



Ararat Rural City

AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 27 October 2026

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

Commencing at 6.00pm

Council:

Cr Bob Sanders (Mayor)

Cr Jo Armstrong

Cr Rob Armstrong

Cr Peter Joyce

Cr Teli Kaur

Cr Luke Preston

Cr Bill Waterston

A recording of this meeting is being made for the purpose of verifying the accuracy of the minutes of the Council Meeting.

The recording is being streamed live via Facebook, to improve transparency between council and the community and give more people the opportunity to view what decisions are being made. You do not require a Facebook account to watch the live broadcast, simply enter www.facebook.com/araratruralcitycouncil into your address bar.

Recordings of Council Meetings (excluding closed sessions) are made available on Council's website.

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SECTION 1 - PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 LIVE STREAMING

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

1.2 TRADITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/OPENING PRAYER/COUNCILLORS PLEDGE

Traditional acknowledgement

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

Opening Prayer

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

Councillors Pledge

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

1.3 APOLOGIES

RECOMMENDATION

That the apology of Cr be accepted.

1.4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 29 September 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 CONSIDERATION OF ANNUAL REPORT 2025/2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32361

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 Annual Report is prepared in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020, Local Government Act 1989 and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2014.

The Annual Report 2025/2026 will be forwarded to the Minister for Local Government once complete. The purpose of this report is to formally present the Annual Report 2025/2026 to Council.

DISCUSSION

The Ararat Rural City Council Annual Report 2025/2026 provides an overview of Council's operations, achievements and financial performance for the year ending 30 June 2026. In accordance with the Local Government Act 2020, Council is required to present its Annual Report at a Council meeting within four months of the end of the financial year. The report includes Council's audited financial statements, performance statements and progress against the strategic objectives outline in the Council Plan.

Council maintained a sound financial position during 2025/2026, recording an operating surplus of \$8.906 million and remaining debt-free at 30 June 2026. Council continued to invest in essential infrastructure, community facilities and services while maintaining a focus on financial sustainability and delivering positive outcomes for the community.

Key highlights from the 2025/2026 Annual Report include:

- Capital Works: Council delivered \$15.063 million in capital works, including \$13.029 million towards the renewal and upgrade of existing assets.
- Roads and Bridges: Significant investment in road reconstruction and bridge upgrades, including Mount William Road, Webb Street, Buangor-Ben Nevis Road and McCrows Road.
- Community Infrastructure: Progress on the Ararat Pony Club covered equestrian arena, improvements to the Ararat Library, redevelopment of Jack and Jill Kindergarten and development of a new dog park at Centenary Park.
- Financial Sustainability: Council recorded a working capital ratio of 130% and an asset renewal and upgrade ratio of 114%, demonstrating its continued focus on financial management and infrastructure investment.
- Community Inclusion: Progression of Council's Disability Action Plan to improve accessibility and inclusion across Council services, facilities, and employment.
- Funding and Advocacy: Continued advocacy and successful funding commitments towards road infrastructure, housing development, recreational facilities and community projects across the municipality.
- Community Engagement: Consultation with residents on key initiatives, including the 2026/2027 Council budget, Sport and Active Recreational facilities, and community projects across the municipality.

The annual report reflects Council's commitment to transparent and accountable governance, responsible financial management and the delivery of services and infrastructure that support the ongoing growth and wellbeing of the Ararat Rural City community.

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.

The Annual Report 2025/2026 reports on the progress in achieving the strategic objectives as listed in the Council Plan 2025-2029 (Year 1).

Budget Implications

Costs associated with the production of the Annual Report are included in the Budget for 2026/2027.

Policy/Relevant Law

Completion and circulation of the Annual Report is a key legislative requirement for all Councils.

Sections 98 to 100 of the Local Government Act 2020 outlines the requirements that Council must meet in preparing and considering the Annual Report for 2025/2026.

Sustainability Implications

This report does not raise any sustainability implications.

Risk Assessment

Council must meet the legislative requirements of the Act in relation to the preparation and consideration of the Annual Report 2025/2026.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

Various Council officers have been involved in the preparation of the Annual Report 2025/2026.

Financial statements and performance statements were presented to the 29 September 2026 Council Meeting. These statements have been signed by the Victorian Auditor-General and are incorporated into the Annual Report 2025/2026.

A copy of the Annual Report 2025/2026 will be submitted to the Minister for Local Government before the Ministerial deadline.

Gender Impact Assessment

The Annual Report provides a summary of the gender of Council staff, activities related to the Gender Equality Action Plan, and Council's commitment towards the prevention of violence against women in the 2025/2026 year.

RECOMMENDATION

That

- Council receive and note the Annual Report 2025/2026.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Annual Report 2025/2026 is provided as Attachment 3.1

3.2 DELEGATION FROM COUNCIL TO MEMBERS OF COUNCIL STAFF S6

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32362

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider adoption of the revised Instrument of Delegation from Council to Members of Council Staff.

DISCUSSION

Delegation to Council staff is necessary to enable Council to conduct business efficiently by enabling Council staff to make routine decisions under different Acts.

Various Acts, including the Local Government Act 2020, empower Council to delegate statutory functions, powers and duties. This report recommends that specific functions, powers and duties be delegated to identify staff positions in accordance with the attached S6 - Instrument of Delegation by Council to Members of Council Staff.

The instrument of Delegation has recently been updated by Maddocks Lawyers. The changes made to the S6 Instrument of Delegation- Council to Members of Council Staff are as follows:

- Amended the Food Act 1984 to reflect the changes create by the commencement of the Safe Food Victoria Act 2026, particularly as a result of section 116 and 172.
- Replaced the Road Management (General) Regulations 2016 (now revoked) with the Road Management (General) Regulations 2026
- Replaced the Road Management (Works and Infrastructure) Regulations 2015 (now revoked) with the Road Management (Works and Infrastructure) Regulations 2026
- Inserted clauses 16(2B) and 16(2C) of schedule 7 of the Road Management Act 2004 as a result of section 21 of the Roads and Ports Legislation Amendments (Road Safety and Other Matters) Act 2025
- Minor staffing changes

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications arising from the review of the S6 Instrument of Delegation - Council to Members of Council Staff.

Policy/Relevant Law

The Council is required to keep a register of delegations, and it must be made available for public inspection. This report is presented to reflect the changes in legislation and staff. The Council can amend or revoke any delegated power at any time.

Sustainability Implications

There are no economic, social or environmental implications in relation to S6 Instrument of Delegation – Council to Members of Council Staff.

Risk Assessment

The amendment of the Instrument of delegation from Council to Members of Council Staff ensures ongoing legislative compliance for Ararat Rural City Council. It is essential that the Instrument of Delegation is kept up to date to ensure that the members of staff are properly empowered to undertake their roles.

The formal delegation of legislated powers, duties and functions via instruments of delegation, supported by consistent policies allows Council staff to perform day-to-day duties and make decisions that may otherwise need to be decided upon Council.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The amendments of Instruments of Delegation from Council to Members of Council staff that have been updated using Maddocks Lawyers Delegation Service and RelianSys software.

The delegation service provides two updates per year and minor updates as required when legislation changes.

The Chief Executive Officer and relevant officers have reviewed this document.

Gender Impact Assessment

The review and adoption of delegations is an administrative governance function and is not expected to have any gendered impacts.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

In the exercise of the powers conferred by the legislation referred to in the attached instrument of delegation, Ararat Rural City Council (Council) resolve that:

- 1. There be delegated to the members of Council staff holding, acting in or performing**
- 2. the duties of the offices or positions referred to in the attached Instrument of Delegation Council to Member of Council Staff (S6), the powers, duties and functions set out in that instrument, subject to the conditions and limitations specified in that Instrument;**
- 3. The instrument comes into force immediately the common seal of Council is affixed to the instrument**
- 4. On the coming into force of the instrument all previous delegations to members of Council staff (other than the Chief Executive Officer) are revoked;**
- 5. The duties and functions set out in the instrument must be executed, in accordance with any guidelines or policies of Council that it may from time to time adopts; and**
- 6. The instrument be signed under the seal of the Council.**

ATTACHMENTS

The Instrument of Delegation from Council to Members of Council Staff S6 is provided as Attachment 3.2

3.3 PITCH MUSIC FESTIVAL TOWAWAY ZONES

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32363

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to request endorsement from Council to establish towaway zones adjacent to the Pitch Music Festival site.

