



Agenda

Scheduled Council Meeting

Tuesday 19 September 2023 at 6:30 pm

You are advised that a Meeting of Council has been called by the Chief Executive Officer on Tuesday 19 September 2023 at 6:30 pm for the transaction of the following business.

This meeting will be held in the Council Chamber at Civic Centre, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang and will be [livestreamed via Council’s website](https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/).

**C Lloyd**

**Chief Executive Officer**

Administrators

Lydia Wilson Chair of Council

Peita Duncan Administrator

Christian Zahra AM Administrator

On 19 June 2020 the Acting Minister for Local Government appointed the Panel of Administrators for the City of Whittlesea and appointed Lydia Wilson as Chair of the Panel. The Panel of Administrators comprises of Lydia Wilson, Peita Duncan and Christian Zahra who will undertake the duties of the Council of the City of Whittlesea until the October 2024 Local Government Election.

Senior Officers

Craig Lloyd Chief Executive Officer

Agata Chmielewski Director Community Wellbeing

Sarah Renner Director Customer & Corporate Services

Debbie Wood Director Infrastructure & Environment

Frank Joyce Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Janine Morgan Executive Manager Public Affairs

Jacinta Stevens Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Sarah Rowe Manager Economic Development

Order of Business

The Chief Executive Officer submits the following business:

[1 Opening 6](#_Toc145600183)

[1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions 6](#_Toc145600184)

[1.2 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement 6](#_Toc145600185)

[1.3 Diversity and Good Governance Statement 6](#_Toc145600186)

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[2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest 7](#_Toc145600189)

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[5.2.1 Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service Review 23](#_Toc145600199)

[5.3 Sustainable Environment 34](#_Toc145600200)

[5.4 High Performing Organisation 34](#_Toc145600201)

[5.4.1 Public Transparency Policy 34](#_Toc145600202)

[5.4.2 Governance Rules 37](#_Toc145600203)

[5.4.3 Updated Community Engagement Policy 41](#_Toc145600204)

[5.4.4 Councillor Communications Policy 46](#_Toc145600205)

[5.4.5 Advisory Committee - Epping Cemetery Trust 50](#_Toc145600206)

[5.4.6 Certification of 2022-23 Financial Statements and Performance Statement 54](#_Toc145600207)

[5.4.7 Rescinding Urban Nature Strip Guidelines 61](#_Toc145600208)

[5.4.8 Draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 66](#_Toc145600209)

[5.4.9 Draft Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan 74](#_Toc145600210)

[5.5 Connected Communities 83](#_Toc145600211)

[5.5.1 Draft Connected Community Strategy 83](#_Toc145600212)

[5.5.2 Youth Council 89](#_Toc145600213)

[5.5.3 Tender Evaluation Design & Construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place Quarry Hills Regional Park (Contract No 2023-67) 94](#_Toc145600214)

[5.5.4 Audit & Risk Committee Report on Activity 100](#_Toc145600215)

[6 Notices of Motion 103](#_Toc145600216)

[7 Urgent Business 103](#_Toc145600217)

[8 Reports from Council Representatives and CEO Update 103](#_Toc145600218)

[9 Confidential Business 103](#_Toc145600219)

[9.1 Confidential Liveable Neighbourhoods 103](#_Toc145600220)

[9.2 Confidential Strong Local Economy 103](#_Toc145600221)

[9.3 Confidential Sustainable Environment 103](#_Toc145600222)

[9.4 Confidential High Performing Organisation 104](#_Toc145600223)

[9.4.1 CEO Employment Matters 104](#_Toc145600224)

[9.5 Confidential Connected Communities 104](#_Toc145600225)

[10 Closure 104](#_Toc145600226)

**Note:**

At the Chair of Council’s discretion, the meeting may be closed to the public in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The provision which is likely to be relied upon to enable closure is set out in each item. These reports are not available for public distribution.

**Question Time:**

During the meeting, the Chief Executive Officer will answer questions from residents and ratepayers. Questions are required to be submitted in writing no later than 5pm the day prior to a Scheduled Council Meeting.

Priority will be given to questions or statements that relate to agenda items and those submitted no later than 5pm the day prior to the Scheduled Council Meeting. Any questions submitted after 5pm will receive a written response following the Council Meeting.

A Question to Administrators form can be downloaded from Council’s website. Refer: <https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/>

Council will hold public question time for up to 30 minutes at each Scheduled Council Meeting to allow for public questions, statements, petitions or joint letters from our community to be read.

Council is committed to ensuring that all residents and ratepayers of the municipality may contribute to Council’s democratic process and therefore, if you have special requirements, please telephone the Governance Team prior to any Council Meeting on (03) 9217 2170.

**1 Opening**

**1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions**

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will open the meeting and introduce the Administrators and Chief Executive Officer:

Administrator, Peita Duncan;

Administrator, Christian Zahra; and

Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd.

The Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd will introduce members of the Executive Leadership Team:

Agata Chmielewski, Director Community Wellbeing;

Sarah Renner, Director Corporate and Customer Services;

Debbie Wood, Director Infrastructure and Environment;

Frank Joyce, Executive Manager Strategy and Insights;

Janine Morgan, Executive Manager Public Affairs; and

Jacinta Stevens, Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO.

Sarah Rowe, Manager Economic Development

**1.2 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement**

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will read the following statement:

*“On behalf of Council, I recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.*

*I would also like to acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging.”*

**1.3 Diversity and Good Governance Statement**

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will read the following statement:

*“At the City of Whittlesea we are proud of our diversity and the many cultures, faiths and beliefs that make up our community. We strive to be an inclusive welcoming City that fosters active participation, wellbeing and connection to each other and this land. We commit as a Council to making informed decisions to benefit the people of the City of Whittlesea now and into the future, to support our community’s vision of A Place For All.*”

**1.4 Acknowledgements**

**1.5 Attendance**

**2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

**3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s**

**Recommendation**

**THAT the following Minutes of the preceding meeting as circulated, be confirmed:**

**Scheduled Meeting of Council held on 15 August 2023**

**4 Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters**

**4.1 Public Question Time**

**4.2 Petitions**

No Petitions

**4.3 Joint Letters**

No Joint Letters

**5 Officers' Reports**

**5.1 Liveable Neighborhoods**

5.1.1 Recreational Reserve Draft Master Plans Community Engagement

**5.1.1 Recreational Reserve Draft Master Plans Community Engagement**

**Responsible** **Officer:** Director Infrastructure & Environment

**Author:** Coordinator Open Space Planning

**In** **Attendance:** Unit Manager Landscape & Open Space Planning

Coordinator Open Space Planning

**Attachments:**

1. Lalor Reserve Master Plan [**5.1.1.1** - 13 pages]
2. WA Smith Sycamore Master Plan [**5.1.1.2** - 15 pages]
3. Lowalde Master Plan [**5.1.1.3** - 8 pages]
4. Mernda Master Plan [**5.1.1.4** - 7 pages]
5. Recreation Reserve Master Plans [**5.1.1.5** - 16 pages]

**Purpose**

* To brief Council on the development of the recreation reserve master plans.
* To seek Council endorsement to exhibit the draft Recreation Reserves Master Plans for the purposes of phase 2 community consultation and engagement.

**Brief Overview**

The Open Space Strategy 2016 recommends the development of Open Space Master Plans to guide strategic and integrated development of open space in consultation with community and stakeholders.

* The recreation reserves included in this report are:
  + Lalor Recreation Reserve, Lalor
  + Lowalde Recreation Reserve, Epping
  + Mernda Recreation Reserve, Mernda
  + WA Smith Recreation Reserve, Lalor
  + Sycamore Recreation Reserve, Mill Park
* The recreation reserves draft master plans have been developed where there is an absence of strategic planning or to replace outdated master plans no longer meeting the needs of the community.
* The draft master plans have been developed with consideration of community and stakeholder engagement undertaken in 2022.
* The draft master plans require additional input from the community and stakeholders to refine proposals and develop a prioritised action plan.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

1. **Commence Phase 2 Community Engagement activities for the recreation reserves draft master plans.**
2. **Refine draft master plans in response to community feedback and prioritise actions for implementation.**

**Key Information**

**Lalor Recreation Reserve**

*Background*

Lalor Recreation Reserve is identified as a Municipal Open Space in the *City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy 2016*. The reserve has an area of 5 hectares with a long frontage to Sydney Crescent. The main vehicular entry to the reserve is from Sydney Crescent and vehicles are time limited by an electronic gate. Secondary pedestrian access points include a laneway off Edmondson Street, and through the tennis club carpark on Sydney Crescent. The reserve is surrounded on three sides by the rear fences of residential properties.

The reserve is used by the football club, with a large pavilion, full size oval with fence and lighting, and circuit road. The recreation reserve also supports cricket with nets in the southeast corner of the reserve, and a pitch on the oval. The southwest corner of the reserve are the tennis courts and supporting facilities, including a dedicated carpark, fenced off pavilion and barbeque facilities.

*Existing Master Plan and Management Plan*

The most recent master plan for the recreation reserve was completed in 2005. Management of Lalor Recreation Reserve is guided by an *Asset Renewal and Implementation Plan* completed in 2018.

*Relevant Council Resolutions*

6 April 2021 Council Meeting

* Resolution for item 5.3.1 ‐ “Withdraw recommendation “2. Explore the feasibility of installing boundary soccer target goals on the oval to prevent the misuse of the coaches’ boxes,” from the recommendations made in the Ordinary Council Meeting held on Tuesday 4 September 2018 under “Section 6.2.1 Joint letter response ‐ Lalor Recreation Reserve ‐ 22 Sydney Crescent, Lalor”.
* Resolution from item 5.3.2 ‐ “Immediately restrict the social gatherings of resident sport clubs at the Lalor Football Club pavilion, 22 Sydney Crescent, Lalor, and that the restrictions take immediate effect” due to noise generated during social gatherings.

*Phase 1 Community Consultation Findings – Information Gathering*

The opportunities and concerns revealed at the conclusion of phase 1 consultation include:

* Safety and Access

Improved evening and night time visibility and safety within the reserve was a main concern raised by the community, as well safer, well-signed, all-weather walking paths.

* Spending longer at the reserve

The community indicated that they would like to have longer stays at the reserve, made possible with upgraded facilities such as a play space catering to a wider age group, public toilets, and supporting public furniture (seats, bins, BBQ's).

* Local disruptions

Noise and traffic are an identified issue for residents living in the area. People are known to use the reserve late into the night with the poor passive surveillance, and traffic and parking in the area is problematic on game days.

*Proposed Draft Master Plan*

The draft Lalor Recreation Reserve master plan proposes to address community needs and the Council Resolutions. The draft master plan maintains the prominence of the football field, uplifts the street frontage to the reserve, decreases parking in the reserve, and proposes more open space areas for spectators and community use.

The main proposed items are:

* Rejuvenation of street frontage and presentation

The removal of cyclone fencing along the boundary increasing physical and visual permeability and direct access into the reserve and creating a more welcoming street interface with the play space and park amenities.

* Car Parking

Restricted access to vehicles parking behind the pavilion and around the oval, with the formalised car park near the entry and proposed indented parking on Sydney Crescent in line with Council’s Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan recommendations, increasing the useable open space in the reserve for informal community recreation infrastructure.

* Path network and seating

Game day informal seating areas for spectators are proposed in locations around the oval with an accessible pedestrian access path circumnavigating the oval and connecting all the areas. These areas double as social areas or informal recreation areas, and the access path is a walking or jogging route at all other times during the week.

* Park lighting

Public area lighting is proposed for increase safety and visibility, along the main thoroughfare through the site, and in the car park. Lighting will be timed and will be to the levels defined in Australian Standards.

**Lowalde Recreation Reserve**

*Background*

Lowalde Recreation Reserve is identified as a Municipal Open Space in the *City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy*. The reserve has an area of 3.4 hectares with a Melbourne Water easement to the northern boundary, a kindergarten and on-site to the eastern edge. There are three street frontages to the recreation reserve, Savannah Crescent to the west, and two frontages on Lowalde Drive. An additional entry laneway is on Eva Place.

The reserve is frequently used by cricket clubs, despite the site having minimal supporting facilities, and the neighbouring school occasionally uses the reserve for school sports. There is a playground near the carpark which was constructed in 2008. The reserve has a network of granitic gravel paths connecting the various entries. The Melbourne Water easement is due to receive a shared path upgrade, connecting the reserve to the Darebin Creek Trail and McDonalds Road.

*Existing Master Plan and Management Plan*

Lowalde Recreation Reserve has no pre-existing master plan or management plan.

*Relevant Council Resolutions*

None

*Phase 1 Community Consultation Findings – Information Gathering*

The opportunities and concerns revealed at the conclusion of phase 1 consultation include:

* Walking and active recreation

The community feedback indicated that community members would like to see Council prioritise actions to enhance the reserve for walking and active recreation. Including formalisation of existing gravel paths, better connections to wider path networks, and infrastructure to support active recreation.

* Furniture and park infrastructure

There is a consensus within the community that the reserve is lacking furniture and park infrastructure. These items include general park furniture (seats, picnic settings, shelters, bins), lighting, fitness equipment, and public toilets.

* Enabling Sports

The existing infrastructure provisions do not meet the needs of the three cricket clubs using the reserve, and there is a want by the community for Council to improve the facilities to enable the clubs to have year-round use.

*Proposed Draft Master Plan*

The proposed Lowalde Recreation Reserve Master Plan emphasises a community-based reserve and retains the oval as an informal overflow field. This allows for the additional programming of the reserve to enhance community use through active and passive recreation facilitated by improved amenities, play space, walking tracks, locality connectivity and planting.

The main proposed items are:

* Car park configuration

Reconfiguring the car park allows for the creation of an entry forecourt to the kindergarten and better visibility into the recreation reserve on Lowalde Drive.

* Public amenities

An automated locking public toilet is proposed in the reserve, the location is near the kindergarten and visible from Lowalde Drive. This is to support the projected increased use of the reserve for informal recreation.

* Informal recreation facilities

A much higher provision of informal recreation facilities is proposed, with the inclusion of a half size multi-use court, junior ‘pump track,’ outdoor fitness equipment, new play space (including nature play), and shelter.

* Park lighting

Public area lighting is proposed for increased safety and visibility, along the pipe track shared path through the site, in the forecourt to the kindergarten, and in the car park. Lighting will be timed and will be to the levels defined in Australian Standards.

**Mernda Recreation Reserve**

*Background*

Mernda Recreation Reserve has an area of 3.5 hectares, with a long frontage onto residential Heals Road, a shorter frontage to Schotters Road and the Plenty River. The Recreation reserve has a full-size oval with cricket pitch and lighting, supported by a gravel carpark and circuit road (blocked off to vehicles). The main entry is from Schotters Road with no formal pedestrian entries or connections to the surrounding footpath network.

The reserve is currently an overflow and training field with a temporary demountable pavilion installed in 2022. The reserve has a playground, dilapidated asphalt hard court, and a poor condition toilet block. The southwest corner is leased to Whittlesea community connections (WCC), with access from Heals Road. The northwest corner is leased to Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE) and has a recently constructed demountable building with dedicated carpark, the facility faces into the park with no street activation to Schotters Road.

*Existing Master Plan and Management Plan*

Mernda Recreation Reserve has no pre-existing master plan or management plan and was omitted from the Open Space Strategy 2016. The Mernda Recreation Reserve Future Directions Plan 2021 was developed in consultation with stakeholders to inform the preparation of the Master Plan.

*Relevant Council Resolutions*

18 July 2023 Council Meeting

* Resolved to grant PRACE a lease extension of eleven (11) years for a maximum of twenty (20) from the existing commencement date (July 2021).

*Phase 1 Community Consultation Findings – Information Gathering*

The opportunities and concerns revealed at the conclusion of phase 1 consultation include:

* Recreation for all users and abilities

The community feedback indicated that community members would like to see Council prioritise actions to increase usage of the reserve by the broader community facilitated by additional park infrastructure, such as an improved play space, better path network, fitness equipment, and better community pavilion for sports and community use.

* Facilities and safety

Safety was a priority raised by the community, requesting council look at opportunities for public amenity lighting, replacing old furniture, and mitigating potential multi-user conflicts.

* Community Spaces

The community would like to have more of a physical presence on site through the existing community education programs offered by PRACE and the Mernda Community House, community gardens, and community events such as art or food festivals.

