**Council MEETING AGENDA**

Wednesday 11 June 2025

Commencing 6.30 pm

Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre, 90 Bell Street, Coburg



**Acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the City of Merri-bek**

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek, and pays respect to their elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

**Information about Council Meetings**

These notes have been developed to help people better understand Council meetings. All meetings are conducted in accordance with Council’s Governance Rules.

**WELCOME** The Mayor, who chairs the meeting, formally opens the meeting.

1. **APOLOGIES** Where a Councillor is not present, their absence is noted in the minutes of the meeting. Council may also approve leaves of absence in this part of the meeting.
2. **DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS INTERESTS** A Councillor has a duty to disclose any direct or indirect financial or other interests, they may have in any matter to be considered by Council that evening.
3. **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES** The minutes of the previous meeting are put before Council to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the record.
4. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS** At each Council Meeting provision of 10 minutes will be made in the Agenda for the Mayor and Councillors to acknowledge and recognise achievements of local individuals and organisations; and raise matters considered important to Council.
5. **PETITIONS** Council receives petitions from citizens on various issues. Council formally accepts petitions at Council meetings.
6. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME** This is an opportunity (30 minutes), for citizens of Merri-bek to raise questions with Councillors.
7. **COUNCIL REPORTS** Council officers prepare detailed reports, which are considered by Councillors and a Council position is adopted on the matters considered. The Mayor can invite firstly Councillors, secondly Officers, and then citizens in attendance to identify Council reports which should be given priority by the meeting and considered in the early part of the meeting.
8. **NOTICES OF MOTION** A motion which has been submitted to the Chief Executive Officer no later than 12 pm (noon) 10 business days prior to the meeting which is intended to be included in the agenda. The motion should outline the policy, financial and resourcing implications.
9. **NOTICE OF RESCISSION** A Councillor may propose a motion to rescind a resolution of the Council, provided the previous resolution has not been acted on, and a notice is delivered to the CEO or delegate setting out the resolution to be rescinded and the meeting and date when the resolution was carried. If a motion for rescission is lost, a similar motion may not be put before the Council for at least one month from the date it was last lost, unless the Council resolves that the notice of motion be re-listed at a future meeting.
10. **FORESHADOWED ITEMS** This is an opportunity for Councillors to raise items proposed to be submitted as Notices of Motion at future meetings.
11. **URGENT BUSINESS** The Chief Executive Officer or Councillors, with the approval of the meeting, may submit items of Urgent Business (being a matter not listed on the agenda) but requiring a prompt decision by Council.
12. **CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS** Whilst all Council meetings of Council are open to the public, Council has the power under the *Local Government Act 2020* to close its meeting to the public in certain circumstances which are noted where appropriate on the Council Agenda. Where this occurs, members of the public leave the Council Chamber or Meeting room while the matter is being discussed.
13. **CLOSE OF MEETING** The Mayor will formally close the meeting and thank all present.

**NEXT MEETING DATE** The next Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 9 July 2025 commencing at 6:30 pm, in the Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre, 90 Bell Street, Coburg. The next Planning and Related Matters meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 June 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

**WELCOME**

**1. APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**2. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

**3. MINUTE CONFIRMATION**

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 14 May 2025 be confirmed.

**4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS**

**5. Petitions**

5.1 Petition - Parking conditions Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy 6

**6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

**7. Council Reports**

7.1 North West Building Phoenix Street and Brunswick Baths Gym Expansion Options 7

7.2 Activity Centres Program Merri-bek Cluster - Phase 1 Engagement 14

7.3 Parking availability on Park Street Service Road, Brunswick 24

7.4 Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030 - drafts for endorsement to consult 31

7.5 Community Grant Program Annual Round Recommendations 2025 39

7.6 Carbon Offsets Policy update 49

7.7 Procurement Policy 55

7.8 Contract Award: RFT-2025-2 Holbrook Reserve Pavilion and Gender Inclusive Change Rooms 62

7.9 Contract Award RFT-2024-45 - Cleaning Services - Collaborative Procurement 67

7.10 Financial Management Report for the period ended 30 April 2025 72

7.11 Governance Report - June 2025 - Cyclical Report 82

**8. Notices of Motion**

8.1 Abolishing sub minimum wages for disabled workers 87

8.2 Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund 89

8.3 Community safety forum for road safety 92

**9. Notice of Rescission**

Nil

**10. Foreshadowed Items**

Nil

**11. URGENT BUSINESS**

**12. Confidential Business**

12.1 Merri-bek Affordable Housing Pipeline

*Pursuant to section 3(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.*

12.2 Confidential Financial Matter

*Pursuant to section 3(1)(e) of the Local Government Act 2020, this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to legal privileged information, being information to which legal professional privilege or client legal privilege applies.*

**5. Petitions**

**5.1 Petition - Parking conditions Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy**

A petition (D25/287682) has been received containing 35 signatories requesting Council to review the parking conditions on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy.

**Officer Recommendation**

That Council:

1. Receives the petition, requesting Council to review the parking conditions on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy.

2. Refers the petition requesting Council to review the parking conditions on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy to the Director City Infrastructure for consideration and response.

**Attachment/s**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Petition - Parking conditions Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy | D25/287720 |  |

**7. Council Reports**

7.1 North West Building Phoenix Street and Brunswick Baths Gym Expansion Options

**Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy**

**Community Wellbeing**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the assessment of possible options for the North-West building, including partial gym expansion, arts/community space fit-out, and demolition.

2. Notes that gym expansion into the North-West building offers poor long-term value, due to title separation, structural limitations, significant cost to enable second floor use and lack of alignment with Council’s future electrification aspirations for Brunswick Baths.

3. Endorse the staged implementation of enabling works to support the future expansion of the Brunswick Baths Health Club, including:

a) Demolition of the North-West building.

b) Relocation of the Outdoor Activity Zone to the current site of the North-West building; and

c) Commencement of preliminary concept design and consultation for a new gym facility extension on the current Outdoor Activity Zone within the Brunswick Baths footprint, including provision of structurally suitable roof space to support infrastructure to allow for future electrification of Brunswick Baths.

4. Refers the below financial implications to the 2025/29 budget process:

a) Brings forward $160,000 from the 2026/27 capital works program to 2025/26, so that in 2025/26 a total $460,000 is allocated in the capital works program for the demolition of the north-west building, relocation of the outdoor activity zone, and design and consultation for a new gym facility;

b) Removes the remaining $2.19 million in the 2026/27 capital works program.

5. Refers the costs of the new gym facility extension (including provision to support future electrification of Brunswick Baths), expected to be over $5 million, to future capital works planning and the 2026/30 budget process.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

This report outlines future use options for the North-West (NW) building in Phoenix Street Brunswick and the Brunswick Baths Health Club, in response to growing community demand, operational pressures, and the current condition of the NW Building.

Following detailed review and consideration, it is recommended that Council proceed with enabling works to support a future extension of the Brunswick Baths Health Club onto the current outdoor activity zone/courts on the Brunswick Baths site. This would include demolition of the NW building, relocation of the outdoor activity zone (at a cost of approximately $460,000 in the 2025/26 financial year) and commencement of the gym extension design and consultation. This recommendation would result in a reduction of the current 2025/26 capital works program by $2.19 million.

This report is also noting that the construction of the new gym facility ($5.0 million) is unbudgeted and recommended to be considered in future years capital works program development and budget considerations.