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

DISCUSSION

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

The risks include the following:

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

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

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

The location of the proposed towaway zones are as follows:

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

It is proposed that:

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

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

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

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

6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

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

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications arising

Policy/Relevant Law

Road Management Act 2004

Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2022

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

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

Gender Impact Assessment

NA

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

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

ATTACHMENTS

The Towaway zone map is provided as Attachment 3.3

3.4 COUNCIL EXPENSE AND SUPPORT POLICY

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32364

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 Councillor Expenses and Support Policy has been reviewed, with minor amendments proposed to ensure consistency with the Allowance Payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2026.

The key amendment relates to travel expenses, replacing the previously specific per-kilometer reimbursement rate with reference to the current Determination. This Policy has also been updated to reflect the applicable remote area travel allowance provisions, including eligibility requirements, daily allowance amount and the maximum annual entitlement.

DISCUSSION

The Councillor Expenses and Support Policy provides a framework for the reimbursement of expenses and provision of support to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors in undertaking their official duties.

Previously, the Policy specified a reimbursement rate per kilometre for travel expenses. It is proposed to replace this provision with a reference to the Allowance Payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2026. This amendment will ensure that vehicle travel expenses are reimbursed in accordance with the applicable Determination, rather than specifying a fixed rate within the policy.

The Policy has also been updated to clarify the provisions relating to the remote area travel allowance. This allowance is payable for each eligible day that the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Councillor travels to or returns for an eligible location more than 50 kilometres for their normal place of residence, calculated using the shortest practicable road distance.

The applicable daily allowance are:

Distance Travelled	Daily Allowance
More than 50km but no more than 100km	\$50.60
More than 100km	\$101.20

The maximum remote area travel allowance payable to an individual Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Councillor is \$6,325 per financial year.

Where possible, Councillors are encouraged to book a Council vehicle through the Governance Team for longer distance travel.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

6 STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

- 6.1** Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.

Budget Implications

Councillor expenses have been allocated in the Budget 2026/2027

Policy/Relevant Law

As per section 41(2) of *Local Government Act 2020* the policy includes;

- (a) specific procedures to be followed in applying for reimbursement and in reimbursing expenses; and
- (b) requirements prescribed by the regulations in relation to the reimbursement of expenses; and
- (c) provides for the reimbursement of childcare costs where the provision of childcare is reasonably required for a Councillor or member of a delegated committee to perform their role; and
- (d) have particular regard to expenses incurred by a Councillor who is a carer in a care relationship within the meaning of section 4 of the Carers Recognition Act 2012.

Sustainability Implications

Environmental, social and economic impacts have been considered in the development of the Council Expense and Support Policy.

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

This policy was presented to the Councillors at the Council Briefing.

Gender Impact Assessment

Not required

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council adopt the Council Expense and Support Policy**

ATTACHMENTS

The Council Expense and Support Policy is provided as Attachment 3.4

3.5 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32365

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The financial statements and performance indicators have been prepared for the period ended 30 September 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 \$20.961 million in revenue and \$9.749 million in expenses to 30 September 2026. This has resulted in an operating surplus of \$11.212 million for the three months ended 30 September 2026.

Income

Rates and charges account for 49% of the total budgeted income for 2026/27. Rates and charges are recognised when the rates have been raised, not when the income has been received. An amount of \$18.476 million has been recognised as income for the three months ended 30 September 2026.

User fees account for 4.4% of the total budgeted income for 2026/27 and \$0.582 million has been received to 30 September 2026. The majority of this relates to transfer station fees, fitness centre income and commercial waste management charges.

Non-recurrent Operating Grants total \$0.175 million to 30 September 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 2026/27 \$'000	Income 2026/27 \$'000	Unearned Income \$'000
Ararat Housing Transition	-	-	300
Digital Twin Victoria	-	-	950

Free Public WiFi Services	-	-	1,289
Supported Playgroups	69	18	-
CALD Outreach Workers Initiative	133	133	-
Streatham CRO & Hub	-	-	270
Engage - Youth Events Activities & Happenings	55	-	-
Centenary Park Dog Park	-	-	75
Queen Street Housing Program	-	-	5,697
Ararat Hills Adventure Sports Precinct	-	-	400
Early Career Educators	-	-	103
Ararat Active Bike Network	-	-	128
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting and Accessibility	-	-	519
Moyston Multi-Use Court Upgrade	-	-	203
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	24	17
	257	175	9,951

Non-recurrent Capital Grants total \$0.112 million to 30 September 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 2026/27 \$'000	Income 2026/27 \$'000	Unearned Income \$'000
Tiny Towns Fund - Buangor Recreation Reserve Pavillion Redevelopment	-	-	50
Pony Club Sports Arena	-	112	80
Queen Street Housing Program	-	-	1,638
TAC Safe Local Roads and Streets Program	-	-	470
Jack & Jill Kindergarten Upgrade	-	-	2
Buangor-Ben Nevis Road Upgrade	5,000	-	2,000
Other Minor Grants (under \$30,000)	-	-	-
	5,000	112	4,240

Gain on disposal of property, plant & equipment totals \$0.539 million which includes a parcel of Council land sold in July 2026.

Note

It is important to note the following:

1. The Grants Operating (recurrent) figure in the Original Budget was \$9.122 million and in the Current Budget is recorded as \$2.040 million, as \$7.022 million was paid to Council in 2025/26 by the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission (VLGGC) for the 2026/27 financial year. Council has still received the expected VLGGC income, to be spent in 2026/27, 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 \$9.756 million for Grants Operating (non-recurrent) and \$4.116 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 2026/27 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 \$4.624 million to a surplus of \$4.261 million for 2026/27. The year-end variance is a surplus of \$0.564 million when the actual year to date expenses are compared to the year to date budget.

Expenses

Employee Costs account for approximately 37.8% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2026/27. For the three months ended 30 September 2026 Council has incurred \$2.753 million in employee costs. Council has also incurred capitalised salary costs of \$0.086 million, which are included in capital works reporting rather than the income statement, as they are treated as part of the cost of creating or improving Council assets.

Materials and Services account for approximately 26.7% of the total budgeted expenditure for 2026/27. For the three months ended 30 September 2026, Council has incurred \$4.032 million in materials and services costs. There are a number of projects, including those carried forward from 2025/26 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 \$9.078 million in the Original Budget to \$16.238 million in the Current Budget for 2026/27. This has resulted from a carry forward amount of \$7.160 million from the 2025/26 financial year surplus and unspent grant funds which will be used to complete the projects in 2026/27.

Balance Sheet (Attachment 2)

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

Council's current assets have increased by \$10.230 million from \$27.103 million as at 30 June 2026 to \$37.333 million as at 30 September 2026. Cash and cash equivalents have decreased by \$4.461 million from \$21.266 million to \$16.805 million. Trade and other receivables have increased by \$15.197 million from \$2.902 million as at 30 June 2026 to \$18.099 million as at 30 September 2026.

Total liabilities have decreased from \$22.042 million in 2025/26 to \$19.681 million in 2026/27. Trade and other payables have decreased by \$3.122 million and trust funds and deposits have increased by \$0.556 million. Unearned income/revenue increased by \$0.319 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 \$21.266 million have decreased by \$4.461 million to \$16.805 million as at 30 September 2026.

Net cash of \$4.258 million was used in operating activities, \$0.067 million was provided by investing activities, and \$0.136 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	30/06/2026	30/09/2026
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	130%	202%
Loans and borrowings <i>Measure - Loans and borrowings compared to rates.</i> Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 0% to 70% Indicator of the broad objective that the level of interest-bearing loans and borrowings should be appropriate to the size and nature of a council's activities. Low or decreasing level of loans and borrowings suggests an improvement in the capacity to meet long term obligations	0.00%	0.00%
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	5.60%	6.14%
Rates concentration <i>Measure - Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue</i> Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - 30% to 80% Indicator of the broad objective that revenue should be generated from a range of sources. High or increasing range of revenue sources suggests an improvement in stability	49.66%	88.64%
Expenditure level <i>Measure - Expenses per property assessment</i> Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework \$2,000 to \$10,000 Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of expenditure suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency	\$4,974	\$1,297
Indicator - Revenue level <i>Measure - Average residential rate per residential property assessment</i> Expected values in accordance with the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework - \$700 to \$2,000 Indicator of the broad objective that resources should be used efficiently in the delivery of services. Low or decreasing level of rates suggests an improvement in organisational efficiency	\$2,030	\$2,088

Indicator	30/06/2026	30/09/2026
Indicator - Percentage of total rates collected The internal audit conducted in 2019 on Rates Revenue and Rate Debtor Management found no routine or regular reporting of large and long outstanding rates debtors. The outstanding Rates Debtors is reported in the Annual Financial report. As at 30 September 2026 the outstanding Rates Debtors totalled \$16.979 million compared to \$2.121 million as at 30 June 2026, an increase of \$14.858 million. In percentage terms 19.1% of the rates raised have been collected at 30 September 2026 compared to 25.6% up to 30 September 2025. The increased percentage at 30 September 2025 included payments totalling \$2.491 million received under the Victorian Government's Drought Support Package for Primary Producer Support Payments, which represented a 40% rate reduction on farm-rated properties. Outstanding rates are currently charged 10% interest. Council issues approximately 7,900 rate notices. In 2025/26 there were 2,495 assessments paying by instalments compared with 2,158 assessments in 2024/25.	89.9%	19.1%
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.	113.93%	27.08%

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.