*Proposed Draft Master Plan*

The proposed draft Master Plan reinforces connections to the Plenty River corridor, maintains the current level of sporting infrastructure and improves upon the quality of the facilities. The plan aims to provide more open space provision by creating better peripheral on-street carparking, formalising a smaller on-site car parking, creating better pedestrian links, and improving the informal recreation infrastructure within the reserve.

The main items proposed are:

* Long term integration of Community House and Community Pavilion  
  The plan proposes the relocation and integration of the Community House into an integrated community pavilion, allowing for more space for the Community House to grow and provide a broader program for the community. Further investigation is required during implementation, including the feasibility and operation of such a facility. The master plan is staged to allow for the continued improvement of the reserve whilst these studies are completed, and stakeholder collaboration occurs.
* Formalised Car Parking

The plan proposes to formalise all car parking on site and on street. This involves clearly delineating parking bays and constructing accessible paths from community facilities to the parking bays. The amount of parking proposed in the plan aligns with the Sports and Leisure Infrastructure Plan for the scale of community pavilion.

* Park lighting

Public area lighting is proposed for increased safety and visibility, along the main paths through the site to community facilities, and in all car park areas. Lighting will be timed and will be to the levels defined in Australian Standards.

* Informal Recreation Infrastructure

The plan proposes to recognise the informal recreation that occurs at the reserve by incorporating paths, seats, and amenities to allow for broader community use throughout the year. New facilities, such as the multi-use court, bocce court, exercise equipment, and new play space will enable more users to make the most of the public facilities.

**WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserves**

*Background*

WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserves are identified as a Municipal Open Space in the *City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy.* These two reserves straddle the Darebin Creek and form a single recreation reserve with an area of 19.4 hectares and is currently guided by an adopted Masterplan completed in 2008.

WA Smith Reserve has a large pavilion, Lalor East Preschool, carpark and play space on the Darebin Drive frontage. There are:

* two fenced fields for Rugby, AFL, and Cricket supplemented by 3 cricket nets, and high mast lighting.
* a small hardcourt with a basketball key and hoop next to a play space.
* The reserve is elevated from the Darebin Creek to create a level playing surface.

Sycamore Reserve includes:

* a former landfill site with methane gas extraction in a facility between the pump track and soccer fields. The soccer fields have a poor undulating surface influenced by the subsurface landfill movement.
* a competition BMX racetrack with club building and community dirt jump loop
* a dedicated carpark to the eastern entry from Sycamore Street.
* the Hawkes Drive entry to another carpark with a smaller pavilion with separate demountables. The smaller pavilion services 2 soccer fields, with one field fenced and lit with high mast lights.
* two cricket nets between the soccer fields and the pump track.

The Darebin Creek Trail weaves through the Sycamore Reserve, providing opportunities for increased connections with the natural environment, with new path connections to the BMX pump track facility, and power easement shared path. The path surfaces across the park are inconsistent with a mix of asphalt, and gravel surfaces. There is one bridge over Darebin Creek connecting the two reserves.

*Existing Management Plans*

* WA Smith and Sycamore Reserves Master Plan 2008

*Relevant Council Resolutions*

None

*Phase 1 Community Consultation Findings – Information Gathering*

The opportunities and concerns revealed at the conclusion of phase 1 consultation include:

* Community Spaces and Facilities\

The consultation responses indicate the recreation reserves are a place for the community to be active and social. In addition to the programmed sports at the recreation reserves, the community gather there for casual social sports, to meet family and friends, and undertake active recreation. There is a call for all the facilities at the reserves to be upgraded and improved, in particular, the need to improve safety through better lighting and passive surveillance.

* Experience and connection to nature

There is an opportunity to enhance the reserve’s connection to the Darebin Creek and the natural environment through creek improvement, nature play, and visual or physical interactions with the creek.

*Proposed Draft Master Plan*

The proposed master plan increases the informal active and passive recreation facilities in Sycamore Recreation Reserve and concentrates the formal sporting infrastructure in WA Smith Recreation Reserve. The desired outcome is to change how the reserves currently function, repurposing the Sycamore sporting fields that cannot be upgraded to meet sporting codes, for the broader community to interact with the natural environment and other forms of informal recreation.

The main items proposed are:

* Co-location of WA Smith Community Facilities

The master plan proposes to locate the pavilion in a position that does not block visibility into the reserve to create better passive surveillance and safety. The new pavilion is also an opportunity to integrate or co-locate the kindergarten into the same building with the aim to reduce built form footprints in the open space, further improving open space provisions in the area and activating the community building during all hours of the day.

* Bridge connection

A new bridge connection from WA Smith to Sycamore will create a more visible and safer route for park users and active transport. The bridge will need to be elevated to be outside of the required flood event areas and will provide a vantage point for passive surveillance into the park. This route will be lit to the levels defined in the Shared Path lighting guide and to Australian Standards.

* Informal recreation facilities

A much higher provision of informal recreation facilities is proposed, with the inclusion of a large central play space, walking trails, and viewing platforms along the Darebin Creek.

* Park lighting

Public area lighting is proposed for increased safety and visibility, along the main active transport route through the site, and in the car parks. Lighting will be timed and will be to the levels defined in Australian Standards.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

**Consultation overview**

*Phase 1 – Information Gathering*

This first phase of consultation was designed to gauge broader community needs and values to assist in opportunities and constraints analysis. This is complimented with initial discussions with stakeholders to understand the operational requirements of sporting clubs and community groups with vested interests at the recreation reserves. Consultation feedback was primarily collected through Council’s online engagement webpage utilising the multiple tools available to maximise the range and reach of submissions.

Consultation activities included:

* In person pop-ups at the Recreation Reserves, market stalls, and other local reserves.
* Face to Face meetings with sporting clubs and stakeholders.
* Phone conversations with sporting clubs and stakeholders.
* Virtual online meetings with stakeholders.

Consultation Periods and Participation:

* Lalor Recreation Reserve – 5 July to 31 July 2022
  + 469 visitors to the engagement website.
  + 42 community members contributed.
* Lowalde Recreation Reserve – 2 May to 5 June 2022
  + 614 visitors to the engagement website.
  + 122 community members contributed.
* Mernda Recreation Reserve - 15 July to 31 July, and 4 August to 26 August 2022
  + 598 visitors to the engagement website.
  + 98 community members contributed.
* WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserve - 5 July to 7 August 2022
  + 288 visitors to the engagement website.
  + 89 community members contributed.

*Phase 2: Present draft concept and master plan to community for further feedback*

*(11 September – 20 October 2023)*

For Phase 2, the draft concept and master plans will be presented to the community for feedback between 19 September and 20 October 2023. Community feedback and priorities will be sought online through Council’s Engage Whittlesea platform and through direct conversation and activities at two community-based pop-ups for each reserve.

Council will share the key aspects of the plans and ask community whether they support the draft plans through a quick poll on the project Engage page enabling participants to indicate their support of the drafts using a rating scale from ‘I like it a lot’ to ‘I don’t like it at all’ with five feasible options. The community will have the opportunity to download the draft master plan and featured FAQ sections for the projects and provide any further comments.

Community pop-ups will be held at Lowalde, Lalor, Mernda, WA Smith, and Sycamore reserves. Participants at community-based pop-ups will be presented with the same draft master plans and offered the opportunity to undertake the same activity on large activity boards. These boards will have the same question and responses as well as space to share any missed opportunities.

The project team will meet directly with key stakeholders including local shopkeepers and sporting groups, to show draft plans and give the opportunity to provide further feedback on the drafts.

The opportunity to participate in the phase 2 engagement will be promoted on Council’s social media channels, including Facebook and Instagram.

*Phase 3 - Confirmation*

The final phase of community engagement for the master plans involves the exhibition of the final Council adopted plans.

*Discrete Projects*

Each master plan may have significant discrete projects requiring additional community engagement for detailed design development, this may include pavilions or community buildings, or land acquisition. Further project specific community engagement will be programmed into the respective project plans.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Liveable Neighbourhoods**

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

The W2040 Goals includes an indicator to increase use of Open Space. Master plans will directly influence this goal by ensuring the management and development of open space meets the needs of the community, local and regional sporting groups and in turn increase accessibility and the value of open spaces.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

Recreation Reserve master plans clearly define actions which address management needs of the green and blue assets in the reserves with the aim of increasing environmental benefits. This occurs through enhancement of tree canopy coverage, increasing biodiversity with native plantings and habitat creation, and the implementation of water sensitive urban design principles to assist in improving our waterways. Master plan design includes increased opportunities for user connection to the natural environment and passive activities.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

The recreation reserve master plans aim to create more social spaces for all community members enabling social gatherings whether affiliated with sporting clubs or not. In addition, the master plans ensure a continued support of established sporting clubs with the improvement of facilities. Quality public open space and interaction with the natural environment has well-documented critical benefits for community health and social cohesion.

**Economic**

The recreation reserve master plans aim to increase patronage of our open spaces and waterways by creating welcoming public open space for the local and broader community. Increased visits to open spaces will in turn increase visits to local shopping precincts to facilitate extended stays. The improvement of public open space can also increase the property values of the locality.

**Financial Implications**

The estimated high level budget requirements for the delivery of each master plan have been developed. All the estimates are in line with current industry rates, with the exception of WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserve which is estimated to be higher due to the transformative concept proposed.

Cost estimations will be further refined during the finalisation of the master plans following community consultation. A Quantity surveyor may be engaged to develop a more detailed cost estimate to assist in actions, implementation, and project prioritisation.

Deliverable actions will be aligned with existing delivery programs in Council’s established Capital Delivery Program. Larger action items will be subject to future funding consideration in Council’s Long Term Financial Plan and external grant opportunities.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Climate Change - Failure to mitigate or adapt to the risks of climate change**Service Delivery - Inability to plan for and provide critical community services and infrastructure impacting on community wellbeing*

**Strategic Risk** *Life Cycle Asset Management - Failure to effectively plan for the construction, on-going maintenance, and renewal of Council’s assets*

The recreation reserve master plans are integrated plans which are a robust way to have a long-term plan of reserve specific asset management and improvement to the service and provision levels identified in the Open Space Strategy.

The involvement of the community and stakeholders is essential in developing the vision and priorities for future reserve improvements. The multi-tiered approach to consultation and engagement ensures there are multiple opportunities for community and stakeholders to be involved in the planning process, and to ensure the actions identified meet the needs of the community.

It should be noted that the development of these master plans will be completed before the *Community Infrastructure Strategy* and the *Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy* which could instigate additional amendments to the final Master Plans.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

Each recreation reserve master plan has a communications plan developed with consideration of their respective engagement plans. A variety of methods will be implemented to ensure effective communication of the draft master plan consultation activities and further development, these include social media posts, articles in print and online media, site signage, direct mail, and sporting club newsletters.

Refer to consultation and engagement section above for additional information.

**Critical Dates**

Phase 2 Community Consultation

* Stakeholder consultation – 11 September to 20 October 2023
* Broader community consultation – 19 September to 20 October 2023

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The Open Space Strategy 2016 recommends the development of Open Space Master Plans to guide strategic and integrated development of open space in consultation with community and stakeholders. Master Plans have been prepared where none previously existed, or the existing master plans are outdated and no longer effectively guide the management and improvement of their respective reserves. The draft master plans will address this gap and respond to ageing infrastructure, community needs, sporting needs, and the aims to improve the City of Whittlesea’s environmental assets.

The community consultation of the draft master plan will ensure the plans have been developed with consideration of the community needs identified in phase 1 consultation and engagement activities and that the community is involved in influencing the outcomes of the recreation reserves.

This report recommends that Council endorse the Recreation Reserves Draft Master Plans for exhibition and to approve commencement of consultation and engagement activities with the community.

**5.2 Strong Local Economy**

5.2.1 Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service Review

**5.2.1 Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service Review**

**Responsible Officer:** Director Community Wellbeing

**Author:** Unit Manager Leisure & Recreation

**In Attendance:** Manager Active & Creative Communities   
Unit Manager Leisure & Recreation  
Projects & Planning Officer

**Attachments:**

1. Library Service Review Implementation Actions [**5.2.1.1** - 2 pages]

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the outcomes and recommendations of the Library Service Review.

The review was undertaken to determine the strategic direction of library services over the next twenty years and inform transition of the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation to a new entity as required under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

This report presents the findings of the Library Service Review from both a service and infrastructure perspective.

The report also seeks endorsement for staffing of future community library hubs, and to make the current trial library community hub at Galada Community Centre in Epping North permanent.

**Brief Overview**

At its December 2022 meeting, Council:

* Noted the commencement and scope of the Library Services Review and the engagement of an independent consultant.
* Endorsed the establishment of a library and community space in a shop front in the Mernda Town Centre.
* Endorsed the establishment of a Library Hub at the Kirrip Community Centre in Wollert.

The Library Service Review was undertaken in response to two actions in the Strong Local Economy goal of the Community Plan 2021-2025:

1. Review the library service to inform transition to a new entity as required under the *Local Government Act 2020*.
2. Increase participation and access to library services through additional ‘satellite’ library programming at community centres.

The Library Service Review was designed to:

* Be a starting point for Council to determine the strategic direction of library services over the next twenty years and the facilities needed to deliver services.
* Inform strategies in Council’s Integrated Planning Framework, including the Connected Communities Strategy, Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy and Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan.
* Guide City of Whittlesea’s input into planning for the transition of Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation (YPRL) into a new entity by June 2031 as required by the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Underpinned by the findings of the Library Service Review, this report recommends the following strategic directions for library services:

* To continue a shared service business model with YPRL, Nillumbik Shire Council and Banyule City Council.
* Increase the agility of the library service in the western growth corridor as the population increases significantly over the next ten years.
* Co-locate library services with complimentary services to enhance community access and partnership opportunities.
* Assess the service level offered at each location with a place-based lens to ensure responsiveness to community needs.
* Develop a framework for Council’s relationship with YPRL to improve strategy alignment and reporting.

Key actions from theCity of Whittlesea Library Service Review Implementation Actions 2023 – 2031 at **Attachment 1** include:

* Improve reporting and alignment to Council’s strategies in a new service agreement with YPRL.
* Develop and implement a relationship matrix in the new service agreement with YPRL to elevate library strategy and reporting.
* Partner with YPRL in trialling a 24/7 library model.
* Develop and trial with pop-up services to activate Council assets and/or other facilities and locations across the municipality.
* Adapt the mobile library route to deliver services to the north-west growth corridor.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

1. **Endorses the continuation of a regional shared service model with the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation, Nillumbik Shire Council and Banyule City Council for the delivery of library services in the City of Whittlesea.**
2. **Delegates authority to the CEO to enter into a new service agreement with Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation for 2025-2031 upon expiry of the current agreement in 2025.**
3. **Notes Council Officers have commenced planning with Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation, Nillumbik Shire Council and Banyule City Council to ensure the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation transitions successfully to a new entity as required under the *Local Government Act 2020*.**
4. **Notes the Library Service Review Implementation Actions 2023-2031 at Attachment 1.**
5. **Notes that actions relating to library infrastructure in Attachment 1 will be incorporated into Council’s Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan.**
6. **Endorses a staffed library service delivery model for future community library hubs, subject to business cases and Council’s budget processes.**
7. **Authorises the CEO to increase the level of service in Council’s existing service agreement with the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation (2021-2025) to transition the trial library hub at Galada Community Centre in Epping North to a permanent library hub in January 2024. The increased level of service comprises additional part time staffing cost of $110,750 per annum, which will be funded through Council’s operational savings.**

**Key Information**

**BACKGROUND**

**Delivery of library services in the City of Whittlesea**

Library services in the City of Whittlesea are delivered on behalf of Council by the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation (YPRL) through a service agreement.  The regional library model includes Banyule City Council and Nillumbik Shire Council. The structure has been in place since 1995 and the agreement has been renewed every five years. While the service is operated by YPRL, Council has representation on the YPRL Board with Council officers supporting the implementation of the service agreement and managing the relationship with the YPRL.

The City of Whittlesea library service currently includes one destination library (Mill Park), three branch libraries (Lalor, Thomastown, Whittlesea), two Click and Collect Hub libraries (Galada Community Centre, Epping and Olivine Place, Donnybrook), the mobile library bus service and outreach programs. The mobile library provides access to books via a large-scale heavy vehicle that delivers to residents unable to travel to library facilities. This service currently stops in Epping North, Doreen, and Mernda.