The report notes that while repurposing the NW building for gym expansion would offer some short-term capacity relief for existing users, it provides limited long-term value due to size limitations, structural compliance, building integrity and title constraints and the high cost to upgrade and maintain. Instead, redevelopment on the existing outdoor activity zone adjacent to the Brunswick Baths Health Club is identified as the preferred long-term solution to address capacity, safety, and future electrification requirements for the Brunswick Baths.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Land adjacent to Brunswick Baths - Options for Future -** 10 July 2024

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the information provided in this report which outlines the comparative benefits, risks, costs and community impact of use options including:*

*a) Expansion of Brunswick Baths Health Club*

*b) Destination arts venue*

*c) Making space (affordable arts)*

2. *Defers a decision on the future use of the North West building until early 2025, in the new Council term.*

3. *To inform this decision, receives a report in early 2025 on options and indicative costs for a future expansion of the Brunswick Baths Health Club within the current facility footprint and in particular gym operations to cater for future service growth and demand.*

**Land adjacent to Brunswick Baths - Options for Future -** 13 March 2024

*That Council:*

*1. Notes that the endorsed concept plan for the 33 Saxon Street hub identified the footprint of the North-West building (fronting onto Phoenix Street) as being for potential use for future expansion of Brunswick Baths.*

*2. Acknowledges that if the North-West building is not retained for future aquatics and leisure purposes, the likely best use of the site would be an arts related usage which preferably also increases activation of the site.*

*3. Commissions cost estimates for repurposing the building for arts use, and for Brunswick Baths Health Club (gym) use.*

*4. Undertakes a targeted market sounding during April 2024 to investigate if there are destination arts tenancies who can provide capital investment to repurpose and activate the building.*

*5. Receives a report in June 2024 that outlines the comparative benefits, risks, costs and community impact of Aquatics and Leisure or arts and culture usage including the options of:*

*a) Expansion of Brunswick Baths Health Club extension*

*b) Destination arts venue*

c) *Making space (affordable arts).*

## 1. Policy Context

This report aligns with the Merri-bek Council Plan 2021–2025 objectives relating to healthy, inclusive, and resilient communities.

The proposed redevelopment of the Brunswick Baths Health Club aligns with Merri-bek City Council’s Aquatic and Leisure Strategy 2018–2038, which sets overarching direction for the provision of high-quality, sustainable, and accessible leisure infrastructure across the municipality.

The strategy highlights the need to respond to population growth, particularly in Brunswick and other inner-urban areas where demand for indoor health and fitness services is projected to increase significantly over the coming decades.

Key objectives of the strategy that support the proposed gym expansion include:

 Objective 1.3: Optimise the use of existing infrastructure through upgrades and redevelopment where appropriate.

 Objective 3.1: Expand indoor health and fitness services in locations with high current and projected demand.

 Objective 4.3: Progressively plan for the transition of aquatic and leisure centres away from gas toward energy-efficient alternatives.

Expanding the Health Club within the existing Brunswick Baths footprint also supports Council’s Zero Carbon Merri-bek targets by allowing for integrated design that includes electrification infrastructure such as heat pumps. In doing so, the proposal supports long-term environmental goals while addressing current operational capacity issues, safety constraints, and service demand in one of Council’s highest-use leisure facilities.

## 2. Background

Council purchased the former school site at 33 Saxon Street Brunswick in 2010. In 2012, 800sqm of the site was annexed and subdivided to become part of the redeveloped Brunswick Baths, with the old sports hall becoming a gym and the basketball court for the Baths.

The remainder of the site was kept and temporarily activated as an affordable arts precinct known as Siteworks whilst longer term plans were considered. Once a Community Needs Assessment and Strategic Framework had been developed, plans were made to redevelop the site to provide a long-term use of affordable arts and community spaces.

The old school building to the North-West of the site (the North-West Building) was originally considered for demolition to maximise the amount of open space in the precinct. However, once more detailed assessments of the building condition had taken place, it was determined that it was not at end of life, and that due its basic soundness as a building as assessed as that point, it would not be good practice from an embedded energy perspective to demolish it.

This also presented an opportunity, as the building is immediately adjacent to the buildings of the Brunswick Baths, which is experiencing more demand in its Health Club (gym) than its existing footprint can accommodate. The building was therefore removed from the scope of the 33 Saxon Street project and investigated as a separate opportunity.

The concept plan endorsed by Council at its November 2021 meeting, notates the space that the NW Building occupies as ‘potential future Baths extension’.

During the development of Balam Balam Place, the NW building was retained for a potential expansion but delivered as a cold shell and remains non-operational without a certificate of occupancy.

In July 2024 Council considered a range of possible uses for the site, the benefits, risks, costs and community impact of use options including:

a) Expansion of Brunswick Baths Health Club

b) Destination arts venue

c) Making space (affordable arts).

Council deferred a decision on the future use of the NW building until 2025, in the new Council term. To inform this decision, Council requested a report in early 2025 on options and indicative costs for a future expansion of the Brunswick Baths Health Club within the current facility footprint and in particular gym operations to cater for future service growth and demand.

This report presents updated findings and financial assessments for these future use options.

## 3. Issues

**Community Impact**

The current gym at Brunswick Baths provides 352 square meters of floor space for over 3,600 members. This is well below industry standards. Current demand significantly exceeds capacity, resulting in service limitations and user dissatisfaction. In July 2024 Council received a petition from approximately 400 people to strongly consider allocation of the NW building for an expansion of the gym space based on community needs.

In parallel, there is ongoing demand for accessible, affordable creative making and rehearsal spaces in Brunswick. Many artists and arts organisations have approached Balam Balam Place operators and Council to express interest in such spaces within the NW building. There is also significant need from Balam Balam Place tenant, Blak Dot Gallery, for space for printmaking and other workshops and residencies that cannot be delivered within the existing infrastructure at Balam Balam Place.

Some initial scoping work to increase arts usage in Brunswick Town Hall has commenced but there is inadequate plumbing and ventilation infrastructure, and shared office tenancies that would make messy art making difficult at that site without significant renovations.

## Climate Emergency and Environmental Sustainability

## Retaining and reusing the North-West building is environmentally preferable to demolition, however the very significant costs associated with meeting compliance and functional needs to bring the facility into safe and usable condition outweigh the benefits of retention.

## Brunswick Baths currently contributes 10 per cent of Council’s corporate gas emissions, primarily to enable year-round pool heating. Transitioning the facility to an all-electric operation is an important strategic priority that will requires significant future investment.

## A challenge with electrification of the baths is ensuring adequate, ventilated, outdoor spaces for a large volume of heat pumps on a very constrained site. Redevelopment of the Health Club will enable integration of heat pump infrastructure onto a structurally suitable roof and help achieve Council’s zero carbon ambitions.

## Economic Sustainability Implications

## Extending the gym into the NW building would deliver only 179 square meters of additional space at a cost of $3.5–$4 million, representing a poor return on investment.

## Legal and Risk Considerations

The NW building and Brunswick Baths are located on separate land titles, which presents challenges for infrastructure integration, legal compliance, and asset management. The NW building also has unresolved structural issues on the upper floor and contains known asbestos. Site contamination has been identified; if demolition proceeds, the site would be capped and contamination appropriately managed as part of the remediation process.

The NW building sits adjacent to the recently completed Balam Balam Place precinct. Although not current used, the building has previously been used for creative practices. Its potential removal from the site’s creative remit poses reputational risks, given longstanding aspirations that the space could support arts uses not accommodated in the new development. Officers will work through alternative options within other community spaces to where possible service this identified need.

## Human Rights Consideration

## This report has been reviewed under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. No rights are negatively impacted by the proposed recommendations. A gender equity and accessibility lens has been applied in the assessment of community needs and infrastructure outcomes.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Community consultation on both the Health Club and NW building has occurred through multiple avenues:

 A 2022 survey of 145 Brunswick Baths members on services offered including the gym.

 Ongoing customer feedback to the YMCA and Council regarding the gym including overcrowding concerns.

 A petition signed by over 400 community members supporting gym expansion.

 Feedback from the arts sector through the development of the Arts and Culture Strategy 2023–2030, highlighting the urgent need for making spaces.

A targeted engagement process will follow any Council decision to confirm implementation priorities and inform stakeholders of the endorsed direction.

**Affected Persons’ Rights and Interests** There are no direct impacts on individual rights. Broader community stakeholders will be consulted further during implementation.

**Communications** A communications and engagement plan will be prepared following Council's decision, to support effective information sharing and implementation planning with affected stakeholders and service providers.

## 5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

## 6. Financial, Resources Implications and Implementation

## The below table shows the current capital works allocation based on Council’s draft 2025/2026 budget.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 | 2028-29 |
| 2024-25 forecast | 50,000 | - | - | - | - |
| Carry forward funding into 2025/26 | - | 150,000 | - | - | - |
| 2025/26 budget (proposed) | - | 150,000 | 2,350,000 | - | - |
| Total | 50,000 | 300,000 | 2,350,000 | - | - |

## The table below outlines the costed options and their respective shortfalls.

## These options reflect a range of approaches from minimal compliance upgrades through to full-scale redevelopment. While the baseline option of the North-West building (as an arts/community space) fits within the existing budget, it offers only short-term functional value and does not address the underlying building condition long term or meet broader service demand. Conversely, the gym expansion into the existing Brunswick Baths footprint, though requiring a future funding commitment, presents the most cost-efficient solution in terms of space value, and alignment with Council’s climate action targets.

