feedback has been passed on to the waste team to not use driveways for U-turns. |
| 9 | The community wanted to say that the Council staff member who does the mowing in Elmhurst does a great job. | The positive feedback has been noted and passed on to the staff member. |
| 10 | Dust suppression on Boundary Lane and Darbyshires Road was requested, the latter is used by a lot of farm machinery and trucks | Dust suppression methods have a short lifespan. Other options, such as OTTA seals, will be considered based on traffic count and other data |
| 11 | Query was raised around whether signs can be installed onto heritage buildings. | This query is pending further clarification that is being followed up |
| Lake Bolac | | |
| 12 | Positive feedback was received that Council were doing a great job. | Feedback noted with thanks. |
| 13 | Query was received on the status of the Lake Bolac Walking Track project. | A significant part of this project is in areas that Council does not own or manage. The sections that are in areas that Council has oversight have not been funded in the upcoming Budget, however, will be considered as part of future capital works planning and decision making |
| Moyston | | |
| 14 | Request for bin surrounds at the Recreation Reserve | Request has been lodged for consideration |
| 15 | Queries regarding the Fire Prevention Notices and how this process worked. | Queries were resolved at the engagement session, no further action required. |
| 16 | There was discussion around a future restoration works on the rotunda | For noting, no further action at this stage. |
| 17 | Queries regarding upgrades to the netball courts in Moyston and new change rooms | Funding from the Local Sports Infrastructure Fund was announced recently to upgrade the netball/tennis courts and begin planning for new changerooms close to the courts. |
| 18 | There was a general discussion around the rabbit pest problem and measures being trialled in the area. | For noting, no further action required. |
| Pomonal | | |
| 19 | Request for walking/bike riding track from Pomonal Hall to Pomonal Estate | This will be considered as part of future capital works planning and decision making |
| 20 | There were queries regarding disposing of large volumes of green waste | These queries will be considered as part of a review of the rural skip bin service later this year. |
| 21 | Community asked for the opening times and dates for the rural skip bins in Moyston and for these to be communicated to the community. | The Moyston Transfer Station will be open on Saturday 16 th and 23 rd May from 10am to 1pm. Promotion of these dates began on 15 April. |

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| 22 | Pomonal community requested to have their own rural skip bin. | This request will be considered as part of a review of the rural skip bin service later this year. |
| 23 | Request for clean-up of the burn scar on Tunnel Road, Pomonal | Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate |
| 24 | The tunnel track loop walking track is getting washed away when it rains | Maintenance schedule will be reviewed with consideration for increasing with rain frequency. |
| 25 | Wattles need cleaning up on the edge of bitumen on Waterhole Road, Pomonal | Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate |
| 26 | Dead wood along Springwood Hill Road intersection requires cleaning up | Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate |
| 27 | The Pomonal Newsletter asked to be notified of Council's media releases | The Pomonal Newsletter's email has been provided to the Council's media team. |
| 28 | Query about walking tracks on the roadside on Robins Road. | This will be considered as part of future capital works planning and decision making |
| 29 | There was interest in the Council's Environmental Working Group in the Pomonal community. | Sustainability Officer has visited Pomonal and met with interested community members on 25 March |
| 30 | Request for information to be received in a more timely manner | CFA will be notified directly on relevant information |
| 31 | Concerns around the speed limit on Waterhole Road was raised. This feedback was also submitted to the Road Safety Strategy consultation process. | This request will be reviewed as part of the Rural Road Strategy process. |
| 32 | Proposed idea for a school drop off point between the school and the CFA building. Letter of support may be requested | Noted, no further action until request for letter of support received. |
| 33 | Safety improvements were requested at the intersection of Tobacco Road and Ararat-Halls Gap Road. Road name sign missing. | Safety improvements to be submitted to VicRoads as the road authority for this intersection. The road name sign was replaced on 25 March 2026. |
| | Tatyoon | |
| 34 | There was positive feedback about the Mount William Road and a query around upcoming road works for the purposes of planning school bus routes. | Query was resolved during the session, no further action. |
| 35 | Query about the Significant Landscape Overlay for the Grampians National Park | Details for this overlay can be found in clause 42.03, Schedule 1 of the Ararat Planning Scheme |
| 36 | The proposed wind farm project was raised. | Topic was discussed during the engagement session. Council is not the planning authority for this proposed project. No further action. |
| 37 | The Tatyoon Pavilion project was presented as a high priority and there was a strong request for Council's support to advocate for the project. | Council officers will continue to work with the Tatyoon Community Asset Committee towards achieving this project. |
| 38 | Possible future community facilities at Maroona Recreation Reserve were flagged. | Future intentions were noted, Council will work with the Maroona Community Asset Committee as these plans take shape. |
| | Willaura | |
| 39 | Area around the Willaura Cenotaph is likely to need some maintenance work in the future. | Site conditions to be checked and any necessary works will be considered as part of future capital works planning and decision making |
| 40 | Footpath between the Willaura supermarket and Police Station needs attention | Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate |

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| 41 | Request for a new ramp for wheelchair/scooter access from the road to the footpath outside the Willaura bank area. | Request has been lodged for consideration |
| 42 | Could there be a pool committee to help manage the Willaura swimming pool? | A committee of Council would not normally be established for a facility that is currently managed by staff. |

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:

- Council receives the Community Engagement Program March 2026 report**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

4.2 PRESTIGE MILL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT - MARCH 2026 UPDATE

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

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

Works will be resuming on this project on 27 April 2026 under strict environmental and safety regulations and in accordance with WorkSafe Victoria and the Environment Protection Authority requirements.

Decontamination of Removed Material

Works will commence with the decontamination of the building rubble material that has already been removed from the Queen St site, this is expected to occur over two weeks. All decontaminated materials will be inspected and cleared by certified hygienists, and any remaining contaminated material will be transported by a licensed transporter to the lawful place of disposal at Stawell Landfill.

Safety measures during this phase will include:

- Ongoing air quality monitoring
- Dust suppression with water
- Established site exclusion zones
- Use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

Crushing for Reuse

Once the material has been cleared of asbestos contamination by the certified hygienist, the concrete building waste will be crushed to create reusable construction material. Crushing will occur over approximately 6-8 weeks, undertaken in batches as cleared material becomes available. Activities are expected 1-2 days per week between 7:00am and 6:00pm. Water will be used for dust suppression, and noise will be carefully managed in accordance with permitted working hours. All crushed material will be tested and cleared before being reused or removed from site.

Council will appoint a suitably licensed and qualified contractor to undertake these works.

Demolition Works at Queen Street

New fencing has been erected at the Queen Street site as part of the site controls in preparation for the resumption of demolition works, and a new building permit for the demolition is in the process of being issued. Demolition works at the Queen Street site are expected to recommence in mid-May 2026.

Construction of New Infrastructure

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

The estimated timeframe for the construction of new enabling infrastructure is expected to commence in the second half of 2026.

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 - March 2026 Update**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.3 ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE (MARCH 2026)

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

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 | 21 (+6) |
| In progress 51-99% | 10 (-1) |
| In progress 0-50% | 12 (-4) |
| Not Started | 0 |
| Ongoing | 10 (-1) |

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

| Council Plan Objectives | Actions | Progress | Officer Comment |
|--|---|-----------------------|--|
| 1.1 Develop a strategic land use planning framework with annual targets to support sustainable urban growth. | 1.1.1 Complete a review of Council's Planning Scheme as required under Section 12B of the Planning Environment Act 1987 | 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% | This project is expected to be completed in June 2026. |

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| 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. | Complete | Four houses have now completed construction in this financial year, enabling this action to be marked complete. Preconstruction planning for next years homes are 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 | This action was completed at the January 2026 Council Meeting. |
| 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 51-99% | Refurbishment works have commenced in the April school holidays and are expected to be completed in early May 2026 |
| | 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 supporting families to enrol into kindergarten for 2027. This action will be completed in June 2026 while the Initiative will continue until June 2027. |
| 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 | This action was completed at the October 2025 Council Meeting. |
| | 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, recommenced 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 adding and advanced manufacturing, potentially leveraging "behind the meter" power. | 2.2.1 Work with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and private sector partners to develop plans for the ARCC Circular Economy Precinct. | Ongoing | Council is working with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and a number of private sector partners to make a case for a state significant circular economy hub in Ararat |
| | 2.2.2 Continue to support Valorify P/L to develop a biogas plant in | Ongoing | Council continues to strongly support Valorify P/L. |

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| | Ararat which uses straw as the major input. | | |
| | 2.2.3 Seek funding from the Victorian Government's \$10 million fund to unlock industrial trunk infrastructure to accelerate new industrial developments | Complete | This action was completed at the March 2026 Council Meeting. |
| 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. | Complete | The results of stakeholder's use of Council's compost created from green waste has demonstrated that this is a useful and valuable resource. Efforts will now focus on promotion of the compost, including compost open days such as the one held on 13 April 2026 |
| | 3.1.2 Continue to support Plastoil to develop a plastics recycling facility in Ararat | Complete | Plastoil have reached the stage of readiness for Invest Victoria to support them through the final stages of planning and development. |
| 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 circular economy, emissions reduction and sustainable management of Council assets. | 3.3.1 Deliver the Pomonal Community Hall Battery Project with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and with support from the 100 Neighbourhood Batteries Grants Program | In progress 0-50% | Installation of the new battery is expected to commence in May and be completed by June 2026. |
| | 3.3.2 Deliver the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program | In progress 51-99% | The Roadside Weeds and Pest Program works are underway and expected to be completed in May 2026 |