At its December 2022 meeting, Council endorsed a proposal to extend the library community hub model into Kirrip Community Centre (Wollert) as well as establish a mini branch model in a shop front in the Mernda Town Centre, both on a medium-term basis.

**Changes to the *Local Government Act* *2020***

Existing library corporations including YPRL were formed under the *Local Government Act 1989*. Under the new *Local Government Act 2020,* library services remain the responsibility of local government, but the Act contains specific provisions that require all existing regional library corporations to be ‘wound up’ and transitioned to a new corporate entity by 2031.

The new entities will be governed by s.110, the Beneficial Enterprises section of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The intent is to remove redundant legislative provisions and potentially use existing incorporation provisions already existing in Victorian or Commonwealth legislation.

The following provisions in the *Local Government Act 2020* have underpinned the Library Service Review:

* Under s.330, no new library corporation can be formed, and no additional Council can become a member of an existing library corporation.
* Existing library corporations must be wound up under the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1989* within 10 years (by 30 June 2031) of the commencement of s.110 Beneficial Enterprises.
* Operations of the existing library corporation can be transferred to a new corporate operating structure if desired.

**Library Service Review Key Findings and Recommendations**

This report recommends that Council continues with a shared library services model with existing member Councils and develops a relationship framework to support the YPRL service agreement to improve reporting and strategy implementation.

**The evolution of libraries as a service**

The purpose of libraries is evolving, and they have become much more than a place to borrow books. Libraries provide a range of recreational, educational, social, information and employment-related benefits for community members of all ages, interests, and backgrounds. This includes involvement in programs and services, accessing computers and other technology, interacting with staff and undertaking informal recreation. There is a much higher demand for program and activities and less emphasis on borrowings and loans in the City of Whittlesea. Future facilities will need to orient the allocation of floor space and resources (staffing) towards programs and activities. A place-based assessment of the service level will need to be undertaken at each location to ensure the community is well supported in accessing facilities and programs.

Delivery of library services as part of a broader integrated suite of services is an effective way of service delivery and using space in a more efficient manner with complimentary services. It also potentially attracts new and different users to the library by allowing cross service collaboration.

The City of Whittlesea is a high-growth municipality with very high levels of demand for new facilities and infrastructure in growth areas and renewal / replacement of assets and facilities in established areas. There is a need to increase the agility of the library service, particularly in the north-western growth corridor as the population increases significantly over the next ten years.

**Future library service model**

Three potential models were analysed for the future library service, including:

1. Shared Service Model – This is the model currently in operation and involves a service arrangement and regional partnership with YPRL and partner Councils Banyule City Council and Nillumbik Shire Council.
2. In-house Service Model – Service is wholly managed and delivered by staff employed by Council.
3. Contractor or Commissioned Provider – Service is contracted out to a third-party entity.

This report recommends that the City of Whittlesea continues with a shared service model for the future delivery of library services. This model has a demonstrated history of high visitation, delivering community outcomes, increased efficiencies and economies of scale.

If Council endorses the continuation of this model, elements including strategic alignment, integration with broader Council services and operations and adapting to changing community need will be addressed through the development of a relationship framework. This framework will define authority, set service requirements and improve accountability for delivery of community outcomes. The benefits of shared service models include economies of scale and efficiencies based on opportunities for staffing and resources being shared across member Councils.

A key measure to ensure effective transition to a new corporate entity has been the establishment of a joint planning initiative between the City of Whittlesea, YPRL, Nillumbik Shire Council and Banyule City Council. A sub-committee of the YPRL Board comprising member Council Executive Officers as well as the YPRL CEO has been established to lead this work.

**YPRL Service Agreement**

Library services are an important but wholly discretionary service and therefore the establishment of clear policy and service standards to guide delivery is integral. An arm’s length entity for delivery of services has advantages (efficiency and scale) but requires mechanisms to ensure clear definition of requirements, performance measurement and accountability to Council and community.

Through the Library Service Review, it was identified that City of Whittlesea as a member Council plays a stronger role in setting vision, strategy, policy, and quality standards for YPRL.

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires that all library corporations in Victoria transition to a new entity by June 2031. Council’s existing agreement with YPRL is from 2021-2025. This report proposes that:

* A new service agreement is negotiated for 2025-2031 whilst the joint planning initiative is undertaken for the entity transition in line with the 2031 timeline. Officers will work directly with YPRL Executive to incorporate key recommendations of this report into the next service agreement. The new service agreement will incorporate the following elements:
  + A more robust relationship framework between Council and YPRL which defines authority, sets service requirements, and improves accountability for delivery of community outcomes.
  + Enhanced strategic and operational alignment – aligning library services closely with Council strategies, community programs and activities.

**Library Infrastructure**

Patterns of library visitation in the City of Whittlesea indicate a much higher demand for program and activities and less emphasis on borrowings and loans. This means that future facilities will need to orient the allocation of floor space towards programs and activities and economic development to compliment collections and traditional library services. This will include the trial of community access to a library 24/7 to support the changing needs of our community.

Delivery of library services as part of a broader integrated suite of services under a community hub model is an effective way of using space in an efficient manner and potentially attracts new and different users to the library by allowing cross service collaboration. Delivering library services in a co-located model enables the community to access multiple services in a single location.

Library infrastructure requirements will be assessed and prioritised through Council’s Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan with plans to create ‘library centric’ hubs in the short to medium term.

**Progressing Community Library Hubs and satellite sites**

In December 2022, Council endorsed a proposal to extend the library service into Kirrip Community Centre (Wollert) and a shop front in the Mernda Town Centre. This is an extension of the ‘click and collect’ models trialled in Olivine Place in Donnybrook and Galada Community Centre in Epping North.

While Olivine Place has served the community as it has grown, visitation has decreased over time. There is limited space to display a collection, the site does not have a YPRL staff member present and there is no integration with other services. This site will be repurposed when the library service at the Kirrip Community Centre in Wollert is established. This change will bring opportunity for a larger collection in addition to place-based programming and events as requested by community members.

The Galada Community Centre trial has run in a similar way to Olivine Place in that it offers ‘click and collect’ borrowings within a community centre setting and is unstaffed by YPRL. The Galada Community Centre site has been a success with growing visitation, borrowing and programming from the Thomastown Library. The strength and success of the library service in the Galada Community Centre is highlighted by the collection’s prominence in the community foyer.

While the ‘click and collect’ model of service is user friendly, the Library Service Review identified that for the service to continue to grow and flourish, a minimum service level of one librarian is required to provide onsite assistance and increased access to facilities such as computers, printing and public Wi-Fi. Due to the success of this site, this report proposes that the Galada Community Centre community library hub becomes permanent, with the addition of staffing for consistent programming and daily on-site processing of collections.

The two new library service locations at Kirrip Community Centre and Mernda Town Centre will provide growth corridor communities greater access to localised services. At Kirrip Community Centre, the library will be integrated within the foyer and include a dedicated library area with bookshelves and seating. In addition, mobile bookshelves, a self-checkout, and a returns area will encourage library users to walk past the program noticeboard, see other activities and engage with facility staff. Library collection items will also be available in various community languages.

The Mernda Town Centre location will be a new model in the library service hierarchy referred to as a ‘mini-branch’. It will have a bigger footprint than the community hub model and have a fulltime YPRL staff member. The mini-branch model is intended to offer increased collection, facilities and opportunities to network through place-based events and programming. It will also offer computer and printing access and public Wi-Fi.

Patterson Drive Community Centre in Donnybrook (currently being designed) will also be a hub of integrated services with a staffed, mini-branch library being central. In the interim, to respond to growing and changing community needs in the Wollert and Donnybrook growth areas, Council will work with YPRL to review mobile library stops.

**Future libraries**

As Council’s two major growth areas increase in population the following actions will be undertaken:

* Investigate implementing a library service in Doreen
* Investigate growing the Patterson Drive Community Centre library from a mini-branch to a branch

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

YPRL, Nillumbik Shire Council and Banyule City Council have been engaged throughout the Library Service Review.

The YPRL Board was presented with key findings of the Library Service Review at its meeting on 31 August 2023.

A working group of member Council officers has been established to participate in the joint planning required to transition the library service into a new entity as per the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Given the extensive community interest in libraries, it is proposed that a public report is made available on Council’s website. The report provides detail about the library service, the service review and outlines how Council will continue to deliver library services for our growing community.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Strong Local Economy**  
This report responds to two actions within the Strong Local Economy goal of the Community Plan:

* Review the library service to inform transition to a new entity as required under the *Local Government Act 2020*.
* Increase participation and access to library services through additional 'satellite' library programming at community centres.

**Connected Communities**

We work to foster an inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

**Liveable Neighbourhoods**

Our city is well-planned and beautiful and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

The construction of new library facilities will consider Council’s Environmental and Sustainable Design Guidelines.

Alignment to Council’s environmental sustainability goals will form part of Council’s new 2025-2031 service agreement with YPRL.

Council will work with and support YPRL to minimise waste by reusing books and upcycling materials, moving towards a localised circular economy.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

Libraries are known as an important universal service that provide free, safe and accessible places and resources to support community development, and the creation of a distinct sense of place.

**Economic**

The opportunity to utilise the programming space in the Mernda Town Centre min-branch to trial additional service mix options will provide case study data to inform the design, functionality and partnership opportunities to deliver a permanent facility in the longer term that maximises local economic benefits.

**Financial Implications**

***Capital***

This report does not propose any new capital funding. All future infrastructure requirements are either already budgeted in Council’s Long-Term Financial Plan or will be considered as part of the Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan.

***Operational***

It is proposed that mini-branch libraries will have a fulltime staffing model. The operational cost of this model for the Mernda Town Centre mini-branch library was endorsed by Council at its December 2023 meeting and incorporated into Council’s Long-Term Financial Plan. Staffing for the library service at the Patterson Drive Community Centre and any future mini branches will be subject to business cases and future Council budget processes.

A shared staffing model for the network of community hub locations is proposed that provides daily part time onsite staff for programming, processing of collection and courier services. At its December 2023 meeting, Council endorsed part time staffing at Kirrip Community Centre in Wollert linked to an existing branch library to the value of $100,250.

It is proposed that the trial library hub at the Galada Community Centre in Epping North becomes permanent, with the same network part-time staffing model as the Kirrip Community Centre. The additional cost to Council of staffing would be $110,750 per annum.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Service Delivery - Inability to plan for and provide critical community services and infrastructure impacting on community wellbeing*

Libraries are a valued service to the community that to adapt and build facilities in the right location at the right time.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

The Library Service Review will be made available on the Council website.

**Critical Dates-**

* **October 2023** – Commence review of mobile library service stop locations
* **October 2023** – Launch mini branch at Mernda Town Centre
* **December 2023** –Launch library hub at Kirrip Community Centre, Wollert
* **December 2023** –Repurpose library hub at Olivine Place, Donnybrook
* **December 2023** –Council endorsement of Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan which will include future library infrastructure requirements

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

This report outlines the recommendations from the Library Service Review including that library services continue to be delivered via a shared-service model.

**5.3 Sustainable Environment**

No reports

**5.4 High Performing Organisation**

5.4.1 Public Transparency Policy

**5.4.1 Public Transparency Policy**

**Responsible Officer:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Author:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Attachments:**

1. Public Transparency Policy August 2023 [**5.4.1.1** - 10 pages]

**Purpose**

To seek Council’s consideration and adoption of the Public Transparency Policy.

**Brief Overview**

In accordance with s 57 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council is required to adopt and maintain a Public Transparency Policy (Policy).

Following the Council resolution of 15 August 2023, officers made the Policy publicly available between 18 August and 1 September 2023 on Council’s engagement page seeking community feedback. The engagement page attracted 70 views however, no feedback was provided.

The revised Policy ensures compliance with the Public Transparency Principles and includes additional information around what public transparency means in relation to Council’s obligations in sharing information with the community.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

**1.** **Adopt the Public Transparency Policy attached at** **Attachment 1**.

**2.** **Note the Public Transparency Policy will be made available on Council’s website.**

**Key Information**

The Public Transparency Policy promotes openness and transparency in Council decision making processes and raises public awareness on the type of information easily accessible publicly to the community.

To highlight the importance of open and transparent governance, the following key Policy amendments were made:

* Definition of ‘What is Public Transparency’ in the local government context.
* Inclusion of Public Transparency Principles as defined in s 58 of the *Local Government Act 2020.*
* Expansion of the Decision Making at Council Meetings section to include information on when a meeting is closed or partially closed to the public and where Council decisions are unable to be made public.
* Inclusion of Council’s commitment to proactive and informal release of information to minimise the requirement for community members lodging Freedom of Information requests.
* Inclusion of availability and accessibility of Council information.
* Inclusion of the Public Interest Test and how Council will apply it when assessing whether to make certain information publicly available.

Other minor administrative amendments were made to ensure ease when navigation through the Policy.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

The Policy was made available on Council’s engagement page between 18 August and 1 September 2023 seeking community feedback. While there were 70 views of the engagement page no feedback was provided.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**High Performing Organisation**We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

The Public Transparency Policy is a requirement under s 57 of the *Local Government Act 2020.*

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

No Implications

**Social, Cultural and Health**

The Policy promotes openness and transparency encouraging proactive release of Council Information to increase community confidence and trust in Council’s decision making.

**Economic**

No Implications

**Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications with the proposed Policy.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Governance - Ineffective governance of Council’s operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach*

Council is required to adopt and maintain a Public Transparency Policy in accordance with s 57 of the *Local Government Act 2020.*

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

The revised Policy will be made publicly available on Council’s website and circulated to all staff.

**Critical Dates**

There are no critical dates associated with the adoption of the revised Policy.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The revised Public Transparency Policy provides for greater clarity to ensure the community is fully informed on the type of Council decision information that can be made publicly available.

5.4.2 Governance Rules

**5.4.2 Governance Rules**

**Responsible Officer:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Author:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Attachments:**

1. Governance Rules - September 2023 [**5.4.2.1** - 37 pages]
2. Election Period Policy September 2023 [**5.4.2.2** - 11 pages]

**Purpose**

To seek approval of the amended Governance Rules, incorporating the Election Period Policy following the community feedback process.

**Brief Overview**

In accordance with s 60(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020* Council may amend its Governance Rules in line with Council’s Community Engagement Policy.

On 15 August 2023, Council endorsed the amended Governance Rules and Election Period Policy to be made publicly available for community feedback.

During 18 August and 1 September 2023, the Governance Rules and Election Period Policy were available on Council’s Engage Whittlesea page which attracted 81 views with no feedback provided on either document.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

**1.** **Resolve to adopt the Governance Rules effective 20 September 2023 attached at Appendix 1.**

**2.** **Resolve to adopt the Election Period Policy attached at Appendix 2.**

**3. Note the Election Period Policy will be imbedded in the Governance Rules as required under section 69 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.**

**Key Information**

At the 15 August 2023 Council meeting when seeking endorsement to proceed to community consultation, it was highlighted in preparation for the October 2024 general Council elections, and transition from appointed Administrators to an elected Council, it was timely to review both the Election Period Policy and Governance Rules at the same time.

The amendments to the Governance Rules focused on continuous improvements and covered the following key changes:

* time limits for meetings;
* speaking times against each agenda item;
* strengthening requirements for the lodgement of Notice of Motions and the grounds by which the CEO may reject a Notice of Motion;
* recording in the meeting minutes the names of Councillors who spoke on each agenda item;
* recording in the meeting minutes the names of Councillors who voted for and against each motion without the need to call for a division;
* requirement to consider each agenda item and not move agenda items en-bloc;
* strengthen reasons why the CEO may disallow a public question, petition or joint letter.

The Election Period Policy incorporated the following key amendments:

* the CEO can publicly correct inaccurate information or statements made by candidates;
* strengthen the use of Council resources during the caretaker period;
* extension of the Policy to cover both Federal and State elections;
* access to information and candidate information to align with Council’s Public Transparency Policy;
* inclusion of a section relating to staff member obligations should they wish to stand as a candidate;
* expansion of the definition section to provide greater clarity.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

Between the period 18 August and 1 September 2023, the Governance Rules and Election Period Policy was publicly made available on Council’s Engage Whittlesea page seeking community feedback.

The page attracted 81 views from community members however, no feedback was provided.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**High Performing Organisation**We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

The Governance Rules incorporating the Election Period Policy were developed in accordance with the relevant provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020.*

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

No Implications

**Social, Cultural and Health**

The Governance Rules allow for members of the public to participate in Council meetings either through public question time, providing a petition or joint statement on matters important to the community.