## This pathway also allows Council to avoid costly and inefficient retrofitting of the North- West building for a use (gym) it is not structurally suited for.

Retaining the North-West building presents a range of ongoing financial, operational, and strategic risks to Council. Despite receiving a Certificate of Final Inspection (for a permitted use for Public Assembly), the building remains a legacy asset that requires ongoing maintenance attention to meet minimum compliance standards particularly around accessibility, fire safety, and egress.

The building lacks a lift to the upper floor, relies on reduced stair compliance, and has unresolved access barriers that are only partially mitigated through alternative ground-level spaces. Maintaining this building would lock Council into recurrent costs for essential safety measures, quarterly and annual inspections, and ongoing reactive maintenance without delivering a fit-for-purpose or fully accessible facility. Further, its outdated infrastructure limits integration with future electrification works at Brunswick Baths, undermining long-term sustainability objectives.

The North-West building represents a high-cost, low-value asset that impacts operational resources while constraining strategic outcomes. Demolition and site readiness investment offer better long-term value, greater flexibility, and alignment with Council’s community and environmental priorities.

| Option | Detail | Estimated Cost | Key Considerations |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Affordable Arts (Ground level only) | Baseline fit out for occupancy permit | $2.5M | Meets minimum compliance, short-term activation only |
| Affordable Arts(Both levels) | Full fit-out incl. lift and upper floor activation | $5M+ | Higher community benefit, but costly to retrofit for access and to maintain |
| Gym Extension – North-West Building (Ground level only) | 179sqm addition into North-West Building | $3.57–$4M | High cost for limited gain, not fit for long-term needs or capacity requirements |
| Gym Expansion – into Brunswick Baths Site | Redevelopment into Outdoor Activity Zone (720sqm total incl. 400sqm new space) | $5M | Best long-term solution, also enables the building to be designed to support heat pumps for future electrification of Brunswick Baths |
| Relocation of Outdoor Activity Zone | Shift fitness programs to new area to enable gym build | $400K | May enable demolition and future use of North-West site |

A breakdown of the financial implications is summarised below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Description | Cost |
| 1 | Demolish the North-West Building | $200,000 |
| 2 | Relocate / construct Outdoor Activity Zone | $200,000 |
| 3 | Design and consult on gym extension (incl. provision for electrification infrastructure) | $60,000 |
|  | Recommended use of 2025/26 Budget Allocation | $460,000 |

It is recommended that Council proceed with Items 1 to 3 above within the current allocation to enable progress on demolition, implementation of new outdoor activity space, and preliminary design of the gym expansion. These works will prepare the site for future delivery and allow integration of electrification infrastructure into the planning phase.

The current 4-year budget does not have capacity to fund the construction of the new Health Club gym extension and it is recommended that this is considered through future years capital works program development and budget cycle considerations.

## Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

7.2 Activity Centres Program Merri-bek Cluster - Phase 1 Engagement

**Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade**

**City Strategy and Economy**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the State Government’s Activity Centres Program (Program), which includes the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres (collectively referred to as the Merri-bek Cluster), and the draft submission provided at Attachment 1.

2. Endorses the draft *Activity Centres Program – Phase 1 Submission: Merri-bek Cluster*, June 2025 at Attachment 1 as Council’s formal submission to the State Government for Phase 1 of the Program.

3. Receives a report on the draft Activity Centre Plan(s) and any associated planning controls to be released by the State Government during Phase 2 engagement, for the purpose of endorsing a formal Council submission.

**REPORT**

**Executive summary**

The State Government’s Activity Centres Program (Program) is a priority action under the new state-wide planning strategy, *Plan for Victoria*. It aims to deliver more housing in well-connected areas across Melbourne. The State Government advises the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres, located along the Upfield Line, have been included in the Program due to their:

 Transport capacity

 Market viability

 Proximity to jobs and services

 Planned infrastructure upgrades, such as level crossing removals.

The State Government is describing the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres as the “Merri-bek Cluster”. The land within the Merri-bek Cluster plays a vital role in supporting the municipality’s residential, economic, and employment functions. Anchored by Sydney Road and the Upfield rail corridor, the area accommodates a diverse and vibrant mix of commercial, industrial, residential, and creative land uses. It is serviced by Merri-bek’s integrated transport network, including pedestrian, cycling, public transport, and road connections as well as a range of civic and open spaces.

Phase 1 of community engagement for the Activity Centres Program (Program) commenced on 6 May and will close on 15 June 2025. This stage seeks preliminary feedback from councils and the community to inform the development of Activity Centre Plans for 25 centres, including the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres (collectively referred to as the Merri-bek Cluster). As a key stakeholder, it is important that Council plays an active advocacy role to help ensure the Program delivers positive outcomes for the Merri-bek community.

At this early stage, no draft Activity Centre Plans (Plans) or supporting technical documentation have been released. As such, the draft submission (Attachment 1), prepared for Council’s endorsement, provides important high-level feedback based on available information, adopted Council strategies, local priorities, and known conditions.

The draft submission supports the State Government’s objective to focus housing growth in well-serviced areas such as the Merri-bek Cluster. However, this growth must be carefully planned to ensure the delivery of affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing, supported by essential infrastructure, transport, and open space. The draft submission outlines seven key issues, and associated advocacy asks to ensure the fast-tracked Program does not negatively impact the liveability of Coburg and Brunswick.

The State Government has advised that detailed planning will continue throughout 2025, with a second phase of engagement to occur later in the year, when draft Plans and proposed planning controls are expected to be released. At that time, Council will consider a further report and a draft submission in response.

An amendment to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to implement the outcomes of the Plans is anticipated in early 2026.

**Previous Council Decisions**

There are no previous Council decisions relating specifically to the State Government’s Activity Centre reforms, which were announced shortly before the local government caretaker period in late 2024.

## 1. Policy Context

**Community Vision and Council Plan**

Merri-bek 2021-31 Community Vision

The *Merri-bek Community Vision 2021–2031* supports sustainable, inclusive growth in well-connected locations like Brunswick and Coburg. It prioritises low-emission development, safer built environments, and diverse, affordable housing close to services and open space.

The Vision also promotes vibrant, well-designed activity centres that reflect local identity, alongside transparent, community-led planning and strong local leadership.

Council Plan 2021 – 2025

The *Merri-bek Council Plan 2021–2025* supports sustainable, inclusive, and well-serviced growth in key locations like Brunswick and Coburg. It reinforces Council’s commitment to climate action, equitable infrastructure, vibrant activity centres, and meaningful community engagement.

**Planning Framework**

State Planning Strategies

*Plan for Victoria*

The Activity Centres Program is a priority action under *Plan for Victoria*, the State Government’s new long-term planning strategy released in February 2025. The Plan:

 Sets a housing target of 69,000 new dwellings for Merri-bek by 2051.

 Reinforces the longstanding 70/30 growth policy, aiming for 70% of new homes in established areas, such as Brunswick and Coburg, and 30% in growth areas.

 Builds on *Victoria’s Housing Statement: The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*, which prioritises affordable, well-located housing for all Victorians.

Merri-bek Planning Scheme

The Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme includes the following key directions for Brunswick and Coburg:

 53% of future growth is expected in the Brunswick–Brunswick East–Coburg corridor.

 With no greenfield land and limited brownfield opportunities, growth must be managed through urban densification near public transport, shops, and services.

 Brunswick and Coburg Major Activity Centres are prioritised for intensification, with Brunswick forecast to absorb the greatest share of new dwellings.

 Growth is managed in line with the 20-minute neighbourhood principle, enabling residents to access daily needs within a short walk, ride or public transport trip. This supports:

o Sustainable and climate-resilient neighbourhoods.

o A healthy and active community.

o Stronger social connection.

o A thriving local economy.

The MPS aligns with the key objective of the Activity Centres Program which is to focus housing growth in well-serviced locations.

Related amendments to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme:

Council currently has several planning scheme amendments awaiting a decision from the Minister for Planning. These proposed amendments seek to introduce the following changes to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme:

 A strengthened Environmentally Sustainable Development policy to raise sustainability standards for new buildings and support a transition to net zero carbon development. Council resolved to seek authorisation for Amendment C223mbek in May 2022.