Gender Impact Assessment

This report provides Council with a summary of the organisation's financial performance and position as at the reporting date. No differential gender impacts have been identified and the report is considered to have a neutral impact from a gender equality perspective.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. The Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators for the period ended 30 September 2026 be received and adopted.**

ATTACHMENTS

Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Financial Performance Indicators are provided as Attachment 3.5

SECTION 4 - INFORMATION REPORTS

4.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM - SEPTEMBER 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32366

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 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

The latest round of community engagement sessions occurred between 14 to 18 September 2026 in Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Moyston, Pomonal, Tatyoon and Willaura. In total 55 people attended across the eight session. The number of issues raised was 86, and so far 83 have been resolved or referred for action.

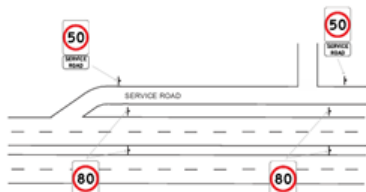
The next round of community engagement sessions are planned for 7-11 December 2026 in Ararat, Lake Bolac, Mininera, Streatham, Warrak, Wickliffe and Willaura.

Table 1. Issues raised in September 2026 and their progress.

#	Issues Raised	Progress as at 22 October 2026
	Ararat	
1	Gorse weeds are resprouting along the footpath at the end of Albert St to the Gordon St Recreation Reserve, it would be good to eliminate these weeds from the area.	Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate.
2	There is a creek off Princes St between McGibbony St and Hakea St is full of gorse, can the weeds be removed?	The area appears to be land managed by the Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action (DEECA). Service request lodged to DEECA via their online form: Contact us
3	Issue regarding the new raised pedestrian crossing on High St	Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate.
4	Request for a footpath around the outside of the Gordon St Recreation Reserve along Gordon St and McGibbony Street	This request is unable to be accommodated in this financial year's budget. It will be considered as part of future project planning and budgeting.
5	Community members asked about a comment they saw on Facebook regarding a \$3 million Mountain Bike project in Ararat.	Topic was discussed at the session, this was a project funded and meant to be delivered by the State Government from 2021. It is understood that the project faced substantial obstacles that ultimately prevented its delivery.
6	Along the bicycle lane on the Western Highway near the intersection of Minton St, there is a grate with holes that are wider than a bike tyre, can the grate over be rotated or	As the grate/drain is located on the Western Highway where the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) is the road authority, a service request has been submitted to DTP via their

	modified to enable bikes to safely ride over it?	online form: Submit a report or enquiry to Transport Victoria : VicRoads
7	Several road safety concerns were raised for the Western Highway in the 80km/hour area heading towards Stawell, including speed limits and the need for additional turning lanes.	Safety conditions and speed limits on arterial roads such as the Western Highway are determined by DTP/VicRoads. Concerns have been lodged via their online form: Submit a report or enquiry to Transport Victoria : VicRoads
8	The hedges at Alexandra Oval are overgrown, and need maintenance	Service request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate.
9	Request to have the hedge trees on the northern side of the Community Centre and netball courts removed because they are also overgrown and do not look to be in good shape.	Request lodged to investigate and action, as appropriate.
10	Safety at the crossing on Ingor St near the Post Office needs improvement	The Victorian Government have provided funding to Council through the Safe Local Roads and Streets Program to install a raised pedestrian crossing at this intersection. This project will be delivered this financial year.
11	Request to have more playground equipment, trees and park infrastructure at the small park between Banfield and View Point Streets.	Playground design considerations were discussed. Changing the small park to attract more children and young families to play in areas very close to roads increases risks. Community ideas were noted, and suitability and feasibility of the ideas will be considered as part of future project planning and budgeting.
12	Historical issues at the indoor pool were discussed, other attendees reported the issue had already been resolved.	No further action required.
13	The safety clip on the treadmill at the Ararat Fitness Centre is quite rusted, can it be replaced?	Request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
14	Query about why some businesses seem to take a long time to open.	The general processes and considerations that businesses need to make were discussed. Council explained its role in the process and our commitment to proactively support businesses where possible
15	The status of the Aradale closure was discussed.	Updates from Melbourne Polytechnic and Eerie Tours were shared with the group. Outdoor tours have resumed since 25 September 2026.
16	The door on the public toilet on Barkly St next to the Bendigo Bank has either broken or been changed. It now opens outwards, making it harder for some to open	The public toilet on Barkly Street has recently been replaced. The door opens outwards in accordance with the National Construction Code. This is to support emergency access in the event a person falls and is against the door, and ensures sufficient clearance internally for movement when exiting.
17	It can be difficult to make turns at the intersection of the Western Highway with Lowe Street, it needs traffic lights.	Concerns have been lodged to DTP/VicRoads via their online form: Submit a report or enquiry to Transport Victoria : VicRoads
	Buangor	
18	Would like a review of the Buangor Township Plan (2016) to see what has been achieved and what next for the Buangor community	This is not able to be accommodated in this financial year's planned activities. It will be considered as part of future project planning and budgeting.

19	Would like to see the signage for the Buangor Avenue of Honour restored.	This is not able to be accommodated in this financial year's budget or works program. It will be considered as part of future project planning and budgeting.
20	There is a wooden bridge over the creek between the Buangor Primary School and the Recreation Reserve that needs some maintenance.	The bridge appears to be located in land managed by the Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action (DEECA). Service request lodged to DEECA via their online form: Contact us
	Elmhurst	
21	Request for the Pyrenees Highway service road between Degrares and McKay St to be sealed	Request lodged for this road to be considered for sealing when Green St is OTTA sealed.
22	There is a large pothole on McKay St between the service road and the highway	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
23	Trucks are speeding through the town and even overtaking cars in the town centre	The Pyrenees Highway through Elmhurst is managed by DTP/VicRoads. Concerns have been reported via their online form: Submit a report or enquiry to Transport Victoria : VicRoads
24	Could Council bring a print out of the list of issues raised previously and their status?	Yes, this will be prepared for the next community engagement session in Elmhurst.
25	Safety at the intersection of Pyrenees Highway and Landsborough-Elmhurst Road was raised as a concern, especially when a train is passing through the rail crossing and causes a bank up of vehicles on the highway. Signage and vegetation also make it difficult to see vehicles approaching when trying to enter the highway from Landsborough-Elmhurst Road. A turning lane is also needed at this intersection.	The Pyrenees Highway through Elmhurst is managed by DTP/VicRoads. Concerns have been reported via their online form: Submit a report or enquiry to Transport Victoria : VicRoads
26	The large fallen pine tree on the side of the highway just outside of town is still there	Tree is located on the Pyrenees Highway in the 80km/hour zone, which is a VicRoads managed road. Issue has been reported again to VicRoads via their online form: Submit a report or enquiry to Transport Victoria : VicRoads
27	Hillary's Road is corrugated and needs to be graded	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
28	There is a large pothole on Green St near the Elmhurst Recreation Reserve	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
29	Darbyshire Road needs grading	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
30	The seat in front of the Post Office is facing the wrong way. The ground in front of it slopes down to the road too steeply. Can it be turned around?	Request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
31	Can the roadside on Landsborough-Elmhurst Road be sprayed?	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
32	Compliment provided to the Council staff member who maintains the parks and gardens around Elmhurst.	Compliment received with thanks and has been passed on to the staff member.
33	There are still dirt mounds on the sides of Boundary Road, making it impossible for local residents to mow the roadsides.	Request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.