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| | 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 2026 Advocacy Priorities. |
| 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 currently released for public view before final consideration by Council |
| 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 51-99% | 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 performances at the Town Hall | Complete | This action was completed at the January 2026 Council Meeting. |
| 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% | Crazy Ideas College have delivered two 'Values in Action' sessions in Term 1 with Ararat College and Lake Bolac College. |

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| | 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% | Disability Action Plan Working Group have provided highly insightful input and advice into the process for developing a meaningful Disability Action Plan for Ararat Rural City. Based on the guidance from the Group, plans and materials that will support genuine engagement are being developed. The completion of the Disability Action Plan is now expected to occur in 2026/27. |
| | 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% | This action will be completed after the next quarterly meeting scheduled for 20 May 2026. |
| | 5.3.4 Deliver multicultural events | Complete | This action was completed at the March 2026 Council Meeting. |
| 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 | Complete | The IT infrastructure and systems upgrades are now complete |
| | 6.2.2 Undertake the Strategic Internal Audit Program - 5 years. | Complete | The items for 2025/26 are now complete |
| | 6.2.3 Develop the 2026-2030 Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) | Complete | Development of the 2026-30 GEAP is now complete |
| | 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 | 6.3.1 Deliver a new Customer Request Management System (CRMS) integrated | Complete | This action was completed at the August 2025 Council Meeting. |

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| deliberative engagement practices, while ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making. | with the Snap Send Solve app | | |
| | 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 - March 2026 report**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.4 2025/2026 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - MARCH 2026

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

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 totaling \$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 continue 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 31 March 2026, 57% of the budget is expended with committed works expected to be completed by 30 June 2026.

Mt William Road is progressing well with the final stage commencing stabilizing, and other completed stages being finalized for sealing. Buangor Ben Nevis Road Bridge Reconstruction is completed with bridge strengthening works on the bridge over Billy Billy Creek commencing on 20 April 2026. Bridge strengthening works at McCrows Road are well underway with the bridge deck being put in place on Friday 17 April 2026. Jack and Jill Kindergarten redevelopment has commenced at a substantial rate and will be completed by the end of the month, plastering, cabinetry and flooring works are currently in progress. The Pony Club arena construction is nearing completion with lighting and drainage works to be finalized in the coming months. The OTTA seals on Tatyoon North Road, Logan Road and Jacksons Creek Road are being prepped for seal to be undertaken in May 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 | | | | | | | |
| Mininera Recreation Reserve Toilet Upgrade | | | | | | \$13,556 | \$159,714 | \$173,270 | | Toilets have been installed onsite and are almost complete. |
| 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 have been completed |
| Former Cobb & Co Staging Stables <i>(Disaster Recovery Heritage Program)</i> | \$60,000 | \$60,000 | | | \$1,237 | | \$29,134 | \$30,371 | 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 | \$324,135 | \$969,441 | \$1,307,847 | 87% | 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 | \$50,122 | \$22,555 | \$73,850 | 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 | | \$114,753 | \$115,056 | 18% | 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 | \$439,734 | \$176,846 | \$642,581 | 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 have commenced, and tracking well. |
| Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade <i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i> | \$700,000 | \$560,000 | \$120,000 (\$20,000 from Tennis Australia) | \$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 | \$1,254,497 | \$1,618,078 | \$2,915,557 | | |

| PLANT & EQUIPMENT | Budget | Committed/ Contracted | Expended 25/26 | % | Notes |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|--|
| Vehicle Purchases | \$240,000 | | \$208,395 | 80% | Replacement of 4 x Utilities and 2 x 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 | \$370,882 | 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 | \$1,014,915 | \$371,780 | \$1,386,695 | 92% | \$1.5m budget reallocated from other line items. Additional OTTA Seal works include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tatyoon North Road • Logan Road • Jacksons Creek 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 | \$738,825 | \$49,446 | \$788,271 | 78% | Works Allocated for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alexandra Avenue (in conjunction with SLRSP Funding) Coral & McNeil Stret Maude Street (in conjunction with Pony Club Project) |
| ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM | | | | | | | | | |
| Buangor Ben Nevis Road <i>(Roads to Recovery 24/25 & 25/26)</i> | \$3,143,000 | | \$2,143,000 (24/25) | \$269,592 | | \$60,220 | \$329,812 | | 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 20 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 | \$313,482 | \$1,966,245 | \$2,497,309 | 40% | Stage 2 & 3 will be sealed by end of April 2026. Stabilising of stage 4 will be completed by end of April with stone and sealing application by |
| 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 | \$17,275 | \$206,002 | 52% | Tenders have been awarded for linemarking, and shoulder sealing under the CEO's delegation. Works to commence on shoulders 20 April 26. |