 The introduction of the Activity Centre Zone in the Brunswick Activity Centre to guide land use, encourage business investment and job creation, and support the ongoing vibrancy of the area. Council resolved to seek authorisation for Amendment C230mbek in May 2024.

 Updated local planning policy to align with Council’s transport and open space strategies. Council resolved to adopt Amendment C231mbek in February 2025.

 An increased open space contribution rate to ensure the provision of new public open space in response to growing demand. Council resolved to seek authorisation for Amendment C235mbek in March 2025.

 A new 15-year Development Contributions Plan to help fund essential infrastructure. Council resolved to seek authorisation for Amendment C236mbek in May 2025.

Council officers continue to advocate for a timely decision by the Minister for Planning to enable these amendments to proceed and be implemented into the Merri-bek Planning Scheme.

In addition, Council is progressing Amendment C196mbek, which applies new flood controls (Special Building Overlay 2) to properties at risk of flooding from local stormwater drains. This amendment is not yet with the Minister for decision.

Related strategic studies:

Council is also progressing several strategic planning projects relevant to the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres, including:

 Brunswick built form review: In May 2023, Council resolved to undertake a comprehensive built form review of the Brunswick Activity Centre. This review is well advanced but is currently on hold to avoid duplication with the State Government’s Activity Centres Program and to minimise potential community confusion.

 Brunswick and Coburg heritage reviews: In 2023, Council resolved to undertake heritage reviews of both the Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres. These reviews are currently underway and are expected to be finalised by mid-2025.

## 2. Background

**State Government Activity Centres Program**

The State Government’s Activity Centres Program (Program) aims to deliver over 300,000 new homes by 2051 across 60 designated activity centres in Melbourne. The first 10 “pilot” centres have already been finalised.

The Program focuses on increasing housing in well-serviced locations with strong access to public transport, jobs, and services. It seeks to create compact, walkable, and vibrant centres that support greater housing choice and urban renewal.

Each activity centre in the Program will consist of two key components (refer to Image 1):

 **A ‘core’:** The area surrounding the train station, including the commercial centre. It is intended for larger apartment buildings, with building heights of 6 to 12 storeys envisaged.

 **A ‘catchment’:** The surrounding area, extending up to 800 metres (roughly a 10-minute walk) from the core, intended for townhouses and smaller apartment buildings:

o **Inner catchment:** Up to 6 storeys on lots over 1,000m² with a 20-metre frontage and up to 4 storeys elsewhere.

o **Outer catchment:** Up to 4 storeys on lots larger than 1,000m² with a 20m frontage and up to 3 storeys elsewhere.

A map of a city

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

*Image 1. Indicative plan of what a centre in the Program will look like.*

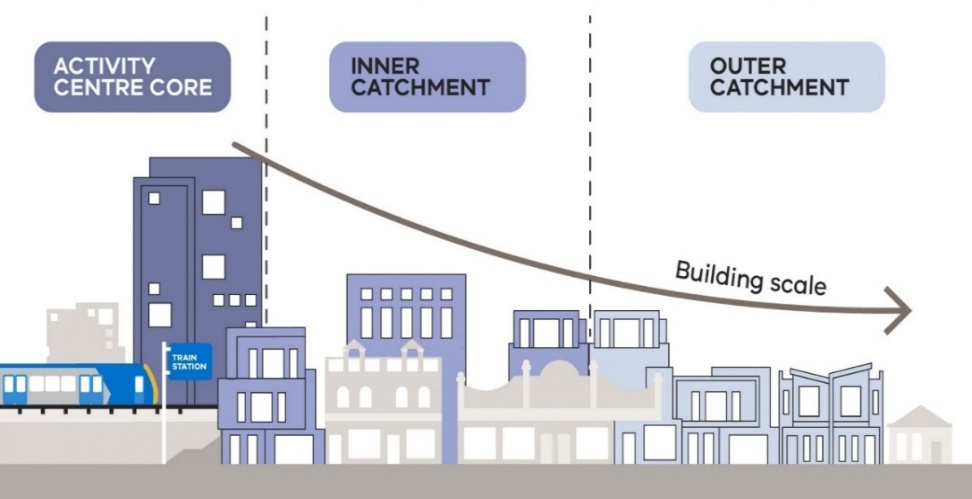
To support implementation, two new planning tools have been introduced into the Victoria Planning Provisions:

 **Built Form Overlay (BFO):** Establishes preferred building heights and design requirements. It introduces a streamlined planning process to accelerate housing delivery.

 **Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ):** Applies to residential land in the catchment, encouraging diverse housing types while retaining current planning approval pathways.

The design intent is for building heights to transition gradually from the midrise core to the surrounding lower scale neighbourhood (refer to Image 2).

**Built Form Overlay | Housing Choice and Transport Zone**



*Image 2. Envelope transitions in scale from mid-rise in the core to the lower-rise outer catchment.*

The State Government is preparing Activity Centre Plans (Plans) for each designated location. These plans will form the strategic basis for future changes to the Planning Scheme.

**Expansion of the program and inclusion of the Merri-bek Cluster**

On 27 February 2025, the Premier announced the expansion of the Activity Centres Program to include 60 centres. Among the 25 newly added centres are Brunswick Station and Coburg Station, which together form the “Merri-bek Cluster”. These centres are part of the first tranche of the expanded Program, involving 18 councils, with implementation expected to occur throughout 2025 and finalisation in early 2026.

The State Government’s selection of the Merri-bek Cluster was based on key criteria:

 Transport capacity.

 Market viability.

 Proximity to jobs and services.

 Planned infrastructure upgrades (e.g. level crossing removals).

Centred on Sydney Road and the Upfield rail line, the corridor has strong multi-modal access and supports a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and creative uses. Brunswick’s core is transitioning from manufacturing to creative and knowledge-based industries, while surrounding residential areas have seen increased housing density.

The Merri-bek Cluster currently has a population of approximately 76,721, projected to grow by 29,947 people (39%) by 2051.

Community engagement

Phase 1 of the State Government’s community engagement for the expanded Program launched on 6 May 2025 and will close on 15 June 2025. This initial stage seeks early feedback from councils and the community to help shape the development of Activity Centre Plans for the 25 new locations, including the Brunswick and Coburg Station Activity Centres (Merri-bek Cluster).

The State Government has confirmed that detailed planning will continue throughout 2025, with a second phase of community engagement to be undertaken later in the year. During this phase, the draft Activity Centre Plans (Plans) and proposed planning controls are expected to be released. Final Plans are expected by the end of 2025, with a planning scheme amendment to implement the outcomes anticipated in early 2026.

**Planning investigation area**

As part of Phase 1 community engagement, the State Government released a high-level map outlining the proposed planning investigation areas for the Merri-bek Cluster (**Attachment 2**). However, the limited level of detail currently available constrains Council’s ability to provide comprehensive or site-specific feedback at this stage. Initial observations and key points are provided below.

Extent

The investigation area generally follows a linear north–south corridor along the Upfield rail line, capturing six train stations (Batman, Coburg, Moreland, Anstey, Brunswick, and Jewell) across approximately 5 kilometres. Brunswick and Coburg stations located 700–800 metres apart, serve as the primary anchors of this corridor.

The planning investigation area extends 700–900 metres east and west of the rail line and includes:

 Sydney Road, parts of Lygon and Nicholson Streets.

 The Pentridge redevelopment precinct.

 Key open spaces such as Gilpin Park, Clifton Park, Reaburn Reserve and Coburg City Oval.

 Coburg Civic Centre.

 The Brunswick Design District (BDD), incorporating RMIT’s Brunswick Design Campus and Council’s new $28 million Balam Balam Place arts hub.

 Major tram routes: Route 19 (Sydney Road), Routes 1 & 6 (Lygon Street), and Route 96 (Nicholson Street).

 An integrated transport network of walking, cycling, public transport, and road connections.

Upcoming proposed State Government projects

Seven level crossings along the Upfield Line are scheduled for removal by 2030, with Anstey, Brunswick, and Jewell Stations to be consolidated into two new stations.

The planning investigation area also includes the public housing tower at 351 Barkly Street, Brunswick, identified for future redevelopment under the State Government’s plan to replace 44 ageing public housing towers by 2051. No relocations are expected before July 2026.