34	Timing of the next rural skip bin service was asked. Feedback was also given that the types of waste that could be disposed of was too restricted. Examples of waste they want to dispose of include old chairs, hard waste, a vacuum cleaner and old fridges.	Next Elmhurst temporary transfer station is opening on Saturday 7 and 14 November from 10am to 1pm. The promotional materials have been updated to make it clearer what can and cannot be accepted in the skip bin, which is limited by what is accepted at the landfill site.
	When the Wimmera River overflows, it floods a person's property. Can anything be done to stop the flooding?	This issue will require further investigation and liaison with the Catchment Management Authority.
35	Could there be a workshop for community & businesses on how to use AI tools?	This is not an area that councils have responsibility for. The feasibility and Council's capacity to incorporate this into existing programs has been considered and is not able to be delivered at this time.
36	Feedback given on how the Ararat Neighbourhood House food van was promoted	Communication of events and initiatives is always a challenge. The feedback will be passed to the Ararat Neighbourhood House.
37	When can food waste go into the green bins again?	The current Victorian Government due date for food organics to be disposed of in the green lid bin is 2030. Council are working through technical challenges to implement this sooner if possible.
38	Worm farms for food waste was suggested	The volume of food waste that is expected at the municipal scale will require a significantly large worm farm facility, which is not feasible.
39	Could Elmhurst have better Christmas decorations this year? A rotation of decorations from Ararat proposed.	Request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
40	There are about a dozen children in Elmhurst now. Could the speed limit of the Pyrenees Highway through the town be reduced from 80km/hr to 60km/hr? A community member said they may start a petition.	This issue has been raised previously in Elmhurst. The Dept. Transport and Planning's Speed Zoning Policy and Speed Zoning Technical Guidelines were reviewed. The 80km/hr speed limit on the Pyrenees Highway through the township is consistent with the Policy and Guidelines, see image captured below from page 20 of the Guidelines:  Figure 4: Service road with signposted speed limit
41	Garbage truck drivers are still doing u-turns in a resident's driveway	This feedback has been provided to the team for action.
42	Community said there seems to be a garbage truck heading towards the Recreation Reserve multiple times a week, and this seems fairly too frequent for the likely volume of waste	Feedback has been provided to the relevant team for investigation and action, if required.
	Lake Bolac	
43	Lake Bolac Hall toilets, disability access and disability toilets are needed. Airlock, storage, improved hot water system, and other changes requested as well.	Council staff have met with a member of the Hall Committee and will continue to work towards accessibility and facility improvements at the Hall as part of future project planning and budgeting.

44	Hall roof leaking in places	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
45	Retaining wall at the Lake is going to fall apart and wanting Council to help with cost.	The lake surrounds and foreshore area are managed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). The Committee were encouraged to liaise with DEECA regarding the maintenance and management of the areas around the lake.
46	Request for sanitary bins to be placed in the toilets next to the yacht club.	Request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
47	Overgrown grass at the triangle shaped area at the intersection South Beach Road and Frontage Road	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
48	Request on behalf of the Lake Bolac Foreshore Committee for Council to assist with slashing along the foreshore.	The lake surrounds and foreshore area are managed DEECA. Committee were encouraged to liaise with DEECA regarding the maintenance and management of the areas around the lake.
49	Query about timing of the kerb & channel works at the Lake Bolac supermarket	This is part of the capital works program for 2026/27 and is being delivered in house. Exact timing not yet confirmed however this will be delivered this financial year.
50	Request to remove the cypress trees on Montgomery Street. More of them are dying.	The cypress trees are quite large and there is added complexity being next to an arterial road. This request has been lodged for investigation and if this request can be achieved, it may take some time before this request is actioned.
51	Howlett Lane from McKenzie road - there is a section that goes around a swamp area and the road has been washed / chewed out and wanting to see if this can be fixed.	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
	Moyston	
52	Query about the Moyston Avenue of Honour restoration project	Query resolved during the engagement session. This project is in the early stages of planning and Council are continuing to liaise with the local community on the scope of this project.
53	When is roadside spraying occurring	Roadside spraying will be delivered progressively across the road network. Exact timeframes for each location may not be available as spraying will move to the next section as soon as the previous section is done.
54	Request for the walking track around the Moyston Recreation Reserve oval to be graded	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate
55	Drainage issue on School Street, towards Moyston-Rocky Point Road	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate
56	Person followed up on correspondence with Councillors	Council has liaised with the individual
57	Brooke Street drains need cleaning where the weeds have built up	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate
58	Graders are leaving an edge on the roads, creating a second drain	Feedback has been provided to the grader drivers and graded roads will be monitored for continuous improvement.
	Pomonal	
59	Water drainage issues in the Tennis Club building	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate

60	There appears to be "mushrooms" pushing up through the asphalt on the tennis courts	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate
61	Overflows from Millers Creek is going into a property	This issue will require further investigation and liaison with the Catchment Management Authority.
	Tatyoon	
62	Community advocated for the proposed new social room at Tatyoon Recreation Reserve	Funding options discussed. There is a Federal Government grant opening soon called the Growing Regions Program, however in previous rounds the co-contribution requirement was 50% of total project costs. Council would be unable to provide the cash co-contribution if this is the funding ratio, and the community's fundraising efforts is also unlikely to reach the amount needed. Initial discussion occurred around maintaining the existing building. Further conversations will occur at the community level before any decisions about the existing community facilities are made.
63	Concerns raised about the cost and access to supply of water to keep the oval green over the summer.	Community members were liaising with GWMWater and expect that they will be connected by October. Council to monitor progress of the connection and assist if necessary.
64	The topic of windfarms and Council's position was raised.	This issue had been raised before and Council's position has not changed.
65	Many of the roads in the area need to be graded, there are potholes in many places. Prioritise the school bus routes.	Council have liaised with the school bus companies and obtained the current routes, these will be prioritised for grading and maintenance.
66	Request to slash and clear the roadside vegetation around school bus stops	Request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate
67	Shape of the unsealed road in some places is causing water to pool in the middle of the road instead of draining to the sides	Feedback has been provided to the grader drivers and graded roads will be monitored for continuous improvement.
68	Rocky Hill Road is an example of an unsealed road that needs reshaping	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate
69	Coopers Road also needs work	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate
70	Burnett's Road needs maintenance	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate
71	Query about the Community Asset Committee facility maintenance grants	This has been resolved with the Community Asset Committee
72	Septic system at the Tatyoon clubrooms struggles on busy days at the Reserve	This will be considered as part of the planning for the maintenance of the existing facilities
73	Regarding roadside slashing, could Council go back to spraying?	Council uses a combination of slashing and spraying, depending on the nature of the roadside
74	The Maroona Community Asset Committee will be meeting again soon and have a few issues to discuss.	A Council representative will attend the meeting and assist the Committee with their issues.
	Willaura	
75	Some time back the resident received a letter regarding a potential Heritage overlay of Main Street, what was the outcome?	This query appears to be related to the Heritage Overlay 'HO243: Willaura Town Centre Heritage Precinct, 40-78 and 49-65 Main St, Willaura', which has been incorporated into the Ararat Planning Scheme.

76	Can Willaura have an off-leash dog park?	This appears to be the first time Council have received a request for a dog park in Willaura and there does not appear to be strong demand for this facility in this area, therefore this is unlikely to be considered for future delivery.
77	When would works for the footpath begin?	Design currently being completed to be able to go to tender. Expect commencement early next year.
78	Wanted us to know that there are roads that need works on prior to harvest e.g. Malim Road.	Council staff have contacted the resident to obtain a list of roads that require work.
79	The gravel road on Century Road needs a grade. The blue gravel on there is significantly better than other road material	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate. Feedback on the better road material is also noted with thanks.
80	Edgarley Estate Road, needs all the gravel brought off the sides, and in the table drains, back onto the road. Currently road is same height as the table drains so water does not run off.	Service request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.
81	Query regarding how Council engages with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) captains. The resident said that once upon a time, all the CFA captains would meet with Council.	Query resolved during the engagement session. Council regularly engages the CFA through the Emergency Management Coordinator and with other local emergency services through the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) and the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee (MFMP).)
82	Query regarding the timing of the Fire Prevention Notices last year being quite late in the year.	The Fire Danger Period for Ararat Rural City took effect from 15 December 2025, which was later than previous years. This impacted on the timing of the Fire Prevention Notices. Council expects that the Fire Danger Period should be earlier this year.
83	There is a heritage plaque on the bluestone building at the back of Sparrows lane that is faded and needs to be replaced. The residents are happy to pay for it but asked for help to find out what was originally on the plaque.	Investigations are continuing to locate the previous heritage plaque drawing/design files.
84	Follow up on the status of the installation of playground equipment at the Willaura Recreation Reserve.	Installation is planned to occur later this year.
85	Feedback regarding the Willaura Outdoor Pool over the 2025-26 summer season was provided during the session and a letter from the Willaura and District Community Development Group was given to Council	Feedback has been thoroughly considered for the upcoming 2026-27 summer season, and a written response has been sent to the Willaura and District Community Development Group.
86	The works that are starting with the Hospital and also when they get busier, that the speed limit on Delacombe Way needs to be reduced back further so that the trucks slow down a lot sooner and not grinding their gears as they come past the hospital as tradies etc will be turning in and out of that area	Delacombe Way is a Council managed road. Request lodged for investigation and action, as appropriate.