**Economic**

No Implications

**Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Governance - Ineffective governance of Council’s operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach*

There are no strategic risks associated with the Governance Rules.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

The Governance Rules will be made available on Council’s website.

**Critical Dates**

There are no critical dates associated with the Governance Rules

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The Governance Rules have been developed to provide detailed information on when and how business may be transacted at a Council meeting in preparation for the return of an elected Council.

5.4.3 Updated Community Engagement Policy

**5.4.3 Updated Community Engagement Policy**

**Responsible Officer:** Executive Manager Public Affairs

**Author:** Manager Communications & Engagement

**In Attendance:** Manager Communications & Engagement

**Attachments:**

1. Community Engagement Policy 2023 [**5.4.3.1** - 11 pages]

**Purpose**

To present an update to Council’s Community Engagement Policy and to seek endorsement to proceed to community consultation for a period of four weeks.

**Brief Overview**

The City of Whittlesea is committed to ensuring the voices of its community are heard and considered in Council decision-making.

As required by the *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*, the City of Whittlesea adopted a Community Engagement Policy, *A Voice for All,* on 1 March 2021. The Policy has now been updated following an internal review as well as benchmarking against best practice community engagement in the public sector.

The City of Whittlesea’s Community Engagement Policy establishes a framework for inclusive and effective community engagement practices to ensure the diverse voices of the community are considered in shaping the city's direction and service delivery. The Policy aligns with Whittlesea 2040, the City's long-term vision, and complies with relevant legal frameworks and principles.

Whilst the updated policy is not substantially different in intent to the original, it seeks to reflect the maturation of the engagement function at the City of Whittlesea in recent years.

Key differences include:

• a clearer focus on clarifying expectations and articulating our commitment to the engagement principles as outlined in the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

• clarifying for community in respect to their level of influence; community feedback is one of a number of factors considered in decision-making.

• transparency around circumstances where engagement may be limited or not appropriate.

• ensuring all relevant legislation is referred to clearly.

The policy outlines Council’s focus areas for this iteration of the policy including:

• further developing our consultation practices with traditionally harder to reach and under-represented cohorts.

• continuing to evolve our journey towards more deliberative practices.

The Policy encompasses a range of principles and commitments to promote meaningful engagement, accountability and transparency. It applies to various stakeholders involved in community engagement activities, including Councillors, Council officers, contractors, consultants, project partners and volunteers.

This Policy does not replace statutory processes relating to permit applications and planning scheme amendments governed by the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and associated regulations. Nor does it apply to other council processes such as service requests or complaints.

The Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, including the Mayor, Councillors, CEO, Executive Leadership Team, and the Community Engagement Team.

It explains how Council is committed to reducing physical, social and cultural barriers to participation that may include Aboriginality, age, ability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.

The policy also describes instances where community engagement may be limited due to various factors such as legal requirements, immediate resolutions, technical expertise needs, or confidentiality concerns. It acknowledges that during these times, the level of community influence might be restricted.

The City of Whittlesea has committed to releasing the draft updated policy for community feedback before its final adoption.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council endorse the draft of the updated Community Engagement Policy 2023 for a four-week period of community consultation from 2-29 October 2023.**

**Key Information**

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic), Council will provide purposeful, genuine and meaningful opportunities for our diverse community to share ideas and provide feedback about activities, projects and issues that are important to them.

The updated Community Engagement Policy recognises the significance of the view of community to inform decision-making and underscores Council's commitment to fostering a culture of engagement.

The Policy will:

* foster community connection and collaboration by involving and consulting with community.
* promote inclusive decision-making.
* build trust between the community and the City of Whittlesea whereby opinions are sought, valued and considered and used to shape the future of the City.
* contribute to exemplary governance with informed and responsible decisions informed by community input.
* remain transparent by being clear on why and how we engage our community and how feedback is used to inform the decisions of Council.
* promote civic participation and foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.
* promote accountability and support inclusivity by outlining how Council will provide a range of tailored engagement opportunities for our diverse community.
* ensure legislative compliance with the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

The Policy highlights two primary types of engagement: consultative engagement and deliberative engagement. Consultative engagement involves seeking feedback, opinions, and ideas from the community, while deliberative engagement encourages critical analysis, collaboration, and consensus-building on more complex issues. These engagement types align with the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement, which is recognised as a best practice framework.

The Policy is proposed to be reviewed again in 2025 and updated in 2027.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

A four-week period of community consultation on the update to the Policy is proposed in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic).* Council will use a mix of engagement methodology to ensure a broad and representative range of community members can participate in the consultation process.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Connected Communities**  
We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported. The Policy seeks to build community connectedness and social cohesion through informed and considered participation.

**High Performing Organisation**  
We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

Council’s community engagement activities support our W2040 goal of a sustainable environment by seeking to reduce printed materials where possible and considering the environmental impact of any engagement activities.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

Council’s community engagement activities support our W2040 connected community goal by providing the opportunity for the community and collaborate with Council to achieve beneficial social, cultural and health outcomes. Authentic and meaningful engagement contributes to building trust, increasing community connectedness and community strengthening.

**Economic**

Council’s community engagement activities support our W2040 goal of a strong local economy by including the opportunity for local business to participate in our consultation. Council also aims to choose local providers to supply resources for community engagement events where practicable.

**Financial Implications**

The cost of the delivery of this Policy is included in Council’s operating budget.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

Council is required under the *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)* to create a Community Engagement Policy to ensure the delivery of a robust engagement program.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

The opportunity for community to have their say on the updated draft Community Engagement Policy will be promoted via Council’s communication channels and the Engage Whittlesea website. Upon adoption, the Policy will be included in Council's policy framework and published on Council’s website. We will close the loop with those who provided feedback on the draft via our Engage Whittlesea website.

**Critical Dates**

* 2 – 29 October 2023: Community consultation
* 19 December 2023: updated policy presented to Council Meeting for final endorsement

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The City of Whittlesea’s Community Engagement Policy serves as a comprehensive guideline for fostering effective and inclusive community participation which will ensure our community’s voices are heard, valued and considered in decision-making processes.

5.4.4 Councillor Communications Policy

**5.4.4 Councillor Communications Policy**

**Responsible Officer:** Executive Manager Public Affairs

**Author:** Manager Communications & Engagement

**In Attendance:** Manager Communications & Engagement

**Attachments:**

No attachments

**Purpose**

To seek Council endorsement of the draft Councillor Communications Policy.

**Brief Overview**

The Councillor Communications Policy supports the delivery of exemplary external communications with the diverse City of Whittlesea community through media and communication channels.

The Policy articulates the roles of Mayor, Councillors, CEO, members of the executive, the Public Affairs Department and Council staff in the delivery of impactful external communications to effectively engage the City of Whittlesea community.

The Policy is underpinned by principles of accessibility, inclusivity, transparency, timeliness, responsiveness and accuracy.

This Policy extends to all City of Whittlesea Councillors, Council staff, and contractors involved in communication efforts.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council endorse the draft Councillor Communication Policy.**

**Key Information**

The Councillor Communications Policy is a new policy that replaces the Communications and Public Comment Policy. It aligns to the Councillors Code of Conduct and the City of Whittlesea Staff Code of Conduct. During a Federal, State or Council election period it should be read in conjunction with the City of Whittlesea Election Period Policy.

The Councillor Communications Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

* the City of Whittlesea commits to providing information that is accurate, transparent, and responsive through public forums and communication channels
* a broad mix of communication channels will be utilised to inform the community of Council decisions, services, events, initiatives and foster civic pride and participation
* communication will be inclusive, tailored for the diverse community of Whittlesea, and presented in an accessible format
* external communication will demonstrate a strategic approach encompassing audience, desired outcomes, efficacy of channels, community impact, risk, government relations, reputation management and legal considerations
* external communication will not be used for the promotion of individual Councillors or political parties or affiliations for political advantage.

**Roles and responsibilities**  
The Policy articulates the delineation in the role of spokesperson for the City of Whittlesea; the Mayor as the spokesperson on strategic matters of public interest and the CEO to be the spokesperson on operational matters and officer recommendations prior to their endorsement at a Council Meeting. The Mayor and CEO may delegate this authority as appropriate.

The Public Affairs Department manages media relations and a broad mix of communication channels, tools and tactics to engage with our diverse community including websites, social media channels, photography, videography, advertising, newsletters, direct mail and signage.

The Policy is proposed to be reviewed in 2025 and updated in 2027.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

Targeted internal consultation has informed the development of this policy. Due to the operational nature of the Policy, it is not proposed to be released for public consultation.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**High Performing Organisation**  
We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

The draft Councillor Communications Policy will ensure a clear and transparent process to deliver effective and impactful communication to the City of Whittlesea community.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

Council’s communication activities support our W2040 goal of a sustainable environment by seeking to reduce printed materials where possible and considering the environmental impact of any communication activities. An example of this is the community newsletter which is distributed to all households and businesses - printed on Australian-made PEFC certified paper (sustainably forested) using vegetable inks.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

Council’s communications activities support our W2040 connected community goal through the delivery of open, accessible and inclusive communications. Ensuring the community is informed and engaged is essential to building trust, increasing community connectedness and encourage participation in the local community.

**Economic**

Council’s communication activities support our W2040 goal of a strong local economy by informing and connecting the community with business and encouraging local spending and investment.

**Financial Implications**

The cost is included in the current operational budget.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Governance - Ineffective governance of Council’s operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach*

The Councillor Communication Policy clarifies roles and responsibilities for the Mayor and Councillors, ensuring external communication is aligned with the obligations and functions of the roles and the Councillor Code of Conduct.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

Upon adoption, the Councillor Communications Policy will be included in Council's policy framework and published on Council’s website. It will be included as part of the planned induction for the return of Council and circulated to relevant stakeholders. Ongoing promotion and reminders of the principles of the Policy will be communicated at regular intervals.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The Councillor Communications Policy is designed to create a structured approach for transparent, responsive, and accurate external communication. By clarifying roles, emphasising ethical conduct, and identifying principles, this policy aims to enhance the Council's interaction with its diverse community while maintaining standards of professionalism and accountability.

5.4.5 Advisory Committee - Epping Cemetery Trust

**5.4.5 Advisory Committee - Epping Cemetery Trust**

**Responsible Officer:** Director Customer & Corporate Services

**Author:** Unit Manager Strategic Property

**In Attendance:** Unit Manager Strategic Property

**Attachments:**

1. ECT and Committee diagram [**5.4.5.1** - 1 page]
2. Terms of Reference [**5.4.5.2** - 2 pages]
3. Epping Cemetery Locality Plan showing conservation layer [**5.4.5.3** - 1 page]

**Purpose**

To inform Council that the Epping Cemetery Trust (ECT) at its meeting of 22 August 2023, resolved to:

* Expand the number of trustees of the ECT currently comprising three (3) Administrators acting as trustees, to a maximum of five (5) trustees comprising a minimum of three (3) Councillors and up to two (2) Council officers nominated by the Chief Executive Officer; and
* Ask Council to establish a committee to assist the ECT to manage the Epping Cemetery and encourage the establishment of a Friends Group.

To ask Council to establish a Community Asset Committee (Committee) pursuant to S65 of the *Local Government Act* 2020 to assist the ECT to manage the Epping Cemetery as a community asset and encourage the formation of a ‘Friends of Epping Cemetery Community Group’.

The relationship between the ECT, Council and the Committee requested to be established by Council as a Community Asset Committee to manage the Epping Cemetery which is a Crown Land Reserve shown in the diagram (refer to Attachment 1).

**Brief Overview**

The Epping Cemetery is a Class B cemetery and the ECT trustees are currently Council’s three (3) Administrators appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister. Epping Cemetery is a closed cemetery and management decisions of the ECT can be validated by one (1) trustee.

An expansion of the ECT from three (3) Administrator trustees to a maximum of five (5) trustees comprising a minimum of three (3) Councillors and up to two (2) Council officers nominated by the Chief Executive Officer was considered and supported by the ECT to assist in satisfying the ECT’s statutory and fiduciary obligations.

In general, trustees are appointed for a term not exceeding five (5) years and the instrument of appointment may need to be structured to ensure that there is alignment between each trustee appointment and the term of a Councillor’s appointment or Council officer’s employment term.

The establishment of a Committee by Council resolution has been requested by the ECT and is recommended as an effective means of ensuring community engagement and input into the ECT’s management decisions.

The Terms of Reference of the Committee are attached (refer to Attachment 2).

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

**1.**  **Notes the Epping Cemetery Trust’s decision to increase the number of trustees in future from three (3) Administrator trustees to a maximum of five (5) trustees comprising a minimum of three (3) Councillors and up to two (2) Council Officers nominated by the Chief Executive Officer.**

**2.** **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to finalise the Terms of Reference of the Epping Cemetery Trust Community Asset Committee.**

**3.** **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to commence the statutory process to establish a Community Asset Committee pursuant to S65 of the *Local Government Act* 2020 by Council to assist the Epping Cemetery Trust to manage the Epping Cemetery as a community asset.**

**4.**  **Supports the establishment of a ‘Friends of the Epping Cemetery Group’ to promote the cultural and historical importance of the Epping Cemetery and community input regarding cemetery operations and upkeep.**

**Key Information**

The expansion of the ECT membership to a maximum of three (3) Councillors and up to two (2) Council Officers nominated by the Chief Executive Officer is an important step towards ensuring that the ECT trustees have the available information necessary to make informed management decisions on behalf of the ECT.

At the ECT meeting on 28 March 2023, the ECT trustees asked Council officers to look at how input could be sought from community members and particularly from persons that have a connection with the Epping Cemetery and/or experience with cemetery administration processes.

The Epping Cemetery is a closed Class B cemetery with historical and regional aesthetic significance. It is also a site of national significance for threatened natural grassland and plains and grassy-woodland vegetation (refer to Locality Plan – Attachment 3).

The objective conferred by the ECT trustees in requesting the establishment of the Committee is to encourage community participation and not to assume trustee responsibilities and the establishment of a Committee under S65 of the *Local Government Act* 2020 would serve as an effective vehicle to assist the ECT in ensuring community input in decisions involving the management of the Epping Cemetery as a community asset. It is noted that S6(3) of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act* 2003 permits closed Class B cemetery trusts like the Epping Cemetery Trust to operate with a sole trustee.

The ECT trustees have also asked Council to consider promoting the establishment of a ‘Friends of Epping Cemetery Group’ to promote the cultural and historical importance of the Epping Cemetery and community input regarding cemetery operations and upkeep.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

The approach suggested is aligned with ensuring community consultation and engagement informs the ECT in managing the Epping Cemetery.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Connected communities**We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

The Epping Cemetery has cultural, historical and biodiversity value to our community and the loss and celebration of life and human emotions is understood and respected by all.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

No Implications and an opportunity to improve.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

No adverse implications and an opportunity to improve.

**Economic**

No Implications.

**Financial Implications**

No significant implications. A separate reserve fund has been established for the ECT. A grant will also be sought.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

**Strategic Risk** *Governance - Ineffective governance of Council’s operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach*

The establishment of a committee with clear terms of reference is focused on maximising engagement with the community, families and the public who appreciate cultural and historical content and the importance of protecting vegetation of national significance.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

Communication will be through engagement and media platforms to establish suitable Committee members.

**Critical Dates**

Review and approval of the final terms of reference by the ECT.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The establishment of a Committee by Council pursuant to S65 of the *Local Government Act* 2020 and under terms of reference recommended would provide the means for the ECT to engage with family members and the Whittlesea community about an important community asset.

5.4.6 Certification of 2022-23 Financial Statements and Performance Statement

**5.4.6 Certification of 2022-23 Financial Statements and Performance Statement**

**Responsible Officer:** Director Customer & Corporate Services

**Author:** Chief Financial Officer

**In Attendance:** Chief Financial Officer

**Attachments:**

1. Whittlesea Annual Financial Report 30 June 2023 [**5.4.6.1** - 64 pages]
2. Whittlesea Annual Performance Statement 30 June 2023 [**5.4.6.2** - 20 pages]

**Purpose**

The purpose of the report is to seek Council’s approval for adoption in principle of the City of Whittlesea Annual Financial Report (Attachment 1) and Annual Performance Statement (Attachment 2) for the year ended 30 June 2023 and authorisation of two Administrators to sign the certifications included in the reports.