Sydney Road Shopping Strip

The Sydney Road shopping strip in Brunswick and Coburg is a key destination for local and neighbouring communities. It is a place where people shop, work, meet, relax, and live—characterised by a high concentration of commercial, residential, social, and cultural activity.

In Brunswick, Sydney Road features a largely intact collection of late 19th and early 20th-century retail and commercial buildings, many with original upper-floor facades. These contribute to a strong and valued heritage streetscape. A large, precinct-wide Heritage Overlay (HO149) applies.

In contrast, Sydney Road in Coburg is covered by multiple, smaller individual Heritage Overlays, rather than a precinct-wide overlay. The area consists primarily of late 19th and early 20th-century retail, commercial, and community buildings.

Existing planning framework

The Merri-bek Cluster currently comprises a range of planning zones and built form controls, reflecting its diverse land use mix and strategic development opportunities.

Brunswick Station Activity Centre:

 Sydney Road, Nicholson Street, and Lygon Street are primarily zoned Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z), with adjacent land in the Mixed Use Zone (MUZ), Industrial 1 Zone (IN1Z), Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ), and Public Use Zone (PUZ).

 Built form controls introduced in 2016 through a schedule to the Design and Development Overlay (DDO) allow for building heights of 5–6 storeys along Sydney Road, and 7–8 storeys between Sydney Road and the rail line (Victoria Street to Brunswick Road).

 Surrounding residential areas are mostly zoned Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ), supporting development up to two storeys.

 The Brunswick Station Activity Centre is expected to accommodate approximately 10,700 dwellings—equivalent to 15.6% of Merri-bek’s overall housing target.

Coburg Station Activity Centre:

 Sydney Road is mostly zoned Activity Centre Zone (ACZ), with surrounding MUZ, PPRZ, and PUZ.

 Built form controls, introduced through the ACZ in 2015, allow for a height range of 6-12 storeys in the commercial core.

 Residential land is mainly zoned General Residential Zone (GRZ), allowing for three-storey development.

 The Coburg Activity Centre can accommodate approximately 7,700 dwellings, or 11.6% of Merri-bek’s housing target.

## 3. Issues

As a key stakeholder, Merri-bek City Council has a critical role in bringing the local community’s perspective to the State Government’s reforms. It is an opportunity for Council to advocate to the State for integrated, place-based outcomes that reflect local knowledge, strategic priorities, and community aspirations. This role is particularly significant given the Program’s focus on facilitating substantial housing growth and built form change in the Merri-bek Cluster.

It is essential that the State Government fully considers Council’s strategic planning framework, existing commitments, and community expectations as it progresses this work.

At this early stage, the absence of draft Activity Centre Plans and technical documentation limits Council’s ability to assess the technical planning implications of the Program. In response, a high-level draft submission, *Activity Centres Program – Phase 1 Submission: Merri-bek Cluster,* June 2025 (**Attachment 1**) has been prepared for Council’s endorsement.

The draft submission provides important high-level feedback based on available information, adopted Council strategies, local priorities, and known conditions. It is intended that the submission is shared with the State Government and also with the Merri-bek community.

It also raises key areas of State investment that are needed to support further housing growth along the Sydney Road corridor. This includes school infrastructure (with two current critical school expansions in these catchments currently stalled), transport infrastructure (duplicating the Upfield line, delivering the Brunswick level crossing removal, upgrading accessibility for the Sydney Road tram line, and delivering 2021 bus reform upgrades). It also includes ongoing commitment to local developer contribution models to ensure that local infrastructure such as parks, community centres, kindergartens, sporting facilities, parking and other services are available to the thousands of new residents the Activity Centre reform may bring to this area.

**Draft submission to Phase 1 of the Activity Centres Program**

The draft submission provides support for the objective of the Activity Centres Program, which seeks to focus housing growth in well-serviced, infrastructure-rich locations. However, to be successful, this growth must be carefully planned to ensure the delivery of affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing, supported by essential infrastructure, transport, and open space.

The draft submission outlines seven key issues, and associated advocacy asks to ensure the fast-tracked Program does not negatively impact the liveability of Coburg and Brunswick. Reform to housing “layers” in the Planning Scheme, without associated economic layers, and critical transport and community infrastructure investment, risks significant negative impacts to liveability in Merri-bek.

In summary, these include:

 **Transport** – investment is needed to improve the capacity, accessibility, and integration of public and active transport networks, including duplication of the Upfield Line and bus network and accessible tram stop improvements.

 **Infrastructure** –G growth must be accompanied by timely upgrades to local and State infrastructure, including open space, drainage, roads, schools, and community facilities.

 **Economic growth and employment** – the Program should safeguard and expand employment floorspace. Council requests authorisation of Amendment C230mbek to support Brunswick’s employment role and retain commercial land.

 **Affordable and diverse housing** – Council seeks increased State investment in social and affordable housing, and planning controls that encourage diverse, accessible housing types, including family-sized apartments and dwellings designed to support people at all life stages.

 **Design quality** – Council emphasises the need for clear, enforceable design controls to ensure new development delivers high-quality, liveable, and contextually responsive outcomes.

 **Climate adaptation and resilience** – Council advocates for strong environmentally sustainable design (ESD) provisions, flood resilience planning, and integration of precinct-scale water management strategies.

 **Community and Council engagement** – the Program must commit to meaningful, inclusive engagement.

Council’s submission also highlights alignment with existing planning scheme amendments (C223mbek, C230mbek, C231mbek, C235mbek, and C236mebk) which are still awaiting a decision. It advocates for the Minister for Planning to make a prompt determination on these amendments to support the timely delivery of strategic planning outcomes in the Merri-bek Cluster.

The submission reinforces Council’s commitment to managing growth in a way that delivers long-term community benefit and reflects local priorities. Council looks forward to ongoing collaboration with the State Government through the next stages of the Program.

**Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

Council has declared a climate emergency and urges the State Government to progress Amendment C223mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, which seeks to strengthen sustainability requirements for new development and raise the standard of environmentally sustainable design (ESD) across the municipality.

**Economic sustainability implications**

The draft submission outlines Merri-bek’s efforts to ensure that its planning scheme supports job growth.

**Human Rights consideration**

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and was found to be in line with these requirements. This report seeks endorsement of a submission to the State Government that reinforces existing Merri-bek policy and adopted strategies.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

The State Government is undertaking community consultation for its Activity Centres Program.

For the Merri-bek Cluster, the first phase of community consultation commenced on Tuesday, 6 May 2025. Led by the State Government, this early-stage engagement aimed to inform the community and gather feedback on where additional housing could be located. Information was made available on the State Government’s online engagement platform, and several drop-in sessions and online Q&A events were held throughout May and June 2025.

A second phase of community consultation is planned for later this year. During this second stage, the state government will share its draft Activity Centre Plans for the Merri-bek Cluster and seek further community input as plans are finalised. The draft Activity Centre Plans that will be released by the state government during the Phase 2 engagement, will be reported to Council for endorsement of a submission.

**Affected persons rights and interests**

Before making a decision that affects a person’s rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views. There are no rights and interests affected by the recommendations of this report.

### Communications

The State Government is leading communication with the community about this state led program, including a letterbox drop in the area shown at **Attachment 2**. Information about this state led consultation has been included on Council’s website, encouraging Merri-bek residents and businesses to participate in the State Government’s survey and attend drop-in sessions and online Q&A events.

## 5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

## 6. Financial and resources implications

The resources required to prepare submissions will be met within existing budgets. There are no financial implications to action this resolution.

## 7. Implementation

Once endorsed by Council, the submission will be lodged with the Victorian Government by the Director Place and Environment on Council’s behalf.

A further report will be presented to Council during Phase 2 engagement, seeking endorsement of a technical submission in response to the draft Activity Centre Plans and any associated draft planning controls.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Activity Centres Program - Merri-bek Cluster Phase 1 engagement -Merri-bek City Council draft submission | D25/232786 |  |
| **2** | Activity Centres Program consultation and planning investigation area Merri-bek Cluster | D25/244574 |  |

**7.3 Parking availability on Park Street Service Road, Brunswick**

**Director City Infrastructure, Anita Curnow**

**Transport**

**Officer Recommendation**

That Council notes that the parking restrictions on the Park Street Service Road between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line are generally operating well and no changes to parking restrictions are warranted at this time.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

In response to resident concerns about parking availability and a request for resident permit parking zones, Council officers have conducted a comprehensive review of the parking conditions along Park Street Service Road between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line in Brunswick. This assessment was guided by the Parking Management Policy (PMP), which outlines criteria for implementing resident permit parking zones, including high occupancy rates and the presence of 1P timed restrictions.