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 2026/2027 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 Community Engagement Program 2026/27 included 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.

Gender Impact Assessment

During the September round of engagement sessions, there were 29 female and 26 male attendees.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

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

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments in relation to this item.

4.2 PRESTIGE MILL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT - SEPTEMBER 2026 UPDATE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32367

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 up to 90 new dwellings, including planning, detailed designs, construction costs for roads, footpaths, kerb & channel, drainage, as well as costs for utility infrastructure such as power, water, sewerage, and NBN. The grant does not fund the cost to build the homes, however with the major barriers removed, private investment into housing will become viable.

Progress Update



Demolition Works at Queen Street

Demolition and sorting of rubble and soil continues on site. Passers-by may notice different types of machinery being used at various times. All works are continuing to be undertaken under strict environmental and safety regulations and in accordance with WorkSafe Victoria and the Environment Protection Authority requirements.

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 late 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.

Gender Impact Assessment

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

That:

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

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item

4.3 ANNUAL PLAN 2026/27 - SEPTEMBER 2026 UPDATE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32368

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

Each financial year Council produces an Annual Plan which provides a series of actions aimed at operationalising the Council's strategic intent. The Annual Plan 2026/2027 covers the second year of the Council Plan 2025-29, and references other Council plans and strategies where the action contributes to or aligns with other strategic documents. This report provides a monthly update on progress against these actions.

DISCUSSION

The Annual Plan 2026/2027 contains 54 actions. Progress on these actions are summarised below.

Status	Number of Actions
Complete	3 (+1)
In progress 51-99%	7 (+4)
In progress 0-50%	33 (-5)
Not Started	0
Ongoing	11

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

Actions	Progress	Officer Comment
1. GROWING OUR PLACE		
1.1 Develop a strategic land use planning framework with annual targets to support sustainable urban growth.		
1.1.1 Champion coordinated planning between housing development and major project delivery to support a well-timed, market-responsive supply pipeline.	In progress 0-50%	One of the Regional Worker Accommodation Fund Round 2 projects in Ararat is nearing completion and are liaising with the contractors working on the Western Highway duplication for worker housing
1.1.2 Position the municipality to attract investment in sustainable industries, including agribusiness, circular economy and tourism, to grow the local economy over the long term.	In progress 51-99%	This work is being undertaken as part of the Ararat Planning Scheme Review, which has encountered an unforeseen delay. Council officers are continuing to work closely with the Victorian Government's Regional Planning Hub to complete this action.
1.1.3 Advance policy and strategic planning work to promote well-planned, thoughtful infill and townhouse style housing that makes efficient use of existing infrastructure.	In progress 0-50%	This has commenced as part of the Ararat Planning Scheme Review, with further work to continue after the Review is complete.
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 Advocate for investment in enabling infrastructure to unlock development-ready land and support housing and employment growth.	In progress 0-50%	Council continues to support local proposals submitted to Regional Development Victoria's Industrial Trunk Infrastructure Fund
1.2.2 Encourage and support the activation and adaptive reuse of underutilised land and buildings to deliver additional housing supply.	In progress 0-50%	Planning assistance and advice is being provided to landowners and developers who are interested in delivering housing in underutilised buildings and areas of land

Actions	Progress	Officer Comment
1.2.3 Foster partnerships between developers and community organisations to deliver diverse, community-responsive housing solutions.	In progress 0-50%	Council is continuing to engage with community housing providers and other organisations on finding solutions to meet affordable and social housing needs. Council's EOI to the NHIF-CT program has been invited to full application stage.
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 Elevate Ararat as the leading destination for lifestyle and work-from-home movers by showcasing the Ararat Digital Hub & Co-Working Space to visitors and tourists	Complete	This action was completed at the August 2026 Council Meeting. We will continue to seize other opportunities to boost this visitor stream throughout the year.
1.3.2 Improve family liveability, local workforce participation and early childhood education outcomes in Lake Bolac by delivering a new childcare centre	Ongoing	Council officers are continuing to liaise with potential childcare providers to deliver this project
1.3.3 Strengthen partnerships across local community, health, education, and State and Federal Governments to attract, expand and sustain migrant settlement capacity in Ararat Rural City	In progress 0-50%	The CALD Outreach and settlement support team continue to work with local employment agencies, community and health services, education and service providers, and local volunteer groups to support settlement capacity and activities
2. BUILDING ROBUST LOCAL ECONOMIES		
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 Partner with Federation University, industry and government to develop and progress a strategic roadmap to expand the Precinct as a regional innovation hub.	In progress 0-50%	Initial engagement with Federation University has occurred to frame the scope and development of the roadmap.
2.1.2 Activate the Precinct as a knowledge hub through delivery of a series of public research talks and events	In progress 0-50%	Planning and identification of research topics and institutions that has begun, with a focus on areas that would generate discussion and local value.
2.1.3 Drive the expansion of TAFE course delivery at the Precinct to meet emerging regional skills needs and support local industry growth.	Ongoing	The 3 rd face to face session of the Ararat Best Start Workshop Series has been delivered on 19 August at the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct
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 Engage 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 Support Valorify P/L to develop a biogas plant in Ararat which uses straw as the major input.	Ongoing	Council continues to strongly support Valorify P/L.
2.2.3 Accelerate the evolution of the Ararat Renewable Energy Park into a regional hub for renewable and circular economy industries through targeted investment attraction and strategic partnerships	Ongoing	Ongoing collaboration and engagement through the Central Highlands Regional Partnerships as well as Council's own investment attraction activities will continue to contribute towards transforming the Ararat Regional Energy Park into a regional hub
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 Collaborate with Grampians Wimmera Mallee (GWM) Tourism to curate, package and promote Ararat Rural City's unique visitor experiences to increase visitation, length of stay and visitor spend.	In progress 51-99%	GWM Tourism and Council has established a strong collaborative partnership to support the tourism sector in Ararat Rural City. This has so far produced and promoted itineraries for Ararat and Pomonal (links below). Council will continue to work with GWM Tourism to promote other key destinations in the municipality. • Ararat's Past in the Present • Follow that feeling to Pomonal

Actions	Progress	Officer Comment
2.3.2 Identify and implement targeted initiatives that increase visitation and visitor yield by analysing spending trends and market data	In progress 0-50%	Analysis of visitor spending data is underway to obtain insights and develop recommendations for targeted initiatives.
2.3.3 Enhance the attractiveness, accessibility and activation of town centres to improve visitor experiences, increase dwell time, and encourage local spending	In progress 0-50%	Wooden bench seats have been varnished following community feedback. Willaura Main St footpath upgrade are in planning for delivery this financial year.
3. PRESERVING OUR ENVIRONMENT		
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 Assess the feasibility and strategic value of becoming a sub-regional leader in the processing and management of recyclable materials	In progress 0-50%	Preliminary assessment underway, with background research and key considerations being identified
3.1.2 Explore opportunities to recover additional reusable and recyclable materials from the general waste stream to increase diversion from landfill	In progress 0-50%	Current material flows and potential improvement opportunities are being reviewed to inform future initiatives.
3.1.3 Pursue funding opportunities to install solar and battery systems across community facilities to strengthen disaster resilience and enhance sustainability.	In progress 0-50%	A grant application to install solar and battery systems at community sports facilities was submitted to the Game On grant program on 13 July 2026.
3.2 Develop innovative energy solutions utilising locally produced waste		
3.2.1 Investigate options to use municipal FOGO waste to generate energy for council facilities and reduce operating costs	In progress 0-50%	Early-stage scoping underway to understand feasibility, feedstock availability and potential biodigester options being assessed
3.2.2 Identify and quantify high-volume waste streams that may be suitable for waste-to-energy solutions to attract commercial development opportunities	In progress 0-50%	The previous years' waste data is being reviewed to better understand waste volumes and composition
3.2.3 Advocate for greater policy confidence and support for renewable gas generation	Ongoing	Council continues to advocate for this as part of its 2026 Advocacy Priorities
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 Review emergency management processes, policies and procedures with vulnerable community members to support adaptation and mitigation to climate change risks	In progress 51-99%	Council's Emergency Management Coordinator attended the Disability Action Plan Working Group meeting on 7 October 2026 to discuss how to support people with disabilities and their carers during bushfires and floods. CALD Outreach Officer has also participated in training in preparation for the upcoming bushfire season.
3.3.2 Work with Ararat Landcare Group and other groups to increase canopy cover in urban streets	In progress 0-50%	Ararat Landcare Group and Council's Sustainability Officer have commenced engagement and planning on how to increase canopy cover.
3.3.3 Investigate opportunities to embed the use of recycled and reused materials in the construction and maintenance of council assets	In progress 0-50%	Opportunities are being considered for old concrete and other infrastructure waste materials
4. DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING KEY ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE		
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 Upgrade the pool surface at the Lake Bolac and Willaura swimming pools	In progress 0-50%	The forecasted weather conditions from now until the start of the summer swimming season is highly likely to be unfavourable (ie rain, cooler temps). To avoid the risk of the outdoor pool not being ready in time for summer, these works have been delayed until after the outdoor pool season and are now planned for March 2027.