**Brief Overview**

Council is required to present audited Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement to a Council Meeting by 31 October each year under the *Local Government Act 2020* section 98(1).

As required under Council’s Audit and Risk Committee Charter, the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 September 2023 will be presented at the next Council Meeting Tuesday 17 October 2023.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

**1.** **Approve in principle the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement for the year ended 30 June 2023.**

**2.** **Authorise the Principal Accounting Officer to make minor amendments to the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement for the Year ended 30 June 2023 to meet the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) requirements.**

**3.** **Authorise Audit and Risk Committee Council representatives, Chair Administrator Wilson and Administrator Zahra to sign-off on the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement for the year ended 30 June 2023.**

**4.** **Authorise the Chief Executive Officer and Principal Accounting Officer to sign-off on the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement for the year ended 30 June 2023.**

**5.** **Authorise the final audited Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement for the year ended 30 June 2023 to be emailed to auditor by 31 October 2023.**

**Key Information**

The Annual Financial Report (Attachment 1) and Annual Performance Statement (Attachment 2) are required to be certified by Council’s Chief Executive Officer, Principal Accounting Officer and two Administrators on behalf of Council prior to Council’s auditor signing the audit certifications.

The draft Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement for the year ended 30 June 2023 are firstly presented to Council’s Audit and Risk Committee (Committee) for review and recommendation for adoption by Council. The review focuses on:

* accounting policies and practices, including any changes to accounting policies and practices;
* compliance with accounting standards and other reporting requirements;
* significant adjustments to the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement (if any) arising from the audit process; and
* significant variances against the budget and from prior years.

**AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING 5 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The Committee discussed and reviewed the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement with a representative of Council’s external auditor, Kathie Teasdale (RSD Audit).

The Committee recommended minor amendments, which have been incorporated and are reflected in the attached Draft Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement. Subject to completion of audit procedures, the Committee endorsed the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement for the year ended 30 June 2023 and recommended to Council to approve in-principle.

As required under Council’s Audit and Risk Committee Charter, the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on Tuesday 5 September 2023 will be presented at the next Council Meeting Tuesday 17 October 2023.

**COMPREHENSIVE RESULT**

The Comprehensive Income Statement includes an amount after the total surplus (deficit) that represents the net revaluation increase of all property and infrastructure assets. Therefore, the total comprehensive result for the year ended 30 June 2023 is $92.8 million.

Council measures its underlying operational result to assist in the determination of whether it is operating in a sustainable fashion or not. The underlying result is an important indicator of Council's long-term financial sustainability. Whilst an underlying deficit in one financial year is not significant, the continued recording of deficits over a sustained period from Council's operations gradually erodes the net assets of Council.

The underlying result from operations excludes transactions which are either 'non-recurring' or not operational in nature. These items are frequently unpredictable and typically can change from one year to the next. The best examples of these items are assets (roads, footpaths, drains, land reserves, etc) that are given to Council by developers once a new subdivision is completed. There are also other accounting adjustments for when existing assets are revalued.

The aim of an underlying result is to determine whether Council's operational costs/income result is a surplus or deficit outcome. In this way, Council can, in long-term financial planning, aim for an outcome where pure operational outcomes assist Council in achieving a sustainable organisation.

The table below shows the underlying operational result for the year ended 30 June 2023.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Comprehensive Result from Comprehensive Income Statement** | **$92.8M** |
| *Less Other comprehensive income:* |  |
| Asset revaluation decrement | $40.8M |
| **Surplus for the year from Comprehensive Income Statement** | **$133.6M** |
| *Less Non-operating income and expenditure* |  |
| Grants – capital (non-recurring) | $11.3M |
| Contributions – cash (developer contributions) | $23.2M |
| Contributions - non-monetary assets | $100.7M |
| **Underlying (deficit)** | **($1.6M)** |

While showing a total comprehensive result of $92.8 million, the table above shows that the City of Whittlesea’s underlying operating result for the year ended 30 June 2023 is a deficit of ($1.6 million). The underlying deficit for the year was largely driven by the write-off of assets ($9.7 million), which is a non-cash item.

**FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS**

The Victorian Auditor-General’s Office publishes Council’s result against a range of indicators used to assist in measuring performance and financial sustainability. The estimated result of the 2022-23 indicators are presented in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ratio** | **2022-23** | **Comments** |
| **Net result margin** (Net result / total revenue) | 32.8% Green | This ratio measures Council’s ability to fund operations and asset renewal. Operating deficits cannot be sustained in the long term. A less than -10% (deficit) is deemed high risk (red) and a positive result is desirable (green). |
| **Adjusted underlying result** (Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit) / Adjusted underlying revenue) | (0.2%) Amber | Indicator of the broad objective that an adjusted underlying surplus should be generated in the ordinary course of business. A surplus or increasing surplus suggests an improvement in the operating position. A result of less than 10% is deemed as high risk (red), and a result higher than 0% is desirable (green).  The main contributing factor that has driven an amber result was works in kind reimbursement payments paid to the developer relating to the Developer Contribution Plan. These payments are funded by the Development Contribution Plan reserve. The amber result is also impacted by write-off of assets as a result of disposal of infrastructure assets. |
| **Liquidity** (Current assets / current liabilities) | 326.9% Green | This ratio measures Council’s ability to pay existing liabilities in the next 12 months. A result of less than 100% is deemed as high risk (red) and a result higher than 150% is desirable (green). |
| **Internal financing** (Net operating cash flows / net capital expenditure) | 149.9% Green | This ratio measures Council’s ability to replace assets using cash generated from operations. A result of less than 75% is deemed as high risk (red) and a result higher than 100% is desirable (green). |
| **Indebtedness** (non-current liabilities / own-sourced revenue) | 5.5% Green | This ratio measures Council’s ability to cover its noncurrent liabilities with its own sourced revenue. A result of more than 60% is deemed as high risk (red) and a result lower than 40% is desirable (green). |
| **Capital replacement** (Cash outflows for property, plant and equipment / Depreciation) | 116.9% Amber | Comparison of the rate of spending on infrastructure with its depreciation. A result lower than 100 is deemed high risk (red) and a result higher than 150% is desirable (green).  The primary factor that has driven an amber result was a number of large capital works projects that were impacted by a range of factors such as delays from service authorities, contractors availability and supply chain issues resulting in lower spending on infrastructure. |
| **Renewal gap** (Renewal and upgrade expenditure / depreciation) | 62.5% Amber | Comparison of the rate of spending on existing assets through renewing, restoring and replacing existing assets with depreciation. A ratio lower than 50% is deemed high risk (red) and a result higher than 100% is desirable (green).  The renewal gap ratio was in amber as a result of delays in delivery of key renewal projects due to lead times in receiving materials, delays from service authorities, and the availability of contractors. |
| Overall assessment for long-term financial sustainability | Green | The City of Whittlesea remains low risk (green) for its long-term financial sustainability. |

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE STATEMENT**

The 2022-23 financial year has seen several favourable developments across some of our valued community services: Aquatic facilities, libraries and the food safety service have fully resumed operations and have returned to pre-pandemic visitor/user levels and beyond. We have also taken the operation of the wat djerring animal facility in-house in October 2022 and are offering shared animal management services across the municipalities of Whittlesea, Darebin and Merri-bek from this facility. The waste and recycling service has seen the rollout of the glass bin service.

From an organisational perspective, staff turnover has decreased from 17.7% to 12.4% year-on-year, indicating a stabilising organisation.

Significant changes to the performance indicators are in effect for the 2023-2024 financial year, particularly in library services. These will be reported against in next year’s Annual Performance Statement, along with the performance against newly set targets for eight service and financial performance indicators.

Please refer to Attachment 2 for the Annual Performance Statement 30 June 2023.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

Consultation has been conducted with the relevant Council departments and external service providers as necessary through the course of the audit.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**High Performing Organisation**We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

No Implications.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

No Implications.

**Economic**

No Implications.

**Financial Implications**

The cost of the annual audit by VAGO is included within Council’s annual budget.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Financial Sustainability - Inability to meet current and future expenditure  
Governance - Ineffective governance of Council’s operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach*

This report provides Council with an oversight of the City of Whittlesea’s key financial information and performance obligations to enable monitoring and to ensure City of Whittlesea’s financial position is sustainable.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Critical Dates**

Council is required to present audited financial statements and performance statement by 31 October 2023 as per Local Government Act 2020 section 98(1).

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement have been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee and Council’s external auditor at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 September 2023. The Victorian Auditor General’s Office (VAGO) have indicated their intention to issue an unmodified audit opinion on the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement.

Two Administrators are required to sign the certification of the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement once clearance is obtained from the Victorian Auditor-General and after the Principal Accounting Officer has signed his certification.

In accordance with usual practice, it is proposed that the Administrators on the Audit and Risk Committee be authorised to sign the certification on behalf of Council after the necessary clearance has been obtained.

If late changes are made to the Annual Financial Report or Annual Performance Statement, including those required after the VAGO review, it is also proposed that the approval given to the Administrators be extended to enable them to sign the certification after the necessary changes have been made.

5.4.7 Rescinding Urban Nature Strip Guidelines

**5.4.7 Rescinding Urban Nature Strip Guidelines**

**Responsible Officer:** Director Infrastructure & Environment

**Author:** Directorate Projects Executive

**Attachments**

No attachments

**Purpose**

This report seeks the rescission of the 2015 Urban Nature Strip Guidelines.

**Brief Overview**

The Urban Nature Strip Guidelines were developed during 2013, adopted at Council on 10 December 2013, and became effective from 1 January 2015. It was determined that a review of these guidelines should be conducted to test Council’s underlying philosophy around the preferred make-up of nature strips and how proactive we are in encouraging/driving modifications, as well as their alignment with our community’s and organisation’s current expectations and values in the areas of design and sustainability. The review resulted in a change of focus and modified requirements which are reflected in the new Nature Strip Garden Guidelines.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council rescind the 2015 Urban Nature Strip Guidelines.**

**Key Information**

The Urban Nature Strip Guidelines were approved at Council on 10 December 2013 and came into effect on 1 January 2015 in order to align with General Municipal Law changes. They reflect community, environmental, and design input that is over 10 years old.

The Urban Nature Strip Guidelines provided residents and property owners in urban areas of the municipality with the ability to alter the nature strip adjacent their property from what was described as the preferred turf nature strip and street tree. The Urban Nature Strip Guidelines also offered direction around the establishment and maintenance of modified nature strips and expressed a preference for the use of native plants.

Following extensive internal and external consultation, and benchmarking with other Local Governments, the Nature Strip Garden Guidelines have been created to better reflect Council’s intentions, and to achieve the following outcomes:

* Provide a safe space for pedestrians and other road users
* Protect the natural and built environment
* Enhance the use and enjoyment of nature strips for the community's benefit
* Contribute to improved environmental outcomes such as habitat corridors and urban cooling.

The new Nature Strip Garden Guidelines were approved for use by the Executive Leadership Team on 13 September 2023 and will be released to the community following rescission of the Urban Nature Strip Guidelines.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

Replacement of the Urban Nature Strip Guidelines with the new Nature Strip Garden Guidelines was informed throughout 2 (two) stages of consultation.

**Stage 1**

Stage 1 consultation and engagement with staff from across the organisation occurred over a period of roughly 18 months. Areas of competence consulted include open space planning; traffic engineering; urban design; arborists; local laws; sustainability; water management; asset maintenance; and open space/city forest management.

The guidelines of 53 local government areas across Australia were reviewed and considered.

These Stage 1 activities informed the draft Nature Strip Garden Guidelines which, following approval by the Executive Leadership Team, were the focus of Stage 2 consultation and engagement activities.

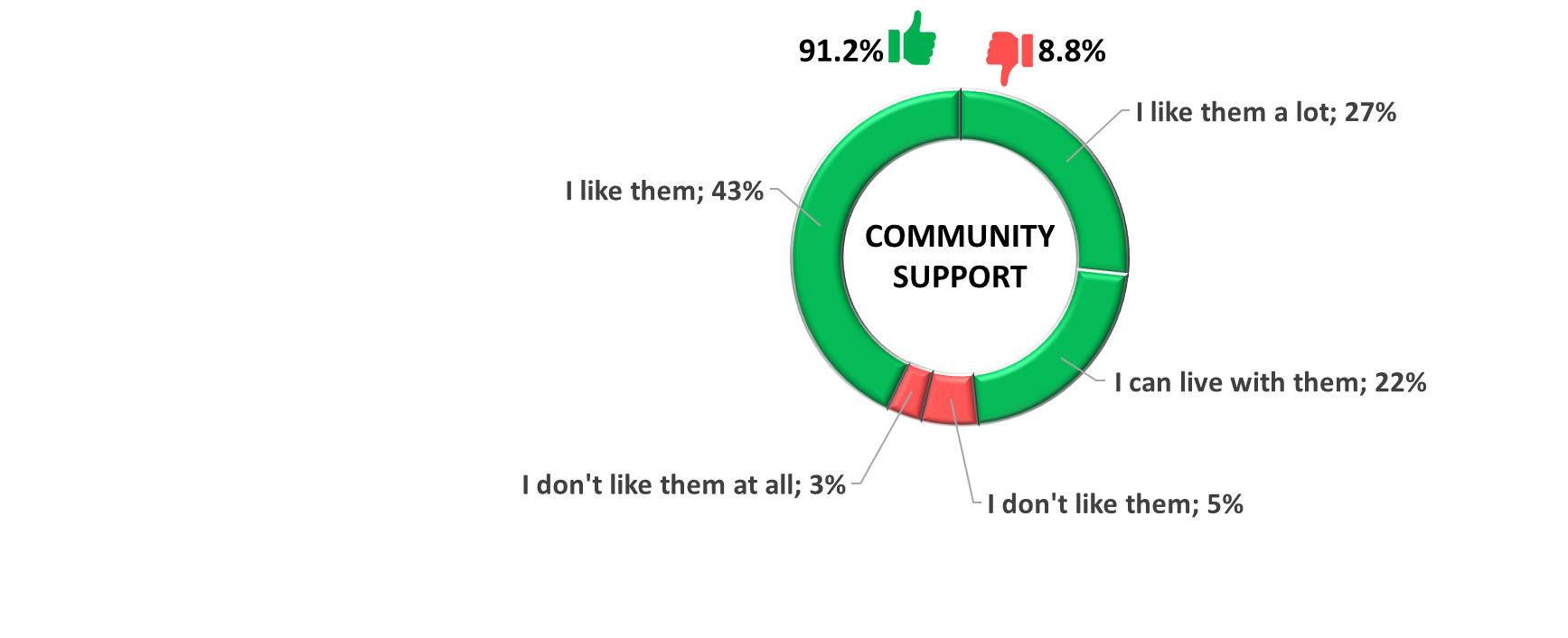
**Stage 2**

Stage 2 community consultation and engagement was carried out from 26 June 2023 to 13 August 2023. The community was provided with opportunities to provide feedback through a dedicated Have Your Say page and in-person events at 20 locations across the municipality.

The general approach across both in-person and on-line engagement was to:

* Seek comment on the new Nature Strip Garden Guidelines document.
* Outline the reason for changes to the Guidelines, specifically those changes that might be considered contentious such as disallowing synthetic grass or changing the permissions around the use of compacted materials (granitic sand, toppings, etc).
* Educate the community on the purpose/benefit of nature strips.
* Understand the community’s appetite for modifying nature strips and what might motivate community participation.

The 530 people who attended Stage 2 in-person events and the 2124 unique visitors to the Have Your Say page provided a total of 611 contributions. Support for the new Nature Strip Garden Guidelines was overwhelmingly positive as indicated by the chart below.



**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**High Performing Organisation**We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

The name really says it all - ‘nature’ ‘strips’ provide a splash of the natural within an artificial environment that would otherwise contain mainly ‘hard’ assets such as roadways, footpaths, and utility infrastructure. Aside from playing an important safety role by separating pedestrian and vehicle traffic, they provide an opportunity to positively impact the aesthetic, environmental, and social health of our city. Moving from the Urban Nature Strip Guidelines to the new Nature Strip Garden Guidelines will further enhance these outcomes.