In July 2024, an initial proposal to introduce 1P timed parking restrictions was put forward to replace some of the existing 2P restrictions on Park Street, accompanied by a questionnaire which was distributed to 189 affected properties. The survey required a minimum 25 per cent response rate with at least 60 per cent support to proceed with the proposed changes. However, only 18 per cent responded, with 79 per cent opposing the changes, primarily due to concerns about guest parking limitations. Consequently, the proposal did not advance.

Following continued resident feedback, Council resolved on 11 September 2024 to monitor parking conditions further. Subsequent occupancy surveys conducted in May 2025 revealed that most sections recorded occupancy rates below the 80 per cent threshold necessary for implementing 1P restrictions, with the exception of one area (south side of the Service Road between 815 Park Street crossover and Dollman Street), which approached or exceeded this threshold during certain periods. Additionally, number plate analysis indicated that approximately two-thirds of parked vehicles belonged to residents with valid permits, suggesting that local residents primarily drive parking demand.

Based on these findings, Council officers determined that existing parking arrangements sufficiently meet current demand, and no changes to parking restrictions are warranted at this time. Council officers remain committed to ongoing monitoring to ensure parking policies continue to align with community needs and usage patterns.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Petition - Park Street, Brunswick Parking** - 11 September 2024

*That Council:*

*1. Receives the petition requesting Council take appropriate action to rectify and standardise parking arrangements in Park Street, Brunswick, between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line.*

*2. Refers the petition requesting Council to take appropriate action to rectify and standardise parking arrangements in Park Street, Brunswick, between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line to the Director City Infrastructure.*

**Park Street Parking -** 11 September 2024

*That Council requests Council Officers to continue monitoring the parking availability on the Park Street Service Road and present a report back to council about these matters.*

**1. Policy Context**

**Parking Management Policy**

The following table set out the priority, from highest to lowest, given to various user groups when introducing or modifying parking restrictions.

Table 3: User Priority Guidelines for residential and other streets

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **User Group** | **Purpose** |
| Safety and other conditions | To improve safety for all road users and to provide access for emergency vehicles, waste collection and street cleansing |
| Public transport | Typically tram or bus stop, or taxi rank |
| Accessible parking | On-street medium term parking bays in locations suitable for people with a disability (e.g. 2 to 4 hours) |
| Car sharing | Where high scheme membership and demand in particular locations justify the allocation of bays |
| Drop-off/pick-up | Where required, short-term parking for drop-off/pick-up e.g. 5-minute parking |
| Residents and their visitors | If required, use of 2P restrictions, 1P restrictions and parking permit zone – resident permit zones should be used as the last resort and after other measures (such as short-term restrictions) have proven to be inadequate |
| Customers | Short stay private vehicle parking if required by business as retail activities in the area |
| Local employees | Local employees should have a low priority as this undermines parking turnover |
| Commuter parking | Commuter parking should have a low priority as this undermines resident parking and parking turnover |

**2. Background**

Park Street Service Road, situated between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line, offers parallel parking on both sides. The northern side falls under the jurisdiction of Merri-bek City Council, while the southern side is managed by the City of Melbourne and is outside the scope of this report. The northern side predominantly features residential properties, including heritage homes with rear laneway access and small apartment units with direct crossovers to Park Street.

According to Section 4.1.2 of Merri-bek City Council's Parking Management Policy (PMP), residents are eligible for parking permits unless their property experienced an increase in separate occupancies after 31 August 2011, such as through subdivision or a new occupancy certificate. Except for one new apartment development, all eligible residential properties on Park Street qualify for one or two parking permits. This high eligibility rate contributes to increased demand for on-street parking compared to other residential streets.

To address the elevated parking demand driven by residents, visitors to Royal Park, and patrons of the Sydney Road Activity Centre, various parking restrictions have been implemented over time. These measures aim to balance the needs of residents and visitors while managing limited parking resources effectively.

Residents have expressed concerns regarding the inconsistency of parking restrictions along Park Street Service Road. Feedback indicates a preference for standardised parking regulations to enhance clarity and fairness for all users. Council acknowledges these concerns and has considered changes as part of this report.

**3. Issues**

**Request for residential permit only parking**

In July 2024, a resident request was made to provide resident permit parking zones on Park Street in place of some of the existing 2P parking restrictions.

As outlined in Section 5.2 of the Parking Management Policy (PMP), resident permit parking zones will only be considered in residential areas with high parking occupancy due to competing demands from other users (e.g. businesses or commuters). It should be recognised that residents do not have exclusive rights to park directly in front of their property, but they should have opportunity to park within a reasonable distance of their residence.

Resident permit zones:

 Will be considered where there is 85 per cent occupancy or greater over a 250-metre section on both sides of a street for continuous period of five hours or more

 Will only be considered after 1P timed restrictions have been introduced and after in-ground parking sensors have been installed

 Will be introduced on one side of the street only initially to help provide a broad range of parking opportunities

 Will be minimised to ensure all available parking is well utilised

 May be appropriate near fee parking areas to protect residential amenity

Authority is delegated to officers to introduce or modify resident permit zone restrictions based on the guidelines in this section of this policy.

As such, in response to the request for resident permit parking restrictions, in accordance with the PMP, Council officers proceeded to consult on the proposal to install 1P parking restrictions on Park Street

Proposal to install 1P parking restrictions

As outlined in Table 8.2 of the PMP, the Conditions for delegation to install 1P parking restrictions on individual streets is that one of two conditions to be met:

1. Obtain written response from at least a quarter of the affected properties, with 60 per cent in support, or

2. Parking occupancy of the area affected by proposed restrictions is 80 per cent or higher over a period of four hours

As is standard practice, Council officers then proceeded to survey all affected residents of Park Street to seek their support on the proposal.

Through discussions with affected residents regarding the proposed change to parking restrictions, it was established that a 15-minute parking space was required to service the adjacent childcare centre. Council officers assessed the request and found it appropriate to install 15-minute parking, 7.30am – 9.30am and 4pm to 6pm Monday – Friday, outside 785 Park Street Service Road.

The circular survey letter included a notification of the 15-minute parking restriction and an invitation to take part in the questionnaire to seek support for the 1P parking restrictions.

Some 340 survey letters were issued to owners and occupants of 189 properties on Park Street that would be affected by the proposed 1P parking restrictions. Thirty-three questionnaire forms were returned which accounted for a response rate of 18 per cent. Of the respondents there were

 Seven in favour of the proposal (21%)

 26 opposed to the proposal (79%)

Many of the respondents who voted against the proposal stated that 1P was too restrictive and would not give their guests sufficient time when visiting their home and that the status quo worked well.

As the requirement of a 25 per cent response rate and a 60 per cent support rate was not achieved, Council officers notified all affected owners and occupiers that the proposal was not proceeding.

Residents who were supportive of the 1P parking restrictions then approached Councillors and at the 11 September 2024 Council meeting, it was resolved that Council Officers continue monitoring the parking availability on the Park Street Service Road and present a report back to council about these matters.

Car parking occupancy surveys

In response to the resolution, Council officers organised car parking surveys on the Park Street Service Road between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line. To capture the typical busy periods of car parking occupancy influenced by Sydney Road Activity Centre and Royal Park sporting activities, surveys were undertaken on Thursday 8 May between 4pm and 8pm as well as Saturday 10 May between 10am and 8pm.