Actions	Progress	Officer Comment
4.1.2 Upgrade public amenities and increase the number of accessible facilities	In progress 0-50%	Pre-construction planning for the Moyston Recreation Reserve public toilet upgrade is in progress
4.1.3 Deliver the Local Roads Data Reconciliation Project	In progress 0-50%	This project is in progress
4.2 Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets.		
4.2.1 Partner with Grampians Community Health to progress plans and advocate for the A&J McDonald Community Centre Redevelopment	Ongoing	This project is identified as one of six on Council's 2026 Advocacy Priorities, and Council continues to work closely with Grampians Community Health
4.2.2 Advocate for the delivery of priority projects identified in the Alexandra Sports Precinct Masterplan, including a new indoor sports facility and Olympic pool upgrade	Ongoing	The indoor sports facility project is identified as one of six on Council's 2026 Advocacy Priorities.
4.2.3 Reconvene the Rural Roads Group to identify strategically critical freight routes for future major upgrades	In progress 0-50%	A review of the previous terms of reference has commenced
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 safety treatments and hazard removal on high-risk rural corridors	In progress 0-50%	Rural road safety upgrades will be delivered as part of the road projects identified in the Capital Works program
4.3.2 Improve safety at high-risk intersections and protect vulnerable road users in townships	In progress 0-50%	A range of high-risk intersections will be upgraded this financial year with support from the Victorian Government's Safe Local Roads and Streets Program
4.3.3 Deliver the 2026/27 Capital Works Program	In progress 0-50%	Refer to the Capital Works report.
5. ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE		
5.1 Open up Council's arts and culture assets to greater community participation, ownership and engagement in decision-making		
5.1.1 Enhance and expand education outreach activities at Ararat Gallery TAMA to increase engagement, visitation and participation.	In progress 51-99%	The outreach with schools is resulting in an increase in engagement by students, including beyond Ararat Rural city. Beaufort Secondary College VCE Art Making and Exhibiting students visited the Ararat Gallery TAMA in September, and there were numerous activities for kids during the spring school holidays.
5.1.2 Engage with community organisations and groups to identify opportunities to activate underutilised community spaces, such as the Gum San Great Hall	Complete	There have been multiple bookings for the Gum San Great Hall since the carpet upgrade, including first aid training, school assemblies, school holiday programs, etc. This underutilised space has effectively been activated and its usage is increasing.
5.1.3 Strengthen regional promotion of major Ararat Town Hall events and Art Gallery TAMA exhibitions through Visit Grampians to maximise attendance and drive increased tourism and visitation.	Complete	This action was completed at the August 2026 Council Meeting. Ararat Town Hall events and Art Gallery TAMA are now featuring prominently on Visit Grampians website.
5.2 Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life.		
5.2.1 Empower young people to shape their own futures and contribute to the future of the municipality through programs such as the YEAH Crew and through the Crazy Ideas College	Ongoing	The YEAH Crew delivered their inaugural Youth Ignite 2026 event on Saturday 17 October 2026 at the Alexandra Oval Precinct, welcoming over 200 attendees. There were free buses available from Lake Bolac, Willaura, Maroona, Pomonal, Moyston, Buangor and Elmhurst.

Actions	Progress	Officer Comment
5.2.2 Strengthen social connection and inclusion by promoting and improving access to volunteering opportunities	In progress 0-50%	Local community events and opportunities to join Community Asset Committees have been the focus of Council's promotional activities in September
5.2.3 Celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of volunteers to show our appreciation, foster community pride, and encourage greater participation in volunteering	In progress 51-99%	Another round of the Council's Community Support Grants opened on 14 September and closed 11 October 2026. Australia Day nominations have also opened with four categories: Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year, Volunteer of the Year and Community Leader of the Year.
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 Partner with Traditional Owner organisations to support the development of First Nations-led enterprises, contributing to economic self-determination, shared regional prosperity, and advancing meaningful reconciliation	Ongoing	Ararat Rural City Council staff attended an information session for local government with the Victorian Government and Barengi Gadjin Land Council on supporting reconciliation, and improving the cultural and economic wellbeing of Traditional Owners.
5.3.2 Advocate for a Changing Places facility in Ararat	Ongoing	Engagement with the Disability Action Plan Working Group is underway to confirm the preferred location and assessing its feasibility
5.3.3 Deliver and support multicultural events and initiatives that strengthen inclusion, cross-cultural understanding, and stronger community connection	In progress 51-99%	The first of two multicultural events has been delivered with Welcoming Week in Sept 2026. Council officers have begun working with numerous community groups and organisations to deliver Harmony Day in March 2027
6. STRONG AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE		
6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness.		
6.1.1 Improve data accuracy and actionability through data cleansing to support cost-effective asset management and decision-making on future upgrades	In progress 0-50%	Additional traffic counters have been purchased and deployed, which will gather important data for informed decision making on prioritising roads for upgrades.
6.1.2 Develop and implement a Smart Cities Strategy that delivers optimised services and cost efficiencies	In progress 0-50%	An assessment of the possible areas to focus on for optimisation is being undertaken
6.1.3 Develop a ten-year plan for development and redevelopment of key community assets, including funding models and strategic approaches to advocacy	In progress 0-50%	This action has commenced with the identification of key community assets and priorities
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 Strengthen cyber security as a core strategic risk priority to support organisation resilience, data protection and business continuity.	In progress 0-50%	Cyber security uplift activities are being scoped and prioritised
6.2.2 Assess priority Councils assets for climate change readiness, and identify adaptation actions to improve resilience safety and service continuity	In progress 0-50%	Initial review underway to identify priority assets, climate-related risks and potential adaptation measures
6.2.3 Drive a strategic, risk-based approach to internal controls and planning, with a clear focus on high-risk areas to support robust oversight, accountability and long term organization resilience.	In progress 0-50%	Work underway to prioritise high-risk areas and inform upcoming planning activities
6.3 Continuously improve Council's community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making.		
6.3.1 Develop digital and permit applications forms to provide more options for community to interact with Council at times and in ways that suit them	In progress 51-99%	The development of new digital forms is in progress, with a number of new online forms expected to be made available from November 2026.

Actions	Progress	Officer Comment
6.3.2 Convene a community asset forum to support evidence-based budget planning and align investment with community-identified needs and priorities	In progress 0-50%	Event planning has commenced
6.3.3 Explore innovative approaches to community engagement in planning new and upgraded public spaces to ensure user insight and everyday use are captured in the design	In progress 0-50%	A broad mix of engagement activities were implemented as part of the Disability Action Plan engagement process. Their effectiveness is being reviewed alongside the development of the Plan

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The Annual Plan 2026/27 aligns with all strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2025-29

Budget Implications

The Annual Plan 2026/2027 does not have any additional budget implications. All actions in the Annual Plan have been budgeted in the 2026/2027 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.

Gender Impact Assessment

The Annual Plan 2026/27 was developed with consideration of Council's obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic). The Plan includes a range of actions that promote equitable access to services, community participation, accessibility, inclusion, health and wellbeing outcomes for all members of the community, including women, people of different genders, people with disability, young people, multicultural communities and First Nations peoples.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- Council receives the Annual Plan 2026/27 - September 2026 report**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item.

4.4 2026/2027 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM - SEPTEMBER 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32369

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 2026/2027 Capital Works Program as a fundamental component of the current budget. With a substantial capital works investment totaling \$15.797 million, the budget primarily targets infrastructure enhancements.