The authority and responsibility to manage road reserves is provided through the Victorian Road Management Act 2004, Road Safety Act 1986, Road Safety Road Rules 2017, and their related regulations. Council’s Road Management Plan, developed in accordance with and as a requirement of this legislation, has as its main objective the provision of a safe and efficient network of municipal public roads, primarily for travel and transport. This legislation establishes Council as the authority for all works within the road reserve for Local Roads within the City of Whittlesea.

**Environmental**

Rescinding the Urban Nature Strip Guidelines removes permission to apply modifications that have a detrimental environmental impact, such as synthetic grass and compacted sand/stone within a street tree protection area.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

None

**Economic**

None

**Financial Implications**

None

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Service Delivery - Inability to plan for and provide critical community services and infrastructure impacting on community wellbeing*

Council has an obligation to ensure that the road reserve is a safe space for our community. Controlling what can be done within the nature strip protects lines of sites for pedestrians and vehicle operators, allows for separation between pedestrians and vehicle, and generally provides for movement between the roadway and the footpath.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

Rescission of the Urban Nature Strip Guidelines and release of the Nature Strip Garden Guidelines will be communicated via Council’s usual channels including media releases, Council’s internet site, and the existing Nature Strip Garden Guidelines Have Your Say page.

**Critical Dates**

1 October 2023 Planned effective start date for Nature Strip Garden Guidelines.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The 2015 Urban Nature Strip Guidelines were adopted at Council on 10 December 2013 and were based on community and officer input that is over 10 years old. The evolution of Council and community design and sustainability perspectives over the intervening years meant we needed to ensure that the guidelines were still aligned with our community and organisational requirements and values in these areas.

Moving from the Urban Nature Strip Guidelines to the new Nature Strip Garden Guidelines allows Council to embrace variation and customisation while still providing a road reserve that is a safe space for users. ‘Turf and tree’ is now considered the *default* treatment not the *preferred* one, and we want to encourage and facilitate community expression in order to realise the social and environmental benefits a more diverse nature strip will bring. The new guidelines received overwhelming community support through Stage 2 consultation.

The Executive Leadership Team have, on 13 September 2023, endorsed the Nature Strip Garden Guidelines for release on 1 October 2023.

The 2015 Urban Nature Strip Guidelines are required to be rescinded before the new Nature Strip Garden Guidelines can be released for community use.

5.4.8 Draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy

**5.4.8 Draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy**

**Responsible Officer** Director Planning & Development

**Author** Senior Strategic Planner

**In Attendance** Manager Strategic Futures  
Unit Manager Corporate Planning & Improvement

Senior Strategic Planner

**Attachments**

1. Liveable Neighbourhoods strategy 2024 – 2034 v 7 SPREADS [**5.4.8.1** - 19 pages]

**Purpose**

This report presents the draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy (LNS) 2023–2033 for the purposes of commencing community consultation.

The report recommends that Council endorses the Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023–2033 for the purposes of consultation for the period 22 September until 29 October 2023.

**Brief Overview**

*Whittlesea 2040: A place for all* (Whittlesea 2040) establishes a vision for liveable neighbourhoods in the municipality.

The draft Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy 2023–2033 (LNS) (Attachment 1) implements this vision, and is one of seven new, consolidated, strategies developed under Council’s new Integrated Planning Framework. The draft Connected Communities Strategy and draft Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan are also being considered at this briefing and have been prepared in close collaboration with the draft LNS.

The draft LNS synthesises work from existing relevant policies and endorsed Council positions. It also considers the extensive research and engagement undertaken since 2020 across a number of Council projects, including Whittlesea 2040, *Community Plan   
2021–2025*, and the 2021 Household Survey.

The draft LNS presents key achievements to date and details future priorities across the themes of public space and infrastructure, activity centres, integrated transport, and housing.

This seeks endorsement of the draft LNS for the commencement of the community engagement phase of the project. It is proposed to conduct the community engagement between 22 September and 29 October 2023.The final LNS, will incorporate the outcomes of this community engagement process and is intended to be presented to Council for endorsement in December 2023.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council**

1. **Endorses the draft City of Whittlesea Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy at Attachment 1 for community consultation.**
2. **Notes that targeted consultation on the draft City of Whittlesea *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* will be undertaken with key advisory and stakeholder representatives including the City of Whittlesea Youth Advisory Council, Whittlesea Disability Network, Whittlesea Community Futures and Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation.  Consultation will also include relevant state departments.**

**Key Information**

**Background**

Whittlesea 2040

In 2018, Council adopted *Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All* (Whittlesea 2040) as the long-term vision for the City of Whittlesea. Whittlesea 2040 will guide all of Council’s work and future partnerships with the community and others.

‘Liveable neighbourhoods’ is one of four goals that will guide achievement of the vision of the City of Whittlesea as a place for all.

Integrated Planning Framework

In 2021, Council adopted a new Integrated Planning Framework (IPF) approach to rationalise the more than 100 community-facing policies.

The IPF organises all strategic and operational documents into a four-tier hierarchy; Whittlesea 2040 being tier one and the LNS being one of seven new, consolidated strategies.

The creation of these strategies will focus on the delivery of outcomes, reducing complexity, increasing transparency and the removing duplication and any conflicting strategies / policies.

**Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy**

Development of the draft LNS was based on Council’s new Outcomes Measurement Framework, which established the following outcomes to implement the key directions established for liveable neighbourhoods in Whittlesea 2040:

Key direction 1: Smart, connected transport network

* Our community has options to easily travel where they need to go

Key direction 2: Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

* Our neighbourhoods are attractive and desirable places to live, work and play
* Our community has infrastructure that can adapt to their changing needs
* Our neighbourhoods are well-designed and enable all people to connect

Key direction 3: Housing for diverse needs

* Our community has the right mix and supply of housing to provide choices for all

The draft LNS identifies four key focus areas related to neighbourhood liveability:

1. Public space and infrastructure
2. Activity centres
3. Integrated transport
4. Housing

The draft LNS takes a place-based approach to planning, service and infrastructure delivery that responds to the needs and of local neighbourhoods so that people have the ability to meet most of their daily needs close to home.

For each of these themes, the draft LNS describes how they contribute to the liveability of our neighbourhoods, what Council has achieved in relation to each of these areas and priorities for the timeframe covered by the LNS.

The draft LNS also establishes an evaluation framework to monitor progress against the outcomes noted above. Progress will be tracked according to a set of outcome indicators, subject matter experts from across Council. Reporting against these indicators will commence in 2024.

The proposed LNS is intended to be presented to Council for adoption on 19 December 2023.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

The draft LNS is a synthesis of the past five years of Council’s strategic work relating to the built environment. Each focus area is informed by extensive research and community engagement. This engagement has included numerous pop-up events; focus groups for community, Council staff, institutional stakeholders, business and youth; online and hard copy surveys; online engagement; local media. Some of the key work and engagement processes that informed the LNS are summarised below:

Whittlesea 2040: A place for all

In 2018, Council engaged with over 4,000 people, through submissions, workshops and forums to inform the preparation of *Whittlesea 2040*.

The consultation and the range of opportunities to get involved was heavily promoted through a range of online, social and traditional media, attendance at local events and supporting materials such as posters in a range of locally-spoken languages and fact sheets.

Consultation activities also targeted diverse stakeholder groups, including different age groups, people living with a disability, Aboriginal and multicultural communities.

Community Plan: 2021–2025

In early 2021, Council launched the *Let’s Talk: Shaping the Community Plan 2021–25* consultation to share its ideas and priorities for Council to focus on delivering over the next four years.

The consultation process engaged with more than 1,300 people across a range of face-to-face and online engagement events.

This consultation included other targeted focus group sessions with 176 people representing culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, LGBTIQ+ community members, people with disabilities and their carers, and seniors.

Household Survey 2021

In 2021 a total of residents 1,545 answered 54 questions about a range of topics, including a number related to the LNS. This provides a rich source of data relating to what people like about where they live and where improvements could be made.

Community priorities focus group

The first two of a series of three Community Priorities Focus Groups were held in June 2023 to help inform the development and provide feedback on draft Connected Communities Strategy (CCS), LNS and the Community Infrastructure Plan (CIP) and associated action plans.

The sessions were attended by 18 residents, from a diverse age groups, genders, abilities, cultural backgrounds, suburbs and household structures.

The groups were asked targeted questions relating to key themes relating to the three strategic documents to help identify, assess, and prioritise community interests.

The final session will be conducted in October to gain feedback on the draft LNS, draft CCS and draft CIP.

Internal staff consultation

City of Whittlesea staff had a range of opportunities to contribute to the development of the draft LNS as follows:

* Input to the preparation of the *Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy Background paper*, with inputs from subject matter experts from across Council
* Input from subject matter experts as part of the project working and project control groups
* Participation in the five outcomes measurement framework workshops
* Input from target stakeholder groups in the preparation of the *Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy* *Gender Impact Assessment*
* Opportunity for all staff to comment on the draft LNS in July 2023.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021–2025:

**Liveable neighbourhoods**

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

The draft LNS seeks to implement the goal established in Whittlesea 2040, for well-planned and beautiful neighbourhoods, with town centres that are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

**Considerations**

Synergy with Connected Community Strategy

For the purposes of this briefing, the close synergy between the draft LNS and draft CCS should be noted.

This strong link has been the driving factor behind the timing of the draft LNS preparation, enabling the community to be consulted on the draft CCS, draft LNS, as well as the draft LTCIP together. The project teams for each of these three strategies have worked in close collaboration and have taken a coordinated approach to planning for community engagement.

The proposed LNS will be presented to Council together with the CCS and LTCIP for endorsement in December 2023.

**Financial Implications**

The draft LNS is likely to result in actions that Council has already committed to for the delivery of Council’s endorsed long-term plans, including the *Integrated Transport Plan 2024–2034.*

Additionally, the updated *Open Space Plan (2025–2035)* is scheduled to commence in July 2024 and does not yet have a budget allocation.

The financial implications of the action items for the next two fiscal years will be identified in the draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Action Plan 2024–2026 once complete.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

A combined engagement plan for the draft LNS, draft CCS and draft LTCIP has been prepared by the Communications and Engagement team.

As described above, the LNS builds on extensive, past community and stakeholder engagement and reflects the needs and wants expressed by the community through these avenues.

Finally, as previously discussed, the draft LNS does not present new policy, but synthesises and streamlines existing policy, so represents minimal risk.

The proposed community engagement period will ensure that the community’s previously expressed wishes for the future have been accurately reflected in the draft LNS.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

Should Council adopt this draft LNS for consultation, we will commence a five-week community engagement period.

**Critical Dates**

The final LNS is intended to be put to Council for adoption at the Council meeting on 19 December 2023.

**Next Steps**

We now have a draft LNS, informed by various levels of external and internal consultation and review and analysis of existing strategies and policies. It is therefore considered appropriate to now undertake community engagement of the draft LNS prior to finalisation.

Community engagement will be undertaken between 22 September and 29 October 2023, and will consist of:

* Key stakeholder engagement, targeting existing networks
* Community priorities focus group session (see description of these groups above)
* Community consultation, incorporating engagement via digital platforms as well as dedicated community pop-ups.

Community engagement will target key stakeholder groups and community organisations, including the Disability Network and the Whittlesea Community Futures.

The final strategy, accounting for the outcomes of the community engagement process, is intended to be presented to Council for endorsement on 19 December 2023.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy, as presented at Attachment 1, seeks to synthesise and streamline Council’s endorsed positions from a number of relevant policies to implement the key directions for liveable neighbourhoods established in Whittlesea 2040.

The draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy is informed by extensive community engagement undertaken since 2020 across a number of Council projects, including Whittlesea 2040, *Community Plan 2021–2025*, and the 2021 Household Survey. The draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy has also been prepared in close collaboration with the Connected Community Strategy project team to ensure consistency across the two, closely related strategies.

The draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy implements Council’s vision of *a place for all*.It will guide Council’s work and future partnerships with the community and others to deliver liveable neighbourhoods for our community. It is based on the key directions of:

1. Smart, connected transport network

2. Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

3. Housing for diverse needs.

The strategy seeks to ensure neighbourhoods are well-planned and serviced so people can meet their daily needs close to home.

It is proposed to now undertake community engagement on the draft LNS prior to its finalisation. To this end, it is recommended that Council endorse the draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy for the purposes of undertaking community engagement from 22 September to 29 October 2023.

The final Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy is intended to be presented to Council on 19 December 2023 for endorsement.

5.4.9 Draft Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan

**5.4.9 Draft Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan**

**Responsible Officer:** Director Community Wellbeing

**Author:** Coordinator Community Infrastructure

**In Attendance:** Acting Manager Strategic Projects

**Attachments:**

1. DRAFT Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan [**5.4.9.1** - 41 pages]

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to:

* Present the draft City of Whittlesea *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan,* outlining Council’s ongoing investment in sport, leisure, and community infrastructure priorities.
* Seek endorsement of the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* for community consultation.

The draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* articulates the principles for planning, design, delivery and activation of community facilities and ensures that proposed projects are responsive and adaptive to the City of Whittlesea’s growing and changing community needs.

**Brief Overview**

Council currently invests in the delivery, maintenance and operation of 140 community buildings and sporting precincts across the City of Whittlesea. As the fifth fastest-growing municipality in Victoria, the City of Whittlesea must plan for the increased demand for community infrastructure in growth areas, while balancing the expansion and renewal of existing facilities in established areas.

The draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* (the draft Plan) establishes an evidence-based approach to guide and prioritise Council’s investment in community infrastructure across the municipality. The draft Plan responds to the opportunities and challenges of providing timely and fit-for-purpose infrastructure, including expected population growth, a changing policy landscape, external investment and partnerships, innovative design and integration, and place-based planning.

The draft Plan, which takes a long-term outlook, was developed with consideration for existing and future strategic planning, Council’s service delivery models and supporting innovative approaches and partnerships to infrastructure planning and delivery. It also outlines the priority capital projects proposed in the short term (0-5 years) and medium to long term (5-10 years) interventions to enable timely delivery of community infrastructure, balancing community needs, financial responsibility and equity across the municipality.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

1. **Endorses the draft City of Whittlesea *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* at Attachment 1 for community consultation.**
2. **Notes that targeted consultation on the draft City of Whittlesea *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* will be undertaken with key advisory and stakeholder representatives including the City of Whittlesea Youth Advisory Council, Whittlesea Disability Network, Whittlesea Community Futures and Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation. Consultation will also include relevant state departments, state sporting bodies, sporting clubs, arts industry stakeholders and users of existing facilities.**
3. **Notes the final *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* incorporating feedback from community consultation will be presented to Council for endorsement at the 19 December 2023 Council Meeting.**
4. **Notes that each project identified in the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* (Attachment 1) will be subject to business case development and Council’s budget processes.**

**Key Information**

The City of Whittlesea is the fifth most populous local government area in Victoria, with a population of 244,119 in 2023. By 2040, the population is forecast to grow to 355,144.

Much of the City of Whittlesea’s population growth is expected to occur in the municipality’s northern corridor, in the suburbs of Donnybrook, Wollert, and Epping/Epping North. Donnybrook’s population alone is forecast to grow by 823%, surging from 5,210 residents in 2023 to 48,123 in 2041.

The expected rate of population growth throughout the municipality, together with Victorian Government policy reform, presents a challenge for Council to address local demand for essential services and infrastructure, including early childhood education (3 and 4-year-old kindergarten), Maternal and Child Health (MCH), support for older residents, sport and leisure activities, youth engagement, health and human services, and library programs.

Between 2021 and 2031, age forecasts for the City of Whittlesea predict a 60.9% increase in population of residents at retirement age. This will be accompanied by increased demand for ageing well services including preventative programs, in home services, care and support, health and allied health services, and community transport.

By 2041, the number of 0–4-year-olds will increase by almost 10,000 children. In addition to population pressures, demand for kindergarten services in the City of Whittlesea is projected to increase in response to the Victorian Government’s ‘Best Start, Best Life’ initiative, which seeks to provide subsidised 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten programs, as well as an increase in hours (15 hours for 3-year-old kindergarten by 2029, and 30 hours for 4-year-old kindergarten by 2032).

Population growth will continue to generate significant demand for meeting spaces and opportunities for social participation. With nearly half all City of Whittlesea residents born overseas, providing culturally safe spaces and programming plays an integral role in making residents feel welcome and creating a sense of belonging.