A aerial view of a city

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

The existing parking restrictions are as follows

Service Road Parking Restrictions (McVean Street to Upfield Railway Line):

 Section A (north side, McVean Street to 815 Park Street crossover): 2P, 8am–11pm

 Section B (south side, McVean Street to 815 Park Street crossover): 2P, 8am–6pm

 Section C (north side, 815 Park Street crossover to Dollman Street): 2P, 8am–11pm; P15, 7:30–9:30am & 4–6pm

 Section D (south side, 815 Park Street crossover to Dollman Street): 2P, 8am–6pm

 Section E (north side, Dollman Street t to Upfield Line): P, 8am–11pm

 Section F (south side, Dollman Street to Upfield Line): 4P, 8am–6pm

The following three tables outline the results of the car parking occupancy surveys. Where the hourly occupancy was recorded to exceed the threshold of 80 per cent, the result is highlighted in orange.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Car parking occupancy, Thursday 8 May afternoon | | | | | | |
| Section | Capacity | 4pm | 5pm | 6pm | 7pm | 8pm |
| A | 20 | 50% | 55% | 35% | 45% | 50% |
| B | 19 | 58% | 58% | 68% | 53% | 63% |
| C | 20 | 75% | 70% | 55% | 55% | 60% |
| D | 24 | 83% | 100% | 79% | 88% | 79% |
| E | 29 | 55% | 38% | 59% | 76% | 66% |
| F | 23 | 61% | 57% | 61% | 57% | 52% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Car parking occupancy, Saturday 10 May morning and afternoon | | | | | | |
| Section | Capacity | 10am | 11am | 12noon | 1pm | 2pm |
| A | 20 | 45% | 25% | 40% | 45% | 40% |
| B | 19 | 74% | 63% | 58% | 58% | 58% |
| C | 20 | 60% | 65% | 70% | 65% | 65% |
| D | 24 | 75% | 79% | 71% | 71% | 63% |
| E | 29 | 59% | 83% | 72% | 72% | 72% |
| F | 23 | 61% | 70% | 78% | 78% | 78% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Car parking occupancy, Saturday 10 May car parking occupancy afternoon and evening | | | | | | | |
| Section |  | 3pm | 4pm | 5pm | 6pm | 7pm | 8pm |
| A | 20 | 35% | 40% | 40% | 30% | 30% | 40% |
| B | 19 | 53% | 58% | 68% | 68% | 63% | 68% |
| C | 20 | 65% | 60% | 60% | 65% | 65% | 65% |
| D | 24 | 58% | 58% | 71% | 67% | 67% | 71% |
| E | 29 | 76% | 72% | 62% | 66% | 66% | 66% |
| F | 23 | 74% | 70% | 52% | 52% | 52% | 48% |

As such, the surveys outline that generally, the car parking occupancy is below the 80 per cent warrants to install 1P timed restrictions. The exception to this is that in Section D, on Thursday afternoon, the recorded occupancy was almost over 80 per cent or was effectively over the threshold for the four hour window. Given most respondents to the circular strongly opposed 1P timed restrictions and there has been a community petition received to create more standardised car parking restrictions, Council officers would not recommend installing 1P parking restrictions in this section of Park Street Service Road. Based on the survey results, all other car parking restrictions appear to be operating well and within the capacity outlined in the PMP.

Similarly, the demand for parking in Section F, where the restrictions are 4P is operating well and no changes are proposed.

In reviewing the parking restrictions along Park Street Service Road, consideration was given to standardising the existing 2P time limits, as some currently conclude at 6pm while others extend until 11pm. However, community feedback indicates that the current arrangements are functioning effectively, with residents expressing satisfaction and noting that the extended hours accommodate visitors who stay later in the evening.

Given this feedback and the absence of significant parking occupancy issues, it is recommended that the existing 2P parking restrictions remain unchanged. Maintaining the current varied time limits provides flexibility for residents and their guests, aligning with the community's preferences and ensuring that parking availability continues to meet local needs.

Number plate analysis

As part of the car parking occupancy survey, the number plates of the parked cars were recorded once per day to understand whether the vehicles had eligible parking permits. This can demonstrate the level of parking demand driven by the adjacent residents compared to visitors wanting to park short term to visit the residents or attend nearby attractions.

The summary of the analysis is provided below:

On Thursday,

 61 of the 98 recorded number plates have valid residential parking permits

 The remaining 37 vehicles were likely visitors to the area

On Saturday

 60 of the 94 recorded number plates have valid residential parking permits

 The remaining 34 vehicles were likely visitors to the area

As such, two thirds of the car parking demand is driven by residents of Park Street.

Summary of assessment

Car parking occupancy surveys were undertaken across a typical Thursday and Saturday to determine the demand for car parking on the Park Street Service Road between McVean Street and the Upfield Railway Line. The car parking occupancies are generally below 80 per cent and are therefore operating with spare capacity. A record of the number plates of some vehicles was noted to determine that about two thirds of the vehicles parked have eligible residential parking permits and are therefore associated with the adjacent residential properties.

Based on the assessment, there appears to be no clear need for changes to the on street parking restrictions on the Park Street Service Road.

**Community impact**

The community will not be impacted as the recommendations is to maintain the existing parking restrictions.

**Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

Nil.

**Economic sustainability implications**

Nil.

**Legal and risk considerations**

Nil.

**Human Rights Consideration**

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The recommendations for the closure of Barrow Street does not limit or interfere with any Human Rights, in particular ‘section 12 - right to freedom of movement’ as residents will continue to have access to their properties. Additionally, the proposed road closures will contribute positively to the freedom of movement by making walking and cycling safer modes of transport.

**4. Community consultation and engagement**

A circular questionnaire was distributed to 340 owners and occupants recipients of 189 properties on Park Street. 33 responses were received. A letter indicating the outcome of the survey was the sent to all original recipients advising that the proposed 1P parking restrictions did not receive the required support and would not be installed.

**Affected persons rights and interests**

Before making a decision that affects a person’s rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

**5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

**6. Financial and Resources Implications**

Nil.

**7. Implementation**

Nil.

**Attachment/s**

There are no attachments for this report.

7.4 Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030 - drafts for endorsement to consult

**Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade**

**Sustainability and Climate**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the draft Circular Economy Strategy (Attachment 1) and the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030 (Attachment 2) for public exhibition and four weeks of community engagement commencing 23 June 2025.

2. Receives a further report at the September 2025 Council meeting presenting a final version of the Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030, incorporating community feedback, for adoption.

3. Acknowledges the valuable contribution that the Merri-bek community, external partners and stakeholders have made to community outcomes over the past five years of the Zero Carbon Merri-bek – Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020 – 2025 (Attachment 3), and the development of the draft strategy and action plan.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

This report progresses three related actions in the Council Action Plan 2024-25 (being CAP #1 for the next Zero Carbon Merri-bek action plan, #199 development of Circular Economy Strategy and action plan, and #206 for the next Climate Risk action plan).

The report presents Council’s first draft *Circular Economy Strategy: Towards a zero waste Merri-bek* (Attachment 1). The draft strategy provides direction for Council’s role in accelerating the transition towards a circular economy. It reflects the need to move beyond ‘managing waste’ towards ‘avoiding waste and pollution’, by rethinking how we can all use precious resources much more efficiently.

The report also presents the draft *Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030: Towards a zero carbon, zero waste and climate resilient Merri-bek* (Attachment 2). This action plan incorporates all the implementation responses across the three strategies of ZCM 2040 Framework, draft Circular Economy Strategy and our Climate Risk Strategy (2022).

Spread across five strategic directions, the action plan proposes 29 goals and 34 programmatic actions (with sub-initiatives) for achievement/delivery by 2030.

Beyond advocacy for critical policy and legislative changes at the state and federal level, the very highest priority/impact actions across the three strategy areas are:

 Climate Risk / Resilience – actions focused on supporting vulnerable/at-risk residents (Actions 1.4, 1.7,1.9), increasing local canopy cover/cooling in recognized hot spots (Action 1.8), and delivering climate-ready infrastructure (Action 5.4).

 Zero Carbon Merri-bek (ZCM) – actions focused on broadscale residential uptake of energy efficiency, electrification and solar (Actions 2.2, 2.3, 2.6) and transport mode-shift (Actions 3.2, 3.3).

 Circular Economy – optimising our kerbside waste services (Action 4.3) to minimise waste to landfill, using our substantial buying power to deliver low-carbon/circular buildings and infrastructure (Actions 5.3, 5.4), and influence our many suppliers.

Where relevant, the action plan notes where actions or activities may be subject to funding allocation through a business case or external grant.

The action plan also notes the relevant Directorate, Branch or Unit delegated as lead delivery partner, in recognition that as the impacts and risks from climate change, waste and pollution accelerate, Council’s proactive response must take a ‘whole of Council’ approach, progressively embedding capability and responsibility within teams across the organisation.