| 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 | \$905,300 | \$1,197,722 | 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 | \$3,238 | \$413,950 | | 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 | | | | | \$974 | \$974 | | Transferred to Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing |
| Footpath Renewal Program | \$400,000 | | \$400,000 | | \$33,875 | \$286,218 | \$320,093 | | |
| 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 | \$4,618 | \$53,239 | 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 | | | | | \$36,929 | \$36,929 | | 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 | | \$89,000 | \$117,000 | \$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 | | \$84,000 | \$117,000 | \$201,000 | | Works to be undertaken by Alford Drainage, commencing week of 23 February 2026. Money from Building Reserve |
| Kerb and Channel | \$0 | | | | | \$101,040 | \$101,040 | | Transferred to Gravel Road Sheetting, 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 | \$442,700 | \$511,840 | \$1,107,120 | 15% | <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 | | \$11,173 | \$11,754 | 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 | | \$13,764 | \$14,364 | 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 | \$13,806 | \$59,508 | 54% | Tenders have been awarded to SHS Civil. Works to be undertaken outside of school term. |
| View Point & High St Intersection | \$117,000 | \$117,000 | | \$1,526 | \$64,500 | \$13,656 | \$79,682 | 68% | SHS Civil have completed these works.. |
| Moore & Princes Street Intersection | \$131,000 | \$131,000 | | \$145 | | \$11,369 | \$11,514 | 9% | 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. |
| 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. |

| ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS | Budget | Funding Amount | Council Contribution | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended 25/26 | Overall Total | % | Notes |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----|---|
| SAFE SYSTEM PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (23/24) | | | | | | | | | |
| Barkly Street Raised Crossing | \$312,232 | \$312,232 | | \$398 | \$153,156 | \$4,606 | \$287,535 | 92% | This project has been awarded to SHS Civil and is complete except for final painting. |
| High Street Raised Crossing | | | | | | \$129,375 | | | |
| TOTAL - ROADS CAPITAL | \$30,312,580 | \$19,661,080 | \$10,639,371 | \$832,886 | \$4,807,811 | \$5,086,362 | \$10,727,059 | | |

| 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 | \$28,000 | \$51,362 | \$69,362 | 93% | This project has been awarded to Project Platypus, all funds are expected to be expended by mid May 2026. |
| Sport & Active Recreation Strategy <i>(Local Sports Infrastructure Funding 23/24)</i> | \$55,000 | \$40,000 | \$15,000 | \$12,452 | | \$24,904 | \$37,356 | 67% | CommunityVibe is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been undertaken, and the draft report is currently out for final consultation. |
| Community Road Safety Action Plan <i>(TAC Local Govt Funding)</i> | \$49,540 | \$49,540 | | \$437 | | \$39,581 | \$40,018 | 81% | DWB Engineering is undertaking the works associated with this project. Community engagement has been completed and draft reporting is being compiled |

| FUNDED PROJECTS - MISCELLANEOUS (NOT CAPITALISED) | Budget | Funding Amount | Council Contribution | Previous Years Expenditure | Committed Expenditure (25/26) | Expended (25/26) | Overall Total | % | Notes |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------|--|
| Unlocking Ararat North East <i>(Streamlining for Growth 22/23)</i> | \$85,000 | \$85,000 | | NA | \$13,888 | \$35,940 | \$49,828 | 57% | <i>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.</i> |
| Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade - Participation Initiative. <i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i> | \$50,000 | \$50,000 | | NA | | | | 0% | <i>This grant was received in July 2025 and will run in conjunction with the infrastructure project for Sports Lighting and accessibility upgrades.</i> |

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 - March 2026 report.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

SECTION 6 - INFORMAL MEETINGS

6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS

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

OFFICER'S DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

DISCUSSION

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

| INFORMAL MEETINGS |
|--|
| Council Briefing held on 21 April 2026 |

Matters discussed at the briefing:

- CEO Employment & Remuneration Committee
- Possible beneficial enterprise
- Burn Street Land
- Monthly Performance Report - March 2026
- Buangor & Mininera Report - March 2026
- Councillor Candidature Policy State or Federal Election
- Update on State Government Activities with First Peoples
- Monthly Community Engagement Report
- Monthly Performance Report - Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project Update - March 2026
- Monthly Progress Report - Council Plan - Annual Plan
- Capital Work Program - March 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 it:

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

- 1. Cr Jo Armstrong to address Council relating to pre-selection for State Elections.**

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

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 not be lifted on adoption of the motion.**