Similarly, libraries play a significant role in improving social outcomes and building community capacity. Most library users (94% of survey respondents) physically attend a branch – but people are not just visiting to access a collection; they are coming to be part of a community. In a 2006 library poll, less than half (47%) of library users believed libraries were a hub for community activities and connections. In 2022 that figure leapt to 82%. (*Inside our public libraries, Findings of the Victorian Public Library Survey and Victorian Public Library Census 2022)*

Sport and leisure infrastructure continues to form a strong basis for improving health and wellbeing outcomes in the City of Whittlesea. In the south of the municipality, including Bundoora, Mill Park, Thomastown and Lalor, there is sufficient sport and leisure infrastructure to meet current and future demand, but many facilities will require renewal over the next two decades. Conversely, rapid population growth in the north is placing excessive demand on established sports clubs, particularly in Epping. New communities in Wollert and emerging communities in Donnybrook are also seeking fit-for-purpose local sport and leisure facilities.

The City of Whittlesea has one of the highest levels of community mental health contacts per capita, most prevalent in people aged 18-24 years. Having infrastructure available in developing communities is critical in supporting access to services and providing spaces for young people to connect.

The draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* aims to address the service needs identified above through a planned approach to infrastructure development.

While Council’s role in community infrastructure is substantial, it is not the sole provider of infrastructure that supports recreation, health and wellbeing, culture, life-long learning, social and leisure programming. The draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* outlines Council’s role as a provider, facilitator and advocate for infrastructure delivery in the City of Whittlesea.

In developing short and medium-term infrastructure priorities, guiding principles were developed to support equitable provision of community infrastructure. This people-focussed planning approach ensures evidence-based decision-making is at the forefront of the prioritisation process.

The guiding principles include:

* Community needs based approach
* Welcoming, safe, inclusive and accessible
* Flexible and multipurpose
* Collaboration and partnership driven
* Optimised investment
* Sustainable.

The above guiding principles were ultimately used to establish the prioritisation process (outlined below) for the proposed community infrastructure in the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan*.

**Step 1:** Identification of the community infrastructure required to address community need by service type

**Step 2:**  Preliminary identification of potential community infrastructure projects by place

**Step 3:**  Scoring and ranking of potential community infrastructure projects

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

In developing the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan*, an extensive consultation and engagement process was undertaken to ensure that community infrastructure principles and proposed infrastructure priorities align with community need, sentiment and identified service gaps.

The engagement process took shape in the following forms:

* **Whittlesea 2040 community consultation** – over 4,000 people participated through submissions, workshops and forums; online, paper-based and in-person activities.
* **Community Plan 2021 – 2025 ‘Let’s Talk’ consultation program** – More than 1,300 people joined the conversation, giving Council a strong understanding of community sentiment through community surveys, online and face-to-face events, pop-up stalls and targeted focus groups.
* **Community focus groups** - held over 2 sessions in June to help shape the key directions for Council’s goals ‘connected community’ and ‘liveable neighbourhoods’, as well as dedicated sessions for the draft *Long Term* *Community Infrastructure Plan.*

If the draft *Long Term* *Community Infrastructure Plan* is endorsed for consultation, focus group participants will be re-engaged to seek feedback and ensure their input has been captured accordingly.

* **Infrastructure and service needs community consultation** was undertaken to inform infrastructure requirements for specific service areas as follows:
* Ageing Well: 2 x community member focus groups; 7 community member telephone interviews; Interviews with 5 key stakeholder group; Interviews and 2 workshops with Council officers (These took place between September 2022 and March 2023)
* Youth services: Engagement workshop with service providers; Community survey completed by 50 young people; Engagement workshop with group of young people (August – September 2022)
* Children and Family Services: Post-card survey completed by 248 parents; Targeted stakeholder interviews; Workshops and one on one discussions with Council officers
* Library Services Review: A series of workshops with staff and stakeholder (YPRL) – 3 general, 2 social infrastructure specific

Consultation will continue through individual projects, where stakeholder engagement will help inform project scope and concept design. This process is designed to create infrastructure that is reflective of the service and program needs of service users, community and sporting groups, staff, and the local community.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Liveable Neighbourhoods**Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

The draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* is one of seven strategies that form part of Council’s Integrated Planning Framework, contributing to our community vision, Whittlesea 2040: *A place for all*.

The development of the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* complements and aligns to the following strategies:

* Connected Community Strategy
* Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy
* Strong Local Economy Strategy
* Sustainable Environment Strategy
* High Performing Organisation Strategy
* Reconciliation Strategy.

The above documents help to inform Council’s *Community Plan 2021-2025*, which articulates what Council plans to achieve between 2021 and 2025, how it will prioritise its resources and effort, and how it will measure success by meeting the needs of its community.

The *Community Plan 2021-2025* identified that our community has growing and diverse support needs, with residents imploring Council to reduce barriers to services and facilities, to achieve improved health, wellbeing, and developmental outcomes. Through evidence-based planning and prioritisation, the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* aims to deliver on this commitment of well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

In determining the infrastructure requirements of the municipality, an asset assessment was undertaken, with an environmental sustainability lens, to ascertain which existing facilities would be suitable for optimisation and enhancement, as opposed to renewal or a new build. This step in the infrastructure identification process helped to determine whether service needs can be met in a sustainable way, with reduced environmental impact.

Similarly, the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* was developed with consideration for Council’s *Environmental Design Guidelines*, with all projects presenting the opportunity to maximise sustainability performance in design and construction.

As a subset of the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan,* functional briefs for each project will outline sustainability benchmarks, in accordance with Council's Project Management Framework.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

Feedback from Council’s *Community Plan 2021-2025* consultation revealed that community facilities, activities and services are highly valued by City of Whittlesea residents and deliver wide ranging and critically important benefits for all members of the community. Most notably, community infrastructure:

* Helps create social interactions
* Creates a sense of place and connects residents to their neighbourhood, community and city
* Provides affordable, accessible and inclusive programs and activities for people, regardless of their financial and socio-economic situations
* Makes communities safer by reducing crime and harmful behaviour by providing productive, safe and skill-building activities and services for at-risk cohorts in our city
* Fosters individual and family health and wellness across all ages, interests and abilities
* Provides environments that enable a meaningful commitment to Reconciliation.

**Economic**

Council’s *Community Plan 2021-2025* commits to prioritising support for local business, local employment, economic development, delivering libraries, schools and early years education, technology and innovation and creating employment pathways.

Infrastructure drives economic growth by facilitating investment, stimulating enterprise opportunities, generating employment and providing people with access to basic services.

The strategic co-location of Council infrastructure and key visitor locales, e.g., Town Centres, schools, shops, and attractions, enables dual economic benefit:

1. Creating jobs through the development of new builds and commercial enterprises. This includes employment for project design and construction staff, Maternal and Child Health nurses, early years educators, Centre Operations Officers, library staff, and leisure and recreation support staff.
2. Providing convenient pedestrian access to commercial business, enhancing opportunities for residents and visitors to shop local, contributing to a strong local economy.

**Financial Implications**

The draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* was developed in the context of Council’s expected annual budget, existing and potential revenue and funding streams, and public/private partnerships. As each of the projects identified in the draft *Long Term* *Community Infrastructure Plan* are at differing stages in their project life cycle, the cost of each initiative will be determined as part of Council’s business case processes, with formal approval through Council’s Project Management Framework and budget processes.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Service Delivery - Inability to plan for and provide critical community services and infrastructure impacting on community wellbeing*

Timely delivery of community infrastructure, in pace with population growth and essential service demand, will alleviate the risks associated with delayed infrastructure provision including:

* Poor health and wellbeing outcomes
* Social isolation
* Limited access to early childhood education
* Reduced early intervention for family and gender-based violence
* Minimal civic participation
* Reduced opportunities for reconciliation.

The draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan,* establishes a roadmap to facilitate, advocate and provide for the critical infrastructure required to meet the needs of our growing community, allowing residents the opportunity to participate, engage and thrive.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

A five-week community engagement period is proposed for the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan,* comprising of:

* Key stakeholder engagement, targeting existing networks
* Community focus group
* Broader community consultation, incorporating engagement via digital platforms as well as dedicated community pop-ups.

Communications for the draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* will take into consideration the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) profile of City of Whittlesea residents. A customised action plan will be put in place to ensure that communication methods are targeted and user-friendly.

**Critical Dates**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Milestone** | **Date** |
| Communication and engagement activities | Between 25 September and 27 October 2023 |
| Presentation of final *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* for endorsement | 19th December 2023 |

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The draft *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan* provides Council with a blueprint to continue providing the community with access to required facilities in a challenging growth and policy environment. The draft Plan capitalises on innovative and integrated models for infrastructure delivery to maximise community benefit, considering measurable impacts, place equity, access, partnerships, financial viability, risks and project preparedness.

**5.5 Connected Communities**

5.5.1 Draft Connected Community Strategy

**5.5.1 Draft Connected Community Strategy**

**Responsible Officer:** Director Community Wellbeing

**Author:** Unit Manager, Social Planning

**In Attendance:** Acting Manager Community & Place   
Unit Manager Social Planning

**Attachments:**

1. Draft Connected Community Strategy [**5.5.1.1** - 36 pages]

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**Purpose**

This report:

* Presents the draft Connected Community Strategy 2023 -2028 (draft CCS).
* Seeks Council endorsement for community consultation on the draft CCS.

**Brief Overview**

The draft Connected Community Strategy 2023 -2028 (draft CCS) at **Attachment 5.5.1.1.** is one of sevenstrategies comprising Council’s Integrated Planning Framework and relates to Goal 1: Connected Community in *Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All*.

The draft CCS outlines how Council will contribute to fostering an inclusive, healthy, safe, and participating community, where all community members in the City of Whittlesea are supported and have a sense of belonging.

Twenty-four (24) priorities for the future are presented across eight Key Focus Areas, informed by the Background Research Report 2022**,** extensive community and stakeholder engagement and the consolidation of 36 individual policies and strategies. The draft CCS Key Focus Areas are:

1. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Communities
2. Arts, Culture and Events
3. Multicultural Communities
4. Access, Inclusion and Discrimination
5. Physical and Mental Health
6. Life Stages
7. Community Safety
8. Community Participation

Once the final Connected Community Strategy 2023 -2028 is endorsed, action plans will be developed in response to the priorities in each focus area. These plans will articulate the specific work Council will undertake and will also identify how we will measure progress.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

1. **Endorses the draft City of Whittlesea Connected Community Strategy at Attachment 1 for community consultation.**
2. **Notes that targeted consultation on the draft City of Whittlesea Connected Community Strategy will be undertaken with key stakeholder groups including Whittlesea Youth Advisory Committee, Whittlesea Disability Network, Whittlesea Community Futures and the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation.**
3. **Notes the final Connected Community Strategy incorporating feedback from community consultation will be presented to Council for endorsement at the 19 December 2023 Council Meeting.**

**Key Information**

**Background**

Integrated Planning Framework

In 2021, Council adopted an Integrated Planning Framework (IPF) approach to rationalise more than 100 existing community-facing policies and strategies across the organisation. The IPF uses a four-tier hierarchy to articulate all strategic and operational documents, with *Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All* being tier one with seven new strategies at tier two. The tier two strategies are the Connected Community Strategy, Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy, Strong Local Economy Strategy, Sustainable Environment Strategy, High Performing Organisation Strategy, Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan and the Reconciliation Action Plan.

The draft CCS relates to Goal 1: Connected community in *Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All* (Whittlesea 2040).

Connected Community Strategy

Development of the draft CCS involved analysis of data and research detailed in theBackground Research Report 2022, community and stakeholder engagement and consolidation of 36 policies and strategies. Over 80 internal subject matter experts were engaged through this process and contributed to the development of outcomes, benefits, and indicators across eight Connected Community Key Focus Areas: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Communities

1. Arts, Culture and Events
2. Multicultural Communities
3. Access, Inclusion and Discrimination
4. Physical and Mental Health
5. Life Stages
6. Community Safety
7. Community Participation

Based on Whittlesea 2040 goals and key directions and aligned with the City of Whittlesea Outcomes Measurement Framework, the draft CCS establishes the following outcomes for three Connected Community Key Directions. Each of the Key Focus Areas are reflected in the outcomes.

**Key Direction 1: A socially cohesive community**

* All members of our community feel that they belong, are valued and respected
* Our community strengthens connections between diverse cultures
* Our community values and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and celebrates their rich diverse cultures

**Key Direction 2: A healthy and safe community**

* Our community is healthy, well, and physically active
* Our community can live independently and safely
* Our children and young people are supported to thrive
* Our community experiences financial wellbeing
* Our community feels safe and supported
* Our community experiences healthy, equal, and respectful relationships, and live free from abuse and family violence
* Our community is prepared and able to respond and recover from emergencies

**Key Direction 3: A participating community**

* Our community is empowered and enabled to participate in decision-making
* Our community values and acknowledges volunteering

**Action Plans**

If the final Connected Community Strategy is endorsed in December 2023, action planning will commence for each focus area. Two-year action plans will determine the specific work that Council will undertake to respond to the key priorities in each focus area and will also outline how Council will measure successful delivery.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

Each focus area in the draft CCS has been informed by extensive community consultation and engagement.

**Whittlesea 2040: A place for all**

In 2018, Council engaged with over 4,000 people, through submissions, workshops, and forums to inform the preparation of *Whittlesea 2040*.

**Community Plan: 2021–2025**

In early 2021, Council consulted with community on the development of the Community Plan 21-25 to identify Council priorities for the next four years. The consultation process engaged with more than 1,300 people.

**Household Survey 2021**

In 2021 a total of 1,545 individual respondents completed the Household Survey. Residents were asked about a range of topics, including their housing, health and wellbeing, employment, and community participation.

**Community Priorities Focus Group**

Two Community Priorities Focus Group sessions were held in June 2023 to directly inform development of the draft CCS Key Priorities. The Focus Group comprised 16 residents, representing a diversity of age groups, genders, abilities, cultural backgrounds, suburbs, and household structures. If the draft CCS is endorsed for consultation, Community Priorities Focus Group participants will be re-engaged to seek feedback and ensure their input has been captured accordingly.

**Integrated Planning Framework Consultation**

As part of the final round of community consultation for the Connected Community Strategy, Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy and Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plans additional input will be sought from Council Advisory Committees.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Connected Communities**  
We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe, and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

This draft CCS is aligned with the following Council Strategic documents:

* Whittlesea 2040: A place for all
* Community Plan 2021-2025
* Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026
* Sustainable Environment Strategy 2022-2032
* High Performing Organisation Strategy 2024-2034
* Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2034
* Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2024-2034
* Stretch Reconciliation Plan 2023-2027

**Considerations**

The close synergies between the draft CCS, the draft Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan and the Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy should be noted. The project teams for each of these three strategies worked in close collaboration to ensure an integrated approach and also took a coordinated approach to community consultation and engagement.

**Environmental**

The draft CCS links to the Sustainable Environment Strategy in the following ways:

* Support good health and wellbeing in a changing climate
* Improve access to better and safer public open spaces
* Support the community to achieve food security
* Empower the community to take action to create a sustainable environment and value and protect the Green Wedge

**Social, Cultural and Health**

The draft CCS sets out the vision for the social, cultural and health considerations for the City of Whittlesea for the next 10 years.

**Economic**

The draft CCS links to the Strong Local Economy Strategy in the following ways:

* Support education, training pathways and lifelong learning
* Improving economic participation for target groups
* Support libraries as spaces to grow and develop

**Financial Implications**

Financial implications for delivery of the final Connected Community Strategy will be determined through the development of two-year Connected Community Action Plans and be subject to Council’s budget processes.

The first two-year Action Plan will be developed in 2024.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Financial Sustainability - Inability to meet current and future expenditure*

Implementation of the final Connected Community Strategy 2023 -2028 will require a commitment to the delivery of services and infrastructure that are essential for community wellbeing. The action planning phase will address this risk.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

If endorsed, the final Connected Community Strategy will be promoted to City of Whittlesea community, including residents and other stakeholders.

Communications for the Connected Community Strategy will take into consideration the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) profile of City of Whittlesea residents. In 2021, 15,215 non-English speakers in the City of Whittlesea reported difficulty speaking English. The Connected Community Action Plan will ensure that communication methods are targeted and user-friendly.

**Critical Dates**

A six-week community consultation period on the draft CCS is proposed across September and October 2023 with the final Connected Community Strategy 2023 - 2028being presented to Council for endorsement on 19 December 2023.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The draft CCS has been informed by extensive research and consultation. It consolidates and builds on existing policies and articulates Council’s priorities towards a connected community over the next five years.