Key initiatives include:

- Pomonal Recreation Reserve Walking Track
- Buangor Ben Nevis Road Construction – Stage 1
- Projects that make up part of the Safer Local Roads and Street Program
- Reconstruction of Birdswing Road in conjunction with Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Upgrade of Footpaths, Drainage, and Kerb and Channel.
- Design and Construction of Moyston Willaura Road Bridge
- Construction of a major culvert at Barton Bridge.

These projects underscore the Council's commitment to improving local infrastructure and fostering community development in the 2026/2027 fiscal year.

DISCUSSION

Council's 2026/2027 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 2026/2027 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
- Continued implementation of OTTA seals across Councils road network
- Reconstruction of Buangor Ben Nevis Road
- Roads to Recovery funded projects (Moyston-Willaura Bridge and Stevens Crescent Reconstruction)
- Safe Local Roads and Street funding projects

Budget Status:

As of 30 September 2026, 11% of the budget is expended.

PROPERTY CAPITAL PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Community Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (26/27)	Expended (26/27)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Property Capital General	\$950,000		\$950,000							
Gum San Carpet Replacement							\$20,813	\$20,813	100%	Works are complete
Paint - Lake Bolac Pool										
Paint - Willaura Pool							\$244	\$244		
Buangor Cobb & Co. Windows and Heating						\$18,600				Replacement of rotted timber windows with like for like.
Ararat Tennis Club - Disabled Toilets										
Ararat Fitness Centre Roof Laserlight Replacement & Flooring Upgrade						\$30,356	\$7,840	\$38,196		Basketball Courts have been sanded and relacquered. To repair roof leaking issue over basketball courts.
Girdlestone Street Residence Renovation						\$9,254	\$18,167	\$27,422		Painting, Rewiring & Carpeting
Ararat Pony Club - Covered Sports Area <i>(Play our Way Program)</i>	\$1,490,000	\$1,490,000			\$1,250,803		\$113,208	\$1,364,011	90%	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. Fire Services works are being completed with Maude Street access the final part of the project
Centenary Park - Dog Park <i>(Open Space for Everyone Program)</i>	\$112,000	\$100,000	\$12,000		\$95,108		\$61,924	\$157,033	132%	The project costs have run over for this job as there have been under ground issues and water connection that was not originally included in the project costs.
Buangor Sports Pavilion Redevelopment <i>(Tiny Towns Program)</i>	\$631,000	\$50,000	\$581,000 (\$220k Property Capital) (\$361k Property Reserve)		\$213,177		\$55,811	\$268,988	34%	Works have commenced on-site with demolition and electrical works complete, new slabs are being laid and internal framing has commenced.

COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA
27 OCTOBER 2026



Jack and Jill Kindergarten Redevelopment <i>(Building Blocks improvement grants program)</i>	\$745,000	\$745,000			\$668,744		\$35,886	\$704,631	95%	All internal works have been completed. Gutter and fascia have been upgraded to the building. A shade structure has been completed.
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade <i>(Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)</i>	\$700,000	\$560,000	\$120,000 <i>(\$20,000 from Tennis Australia)</i>	\$20,000	\$224,624	\$279,347	\$40,075	\$544,046	78%	Tenders for Civil, Lighting and Fencing have been awarded under Council Delegation. All sports lighting work has been completed.
Moyston Multi-Use Court Upgrade <i>(2025-26 Local Sports Infrastructure Fund - Community Facilities)</i>	\$300,000	\$225,000	\$75,000		\$1,329	\$14,220	\$7,982	\$23,531	7%	Detailed designs are currently being completed to be able to go out to tender.
Moyston Netball & Tennis Changeroom Design <i>(2025-26 Local Sports Infrastructure Fund - Planning)</i>	\$25,000	\$18,750	\$6,250		\$241		\$2,354	\$2,595	9%	Tender for architect is under evaluation
Ararat Library Lighting and Exterior Upgrade. <i>(Living Libraries Infrastructure Program 2024-25)</i>	\$51,026	\$51,026			\$51,691		\$860	\$52,551	103%	Works are now complete
TOTAL - PROPERTY CAPITAL	\$5,004,026	\$3,239,776	\$1,744,250	\$20,000	\$2,504,147	\$351,777	\$365,164	\$3,204,059		

PLANT & EQUIPMENT	Budget	Committed/ Contracted	Expended 26/27	%	Notes
Vehicle Purchases	\$240,000		\$232,097	97%	
Major Plant Purchases	\$260,000				
Fixtures, Fittings & Furniture	\$45,000		\$5,720	13%	
Book stock - Library Book Replacement	\$45,000		\$12,822		
TOTAL - PLANT & EQUIPMENT			\$250,639	42%	

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (26/27)	Expended 26/27	Overall Total	%	Notes
Gravel Road Sheeting, Widening & Alternative Sealing	\$1,800,000		\$1,800,000	NA		\$60,073	\$60,073	3%	Resheeting work has been undertaken in various locations through the municipality. Including Yarram Gap, Moyston Dunkeld Road, Waterhole Road, Quarry Road.
Reseal Program	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000	NA	\$958,414	\$4,163	\$962,578	4%	Works commenced in late September.
Urban Road - Gravel to Seal	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000	NA		\$188,066	\$188,066	19%	Works currently ongoing from 25/26: - Alexandra Avenue (in conjunction with SLRSP Funding) - Coral & McNeil Street (Early June Commencement) - Maude Street (in conjunction with Pony Club Project)
ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM									
Buangor Ben Nevis Road (Roads to Recovery 24/25 & 25/26)	\$3,143,000		\$2,143,000 (24/25) \$1,000,000 (25/26)	\$498,159		\$19,618	\$517,778		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				\$198,139	\$81,071	\$37,040	\$316,250		Works have been completed to allow for traffic flow
Buangor Ben Nevis Road (SILRP Funding 25/26)	\$6,250,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,250,000						
Mt William Road (HSVPP Funding 24/25)	\$6,250,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,250,000	\$5,549,659		\$135,341	\$5,685,000	91%	Final 2km of sealing will be undertaken in mid October.

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (26/27)	Expended 26/27	Overall Total	%	Notes
Road Reconstruction Program 26/27	\$1,457,000								
<i>Stevens Crescent (R2R)</i>				\$15,466		\$3,302	\$18,768		Designs are being finalised
<i>View Point Street (Banksia to Temple) (R2R)</i>				\$21,612		\$7,576	\$29,189		Designs are being finalised
<i>View Point Street (High to Lambert) (R2R)</i>				\$16,585		\$7,951	\$24,536		Designs are being finalised
<i>Green Hill Lake Drive</i>									Designs are in progress
Ararat Active Bike Network <i>(Active Transport Fund)</i>	\$399,000	\$266,000	\$133,000	\$122,386		\$119,059	\$241,446		Original scope of works is complete
Major Patching	\$100,000		\$100,000		\$83,565	\$26,587	\$110,153	110%	Major patching works are expected to commence in October 26. The overspend is from late invoices for the 25/26 FY.
Bridges	\$1,200,000					\$1,551	\$1,551		
Bellellen Road Floodway (R2R)				\$24,542		\$2,100	\$26,642		Investigation Works being undertaken
Moyston Willaura Road Bridge (R2R) <i>Design and Construct</i>				\$595		\$40	\$635		Technical Reporting being undertaken
Footpath Renewal Program	\$400,000		\$400,000			\$64,904	\$64,904	8%	Albert Street Footpath between Currajong Ave and Grano Street is now complete.
Urban Drainage Works	\$750,000		\$750,000			\$15,225	\$15,225	<1%	Works on the drainage at the rear of our SES property will take place when the weather dries.
Kerb and Channel	\$300,000		\$300,000			\$20,106	\$20,106	4%	The tender for K&C in Lake Bolac on the Mortlake Ararat Road came in well over budget and will be undertaken in house.

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (26/27)	Expended 26/27	Overall Total	%	Notes
Queen Street Housing Support Program (Housing Support Program - Community Enabling Infrastructure)	\$7,380,000	\$7,380,000		\$1,090,597		\$381,063	\$1,471,660	20%	Demolition and site clean up are ongoing
SAFE LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS PROGRAM									
View Point, Tobin & Taylor St Intersections	\$224,000	\$224,000		\$22,842		\$2,062	\$24,904	10%	Project is out to tender
Ingor Street - Raised Crossing	\$110,000	\$110,000		\$20,731		\$1,859	\$22,590	19%	Project is out to tender
King Street - Raised Crossing	\$110,000	\$110,000		\$22,900	\$41,000	\$7,464	\$71,364	58%	Tenders have been awarded to SHS Civil. Works to be undertaken outside of school term.
Moore & Princes Street Intersection	\$131,000	\$131,000		\$21,090		\$3,921	\$25,012	18%	Project is ready for tender.
Vincent Street & Alexandra Avenue - Raised Crossing	\$321,000	\$321,000		\$27,706		\$3,900	\$31,606	9%	Project is ready to tender
Queen & Moore Street Roundabout	\$548,000	\$548,000		\$31,213		\$2,074	\$33,287	6%	Project is out to tender.
George Road Raised Crossing (Ararat West)				\$5,896		\$65	\$5,961		New initiative for the SLRSP to include a permanent raised crossing at George Road. Awaiting final approval for funding.
Barkly Street Raised Crossing (IP43)						\$3,120	\$3,120		Final painting has been completed.
TOTAL - ROADS CAPITAL	\$32,873,000	\$19,818,500	\$10,639,371	\$7,715,255	\$1,164,050	\$1,118,230	\$9,975,535		

FUNDED PROJECTS - MISCELLANEOUS (NOT CAPITALISED)	Budget	Funding Amount	Council Contribution	Previous Years Expenditure	Committed Expenditure (26/27)	Expended (26/27)	Overall Total	%	Notes
Unlocking Ararat North East (Streamlining for Growth 22/23)	\$85,000	\$85,000		\$39,393	\$19,691		\$59,085	70%	Beveridge Williams is undertaking the works for this project. They are working with our Planning Department and Strategic Project Lead to progress the outcomes of the funding.
Ararat City Tennis Sports Lighting Installation and accessibility upgrade - Participation Initiative. (Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund)	\$50,000	\$50,000		NA				0%	This grant was received in July 2025 and will run in conjunction with the infrastructure project for Sports Lighting and accessibility upgrades.

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 2026/2027 Capital Works Program represents a significant element of Council's 2026/2027 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 2026/2027 Capital Works Program complies with the program funded in the 2026/2027 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 part of the Capital Works program.

Risk Assessment

The 2026/2027 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 2026/2027 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 2026/2027 Capital Works Program has been developed as an element of the 2026/2027 Budget. There was extensive community engagement undertaken prior to adoption.

Gender Impact Assessment

Gender Impact Assessments will be undertaken on a project basis.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. That Council receive the Capital Works Program - September 2026 report.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no Attachments relating to this item

4.5 COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS - SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT: CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32370

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any Conflict of Interest.
No person involved in the preparation of this report has a Conflict of Interest requiring disclosure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council received 12 applications for the September/October 2026 Community Support Grants Program. Applications were assessed by a panel comprising the CEO and one community representative. A second community representative was unable to attend due to a late apology. Following the assessment process, eight applications were approved for funding of a total of \$20,628.00 awarded in this round, with all successful applicants receiving the full amount requested. Four applications were not recommended for funding.

DISCUSSION

The Community Support Grants Program is designed to support community organisations in delivering projects and events that provide measurable benefits to the community. Applicants are required to demonstrate a contribution to their project through either cash or in-kind support.

In accordance with the Community Support Grants Guidelines, funding is not available for capital works or major maintenance of buildings and facilities, general administration costs, wages, insurance, debt payments, projects funded through other Council programs, projects that have already commenced, ongoing recurrent activities, trade shows and conferences, politically or religiously focused activities, or fundraising-related expenses such as prizes, trophies, travel, accommodation and catering.

Council received 12 applications for the September/October 2026 Community Support Grants Program. Applications were assessed by a panel comprising the CEO and one community representative, with a second community representative unable to attend due to a late apology. Following assessment against the program objectives, eligibility requirements and funding guidelines, eight applications were recommended for funding, with all successful applicants receiving the full amount requested.

The successful applications are detailed below.

Community Organisation	Purpose	Amount awarded
Ararat Car Club	King of the Hill Climb event. Grant approved, subject to the organisation demonstrating its co-contribution prior to payment. The group will also be encouraged to consider strategies to support the event's long-term sustainability, growth and financial viability.	\$5000
Ararat City Band Inc.	Modernising Ararat City Band's Administrative Systems and Digital archiving which includes organising volunteer records, and secure storage of their extensive music library	\$1540
Ararat Interested Parties (AIP)	Purchase of portable equipment and event signage (e.g. a gazebo, tables, chairs, A-frames and promotional printing) to support rehearsals and performances in a range of locations, including summer events. AIP would be required to share event photos with Council and promote supported activities through its social media channels.	\$1578

Ararat Mens Shed	This project includes upgrading the front entrance to clean up the front area and lay some weed matting and gravel to improve safety and street appeal, purchasing additional Men's Shed member T-shirts with our logo on, and acquiring three vacuum cleaners to improve cleanliness and safety in the workshop and shed areas.	\$3000
Grampians Soaring Club	Funding will support the installation of a reliable Wi-Fi network and battery backup system, providing members, students and visitors with consistent internet access across the clubhouse, operations building and main hangar.	\$3000
Moyston Progress Association	Funding will support the installation of a Snapshot Sign at Moyston, providing clear and welcoming signage for visitors entering the township. The project has been identified by Moyston Progress through the Community Action Plan and is ready for delivery, with a one-week implementation timeframe.	\$510
WestVic Academy of Sport	The Ararat Para Sport Discovery Day 2027 will provide inclusive para sport opportunities in the local community, reducing travel barriers and increasing participation for people with disability. As a condition of funding, any equipment purchased must remain within the Ararat Rural City municipality for ongoing community use, preferably through donation to a local NDIS provider or an organisation such as Pinnacle.	\$3000
Wimmera Mallee Umpires Association	Electronic Communications for Football Umpires will support the purchase of communication systems for umpires officiating in the Wimmera and Horsham District football competitions. Following a successful trial in 2026, the devices demonstrated clear benefits in teamwork, decision-making and game management, helping umpires keep pace with the speed and demands of modern football.	\$3000
TOTAL AWARDED		\$20,628.00

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives

5 ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE

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

Budget implications

The grants were awarded within existing budgetary allocations

Policy / Relevant Law

Community & Event Support Guidelines

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The outcome of each grant was made in conjunction between one external panel member and the Chief Executive Officer.

Gender Impact Assessment

Assessment panel consists of all female members. Gender equality implications of the grant applications were considered as part of the assessment.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. That Council receive the Community Support Grants - September/October 2026 report.**

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments relating to this item.

SECTION 5 - COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

There are no Committee Minutes/Reports

SECTION 6 - INFORMAL MEETINGS

6.1 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS

AUTHOR'S TITLE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DEPARTMENT CEO'S OFFICE
REFERENCE: 32371

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 20 October 2026

Matters discussed at the briefing:

- S6 - Instrument of Delegation - Members of Staff
- Pitch Towaway Zones
- Councillor Expenses and Support policy
- Annual Report
- Monthly Performance Report - September 2026
- Sponsorship Request - Ararat Community Enterprise
- Moore Street/Queen Street Roundabout Contract
- View Point Street, Taylor Street and Tobin Street - Pedestrian Safety Upgrades Contract
- Setting of Council Meeting Dates 2026/27
- A&J McDonald Centre Redevelopment
- Monthly Community Engagement Report
- Monthly Progress Report - Prestige Mill Infrastructure Project Update - September 2026
- Monthly Progress Report - Council Plan - Annual Plan
- Capital Works Program - September 2026
- Community Support Grants - September/October 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 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.

Financial

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

Policy/Relevant Law

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

Risk Assessment

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

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

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

RECOMMENDATION

That

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

ATTACHMENTS

The Summary of Council Briefings are provided as Attachment 6.1.

SECTION 7 - NOTICES OF MOTION

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

SECTION 8 - URGENT BUSINESS

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

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

SECTION 9 - CLOSE SESSION (CONFIDENTIAL)

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

- Item 9.1 - Construction of Roundabout - Queen Street & Moore Street, Ararat (Safer Local Roads & Streets Program)
- Item 9.2 - View Point Street, Taylor Street and Tobin Street - Pedestrian Safety Upgrades Contract (Safer Local Roads & Street Program)

CLOSURE OF COUNCIL MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

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

RECOMMENDATION

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

OPEN COUNCIL MEETING RECOMMENCEMENT

RECOMMENDATION

That the Open Council Meeting recommence.

Gallery invited to return to Council Chamber.

LIFTING OF CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTIONS

RECOMMENDATION

That:

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