5.5.2 Youth Council

**5.5.2 Youth Council**

**Responsible Officer:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Author:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Attachments:**

No attachments

**Purpose**

This report seeks Council endorsement to transition from a Youth Advisory Committee to a Youth Council.

**Brief Overview**

Young people find it difficult to have engagement with Council and action avenues for civic participation, particularly in relation to issues that impact them and their relationship with their community.

Youth Councils are one of many models of young engagement and participation which can provide an avenue for young people to have a formalised opportunity to engage in civic life and effect change.

The Youth Advisory Committee explored Youth Civic participation models across a number of Council’s, including models at Greater Bendigo, Geelong and Darebin for the purpose of exploring their models and learnings in establishing a Youth Council.

This report seeks to transition from a Youth Advisory Council to a Youth Council effective from February 2024.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

**1. Resolve to transition from the current Youth Advisory Committee to a Youth Council.**

**2. Note an expression of interest process seeking young community members to join the Youth Council will take place during the month of October 2023.**

**3. Note Youth Council meetings will be held in the same manner and adopt the same governance rules as those adopted for Council’s incoming elected Council.**

**4. Note officers will provide an induction program, including the election of a Youth Mayor and Youth Deputy Mayor prior to the proposed first Youth Council meeting in February/March 2024.**

**Key Information**

Council’s Youth Council will represent young people by:

* Providing advice to Council on plans, strategies, policies and projects directly related to young people
* Provide avenues for young people to engage with Council and have a voice
* Act as a representative to Council, advocating for opportunities, barriers and or issues impacting you people in our municipality
* Determine and setting Youth Council agenda and priorities
* Referring issues to the elected Council for consideration
* Consider relevant matters referred from the Council to the Youth Council for input and feedback prior to Council’s formal decision
* Represent young people in the municipality through press releases, official statements, speeches and media correspondence

**Membership and Eligibility**

Council’s Youth Council will comprise of a minimum of fifteen Youth Councillors and a maximum of eighteen Youth Councillors who live, work and or study within the municipality.

To be eligible as a Youth Council Councillor the following criteria will apply:

* Youth Council Councillors will be aged 12 to 22 (noting Youth Councillors are required to resign when they turn 23)
* Youth Councillors must live, work and or study in the City of Whittlesea
* Hold a valid working with children check and police check, if 18 years or older
* Not be an employee of the City of Whittlesea

**First Nations Position**

A dedicated position will be reserved for a First Nations young person. This position is reserved to prioritise representation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young person on the Youth Council. It should be noted, should this position not be filled during the expression of interest process, the position will continue to remain open until such time it is filled by a First Nations young person.

**Term of Office**

Each Youth Council term will be for a period of two year. Youth Councillors have the ability to reconsider their position according to work, study or personal commitment during their term.

**Payment**

In recognition of the time commitment and contribution to the municipality and community, Youth Council members will be paid an honorarium fee either fortnightly or monthly. The honorarium fee is to reward and recognise the Youth Councillors contributions in making a difference to and contributing to the municipality young voice.

The Youth Council Mayor and Deputy Mayor will receive a separate higher level honorarium payment based on their respective roles to recognise their higher level of commitment required for the position.

Youth Councillors will be eligible for additional payments, at the discretion of Council’s administration, to assist their attendance of Youth Council meetings.

**Child Safety**

The Youth Council will be required to undergo training from Council’s Child Safe team to ensure their responsibilities in relation to child safety concerns are adequately reported and addressed in accordance with Child Safety Standards.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

The Youth Council will engage with young people and organisations for the purpose of ensuring young people’s voices are heard across the municipality. Engagement with the Youth Council by community members wanting to raise local issues of relevance to young people will be monitored by Council’s administration to ensure any open youth community engagements are appropriate and meet the Child Safety Standards.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Connected Communities**

We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

Youth participation

**Social, Cultural and Health**

There is a need to ensure genuine pathways for young people to engage in an exchange with government systems whereby young people can have meaningful engagement and influence change across our municipality.

Youth participation in local government offers multiple benefits to both youth and community, particularly in the form of youth participation.

**Economic**

Youth participation in leadership and civic engagement opportunities provides development in workspace skills and employability not only within a local government context but more broadly a range of sectors.

**Financial Implications**

The anticipated cost associated with the establishment of a Youth Council has been considered in Council’s current operating budget.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

A risk has been identified should adequate resourcing, training and support not be provided to the Youth Council to ensure their success.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

A communications plan is being developed around the Youth Council model detailing what is involved, how young people can apply to be a young Councillor and how community and Council can engage with the Youth Council.

**Critical Dates**

Officers are seeking endorsement of the transition from a Youth Advisory Committee to a Youth Council in September 2023 to allow the expression of interest process to take place in the month of October. These timelines will ensure the Youth Council can be established no later than February/early March 2024 prior to the proposed first Youth Council meeting.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The transition of the Youth Advisory Committee to a Youth Council is identified as a key initiative in the City of Whittlesea Community Plan 2021-25 and will provide our young community members an opportunity to have a say in the strategic direction of the Council.

5.5.3 Tender Evaluation Design & Construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place Quarry Hills Regional Park (Contract No 2023-67)

**5.5.3 Tender Evaluation Design & Construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place Quarry Hills Regional Park (Contract No 2023-67)**

**Responsible** **Officer:** Director Infrastructure & Environment

**Author:** Senior Project Manager

**In** **Attendance:** Manager Capital Delivery   
Unit Manager Community Infrastructure Delivery

**Attachments:**

1. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - 2023-67, Design & Construction of an Aboriginal Gathering Place, Tender Evaluation Summary [**5.5.3.1** - 4 pages]
2. Appendix Concept Designs of Aborignal Gathering Place [**5.5.3.2** - 2 pages]

Attachment 1 has been designated as confidential in accordance with sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that it contains Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released. In particular the attachment contains information regarding tender amounts submitted by a contractor which give direct insight into the contractor’s detailed pricing information that is commercially confidential.

**Purpose**

It is proposed that contract number 2023-67 for the Design and Construction of an Aboriginal Gathering Place at Quarry Hills Regional Park is awarded to 2Construct Pty Ltd for the lump sum price of $5,494,469 for Option 2 concept design façade treatment (excluding GST).

**Brief Overview**

The vision for the Aboriginal Gathering Place is to create a welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe space, where all Aboriginal people have a sense of belonging and have access to a range of community supported programs, services and activities which strengthen culture and enhance wellbeing. An Aboriginal Gathering Place has been an aspiration of community members for many years and aims to:

* Improve social, physical, cultural and emotional health and wellness.
* Strengthen identity and wellbeing through reflection, recognition and connection to culture.
* Empower Aboriginal people to thrive through self-determination.
* Create opportunities to educate, learn about and celebrate Aboriginal culture through storytelling, knowledge sharing, cultural events and structured programming.

This report summarises the evaluation of the tender submissions received for the design and construction of an Aboriginal Gathering Place at Quarry Hills Regional Park.

The tender evaluation panel advises that:

* The recommended tender was considered best value because it is competitive compared to the pre-tender cost estimation and has demonstrated that it has the ability to deliver the project in accordance with Council’s specified requirements.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

1. **Accept the tender submitted by 2Construct Pty Ltd for the following contract:**

**Number:** **2023-67**

**Title:** **Design & Construction of an Aboriginal Gathering Place, Quarry Hills Regional Park.**

**Cost:** **A lump sum of $5,494,469.00 (excluding GST)**

**subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Tenderer to provide proof of currency of insurance cover as required in the tender documents.**
2. **Price variations to be in accordance with the provisions as set out in the tender documents.**
3. **Tenderer to provide contract security as required in the tender documents.**
4. **Approve the funding arrangements detailed in the confidential attachment.**
5. **Delegates to the Chief Executive Officer the authority to approve Option 2 Concept Design (enhanced façade treatment) of the Aboriginal Gathering Place, subject to further design detail provided within one month of the commencement of the contract.**

**4.** **Delegates to the Chief Executive Officer authority to sign and execute the contract on behalf of Council.**

**Key Information**

The purpose of this contract is for the design and construction of an Aboriginal Gathering Place at Quarry Hills Regional Park.

Tenders for the contract closed on Tuesday 2 August 2023. The tendered prices and a summary of the evaluation are detailed in the confidential attachment.

No member of the Tender Evaluation Panel declared any conflict of interest in relation to this tender evaluation.

A Tender Probity and Evaluation Plan was designed specifically for this tender process and was authorised prior to this tender being advertised. All tenders received were evaluated in accordance with that plan. The evaluation involved scoring of conforming and competitive tenders according to these pre-determined criteria and weightings:

* Price 50%
* Capability 20%
* Capacity 20%
* Sustainability 10%

The weightings reflect the relative importance of each element to this particular contract. They were determined as being most appropriate after considering numerous factors including (but not restricted to) the time, quality, risk, and contract management requirements which were likely to have the most impact on the achievement of best value.

The tender received from 2Construct Pty Ltd was deemed to be a conforming and competitive and therefore was fully scored.

The evaluation outcome was as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tenderer** | **Conforming** | **Competitive** | **Score** | **Rank** |
| 2Construct Pty Ltd | Yes | Yes | 89.3 | 1 |

The preferred option for the building is Option 2 (enhanced façade treatment). In this regard, the tenderer shall provide further design details of this option within 4 weeks of the contract, for approval by the Chief Executive Officer. If this is not approved, then Option 1 (simplified façade treatment) will be the preferred concept design option for design and construction of the works.

Refer to the confidential attachment for further details of the evaluation of all tenders.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, consideration was given as to whether there were any opportunities to collaborate with other councils and public bodies or to use any existing collaborative procurement arrangements. The outcome was as follows:

Due to the highly specialised nature of the design, it was not possible to undertake any collaborative procurement methods.

Community consultation and engagement was not required in relation to the subject matter of this report as it relates to commercial arrangements and contractual obligations that are confidential.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Connected Communities**

We work to foster an inclusive, healthy, safe, and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

**City of Whittlesea Aboriginal Inclusion Charter:** Acknowledgement of the rights of local Aboriginal communities can expect to have put into practice across Council work.

**City of Whittlesea Reconciliation Policy:** A Council policy that encourages building better relationships between Aboriginal people and the wider Australian community and for the benefit of all Australians.

**Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021:** State Government Strategy that aims to progress Aboriginal self-determination and reconciliation through mutual control, shared power and decision-making, fairness, respect, and trust.

**City of Whittlesea Reconciliation Action Plan:** A Council plan that outlines targeted actions that enhance opportunities and outcomes for local Aboriginal communities.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

The contract management includes Key Performance Indicators that relate to the management of environment, waste, and site throughout the contract.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

The contract management will include Key Performance Indicators that relate to Occupational Health and Safety and traffic and pedestrian management to ensure a safe work site is maintained throughout the contract.

**Economic**

The project will provide the Aboriginal and wider community with a fit for purpose, compliant and accessible facility that will increase participation and create community connection.

**Financial Implications**

Sufficient funding for this contract is available in the Capital Program for the construction of an Aboriginal Gathering Place.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Service Delivery* – Inability to plan for and provide critical community services and infrastructure impacting on community wellbeing.

**Strategic Risk** *Contractor Management* - Failure to manage contractors to deliver agreed outcomes. Awarding this contract will enable Council to provide the community with adequate and safe community infrastructure that meet current needs of the community and increase community participation.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

There is no requirement to communicate the contract award decision of this report to the community beyond the Council minutes. However, information regarding the proposed works will be provided via Council’s social media communication channels and to relevant stakeholders.

**Critical Dates**

It is anticipated that the construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place will be completed by the end of 2024.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The tender from 2Construct Pty Ltd was determined to be best value and that this company can perform the contract to the required standards.

5.5.4 Audit & Risk Committee Report on Activity

**5.5.4 Audit & Risk Committee Report on Activity**

**Responsible Officer:** Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

**Author:** Corporate Assurance Advisor

**External in Attendance:** Geoff Harry, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

**Attachments:**

1. ARC Annual Activity Report F Y 23 Signed 050923 [**5.5.4.1** - 6 pages]

**Purpose**

To provide Council with an overview of key activities undertaken by the Audit and Risk Committee during the period 12 September 2022 to 5 September 2023. This report is intended to be included in the City of Whittlesea 2022-2023 Annual Report.

**Brief Overview**

The Audit and Risk Committee Report on Activity provides Council with information on the progress of its Annual Work Plan and activities for the period 12 September 2022 to 5 September 2023. It contains the activities that the Committee monitors and reviews to ensure it complies with the requirements under the Committee Charter. The report contains details of discussions and recommendations made relating to the key activities of risk management, financial and performance reporting, systems of internal control, internal assurance, internal audit, external audit, compliance and governance.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council notes:**

1. **The Audit and Risk Committee’s Report on Activity for the period 12 September 2022 to 5 September 2023.**
2. **That the Audit and Risk Committee have provided valuable support to Council and discharged their responsibilities under the Audit and Risk Committee charter; including providing oversight on financial reporting, risk management, internal control, audit and assurance activities.**

**Key Information**

The Audit and Risk Committee (Committee) is an independent advisory committee of Council, and its role is to report to Council and provide appropriate advice and recommendations on matters presented to it. The Committee acts in this capacity by monitoring, reviewing and advising on issues within its scope of responsibility and assisting Council’s governance obligations to its community.

In accordance with Section 54 (5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Committee is required to prepare a biannual report on its activities. A copy of that report is to be provided to the Chief Executive Officer for tabling at a Council Meeting. At its 12 November 2020 meeting, the Committee determined that it would prepare a report for Council on its activities following the March and September Committee meetings each year.

The Committee Report on Activity (attached) provides Council with information on the progress of its Annual Work Plan and activities for the period 12 September 2022 to 5 September 2023. It contains the activities that the Committee monitors and reviews to ensure it complies with the requirements under the Committee Charter. The report contains details of discussions and recommendations made relating to the key activities of risk management, financial and performance reporting, systems of internal control, internal assurance, internal audit, external audit, compliance and governance.

The report was approved by the Committee at the meeting held on 5 September 2023. The Independent Committee Chair, Geoff Harry, will attend the Council Meeting to discuss the report.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

The Audit and Risk Committee is a non-delegated Committee of Council and therefore, no community consultation and engagement is required.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**High Performing Organisation**We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

The establishment of the Audit and Risk Committee and the reports it receives are reflective of Council’s commitment to the implementation of good governance principles. The Committee provides advice to Council to assist with fulfilling its oversight responsibilities for the financial and non-financial reporting process, internal controls, the audit process, risk management and Council’s process for monitoring compliance with legislation and regulations and the Code of Conduct.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

No Implications

**Social, Cultural and Health**

No Implications

**Economic**

No Implications

**Financial Implications**

The cost is included in the current operating budget.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Governance - Ineffective governance of Council’s operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach*

The Audit and Risk Committee assists Council in monitoring its governance requirements and provides advice to Council to assist with fulfilling its oversight responsibilities.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

This report is one method by which Council is informed of the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee.

**Critical Dates**

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, the Audit and Risk Committee’s Report on Activities is to be tabled at the subsequent Council Meeting.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

In accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council is provided with the Audit and Risk Committee’s Report on Activities for the period 12 September 2022 to 5 September 2023.

**6 Notices of Motion**

No Notices of Motion

**7 Urgent Business**

No Urgent Business

**8 Reports from Council Representatives and CEO Update**

**9 Confidential Business**

**9.0.0 Close Meeting to the Public**

Under section 66(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* a meeting considering confidential information may be closed to the public. Pursuant to sections 3(1) and 66(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

**Recommendation**

**THAT the Chair of Council recommends that the meeting be closed to the public for the purpose of considering details relating to the following confidential matters in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* as detailed.**

**9.1 Confidential Liveable Neighbourhoods**

No Reports

**9.2 Confidential Strong Local Economy**

No Reports

**9.3 Confidential Sustainable Environment**

No Reports

**9.4 Confidential High Performing Organisation**

9.5.1 CEO Employment Matters

**9.4.1 CEO Employment Matters**

**Responsible Officer:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Author:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

This report and attachments have been designated as confidential in accordance with sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that it contains personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs. In particular the attachments contain information regarding CEO employment matters.

**9.5 Confidential Connected Communities**

No Reports

**10 Closure**