**Previous Council decisions**

**Zero Carbon Moreland – 2030 targets review** – 8 December 2021

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the summary of updated climate science and the advice regarding the extent of emissions reductions required by 2030 to keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5C (above pre-industrial levels), alive.*

*2. Notes that the Zero Carbon Moreland (ZCM) 2040 Framework (ZCM Framework) and associated 5-year ZCM Climate Emergency Action Plan (endorsed in November 2019) are providing a solid foundation for Council to continue demonstrating local government leadership in responding to the climate crisis through:*

*a) progressively eliminating emissions from Council’s own operations*

*b) inspiring and enabling community and businesses to reduce emissions, with a focus on ensuring equity and co-benefits such as community health and resilience*

*c) facilitating collective advocacy calling for urgent and effective action by state and federal government.*

*3. Endorses interim and aspirational ZCM targets for the Moreland community:*

*a) 75 per cent emissions reduction by 2030*

*b) Net zero by 2035*

*c) Drawdown (‘negative emissions’) by 2040*

*4. Call on our community, businesses, state and federal governments to join Council in collective action towards these community targets and the safe and fair future that success would help to achieve.*

*5. Endorses the additional highly ambitious ZCM ‘target range’ for Council (corporate/ operational) emissions:*

* 80 – 100 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 (precluding offsets, against 2011-12 baseline). Note: Council has taken significant actions to reduce its operational emissions by 70 per cent from the 2011-12 baseline and that Council has been certified as ‘carbon neutral’ (or ‘net zero’) since 2012 under the national Climate Active scheme, whereby Council annually purchases carbon offsets for all its remaining emissions.*

*6. Note the following conditions related to achievement of corporate emissions target:*

*a) Achievement of 80 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 is contingent on additional funding allocation and re-scoped capital works forward plan (to bring forward a transition of Council’s light fleet to zero emissions and converting approximately 27 Council buildings to ‘all electric’). High-level cost estimate to deliver these actions may be up to $16M over the 9 years to 2030.*

*b) Progress beyond 80 per cent, towards 100 per cent reduction (the upper end of the target range) is also contingent on commercialisation and availability before 2030 of suitable new or emerging technologies (that is, zero emissions waste trucks and construction materials).*

*7. Pending adoption of corporate ZCM target range, develop business cases for referral to the 2022-23 budget process and consideration within Council’s long term financial plan (i.e., to enable accelerated transition to zero emissions light feet and accelerated transition off gas in Council buildings)*

*8. Endorse revisions to the ZCM Framework and Climate Emergency Action Plan as necessary to reflect the newly endorsed targets.*

*9. Acknowledges and thanks all community members, including those involved in the Moreland Climate Coalition, that are acting and advocating for the many local and regional and national systems changes required to ensure a safe, fair and resilient Moreland into the future.*

**Planning for the next waste strategy – response to notice of motion** – 13 October 2021

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the proposed approach and project schedule to develop Council’s next draft Waste Strategy to 2030 (8-year strategy) and associated medium-term (3-4 year) action plan. The new strategy and action plan would be finalised by mid-2023 and will supersede the expiring Waste and Litter Strategy 2018.The approach includes the high-level strategy scope, required technical research / advice and resourcing, estimated budget and the schedule for drafting and consulting on the future strategy and action plan.*

*2. Refers the required project resourcing (approximately $40,000) to the mid- year budget review, and a related budget proposal (approximately $40,000) for consideration in the FY22-23 budget process.*

*3. Noting that waste incineration (also known as waste to energy) options have major environmental, health and economic costs and undermines a transition to a circular economy, Council maintains that it should not be considered as part of its future waste strategy.*

**Climate risk strategy - for adoption** – 9 November 2022

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement on the draft Climate Risk Strategy, as summarised in the engagement consultant’s outcomes report (Attachment 1), and thanks community members and stakeholders for their feedback on the draft Strategy.*

*2. Adopts the revised Climate Risk Strategy (Attachment 2).*

*3. Notes that preparation of a foundational action plan is being developed to inform new program/initiative submissions for the 2023/24 budget setting process and beyond.*

## 1. Policy Context

Council’s efforts to address the climate emergency are reflected in the Council Plan 2021 – 2025:

 ‘Theme 1: *An environmentally proactive Merri-bek*, and associated strategic objective:

*To strive for maximum protection of people’s health, plants, and animals through leading an urgent response to the climate emergency and a regeneration of our natural environment*

 *Theme 3: A healthy and caring Merri-bek,* and associated strategic objective*:*

*To support Moreland to become a more inclusive, connected, healthy, and caring community through providing equitable access to community facilities and services, facilitating local partnerships and programs, mitigating the effects of climate change, and supporting the community to adapt and build climate resilience.*

The draft Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan fulfill three actions outlined in the Council Action Plan 2024-25:

 CAP #1 – Finalise implementation of ZCM Climate Emergency Action Plan and develop new action plan to commence in 2025

 CAP #199 – Development of a Circular Economy Strategy: Towards a Zero Waste Merri-bek

 CAP #206 – Continue to implement the Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan and develop a new action plan to commence in 2025

The draft action plan aligns with and complements other Council strategies, plans and policies contributing to sustainability and climate action, including:

 Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy and Streets for People Plan

 Urban Forest Strategy

 Nature Plan

 Integrated Water Management Strategy

 Sustainable Buildings (Council) Policy

 Food Systems Strategy

 Procurement Policy.

Victorian legislation designates certain climate change accountabilities to all local governments. *The Local Government Act 2020* S. 9(2)(c) states ‘the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted’. Additionally, the *Victorian Climate Change Act 2017* explicitly states that climate change decisions should be based on the Act’s guiding principles including being evidence-based, integrated and equitable.

## 2. Background

The draft Circular Economy Strategy supersedes Council’s expired Waste and Litter Strategy (2018). The draft strategy has been informed by:

 Quarterly meetings since September 2022 of an internal Circular Economy Strategy Project Control Board (PCB)

 A Waste Options Development Report by consultants Ricardo (2022)

 A Material Flow Analysis for Merri-bek by consultants Blue Environment (2023)

 Stage 1 Community and business engagement from February to March 2024

 Council participation in the Circular Economy Leadership Program, a collaboration between 13 councils in 2024, funded by Sustainability Victoria and facilitated by Aurecon, with dedicated sessions for senior leadership, changemakers, department professionals, and procurement practitioners

 Cross-council workshops and stakeholder discussions.

The draft Climate Emergency Action Plan supersedes, and expands on, Council’s ZCM Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020 – 2025. It has been informed by:

 Council’s Climate Resilience Integration Board (CRIB) and ZCM PCB discussions

 Review of outcomes from past zero carbon, waste, and climate risk action plans

 Cross-council workshops and stakeholder discussions, including assessment of evolving external context (social, political, environmental etc)

 Review of neighbouring/leading local government climate emergency plans

 Officer networks, alliances, and experience.

Both documents have also been refined based on briefing discussions and feedback from the Executive, Councillors, and community members of Council’s Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC).

## 3. Issues

The draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 – 2030 (**Attachment 2**) integrates priority actions for 3 related strategies:

### 1. Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2040 Framework – our approach to reducing community and Council climate pollution (‘zero carbon’) through Energy Transition, Sustainable Transport, and Waste & Consumption.

### 2. Circular Economy Strategy (draft, Attachment 1) – our evolved approach for tackling the unsustainable way we buy, use, and dispose of goods and materials (‘zero waste’) to mitigate climate and ecological damage.

### 3. Climate Risk Strategy – collaborating to identify and address Council and community climate risks, and increase our resilience against climate impacts, particularly heat and other weather extremes.

### Strategic directions for action across 2025-2030

The draft action plan is structured around 5 strategic directions:

1. ‘Socially just and climate resilient transition: No one left behind’ (NEW)

This direction focuses on actions to ensure our diverse community is well informed about the changing local climate and the effective actions they can take. This includes tailored programs, such as our solar thermal subsidy program, to reach out to at-risk residents to support them to stay healthy in the heat and manage their energy bills. Recognising the importance of nature-based solutions to climate risk, it includes trialling approaches to increase shade trees and cooling on private land, with a potential focus on schools and retirement villages. And because climate resilience must be responsive to local place-based context, the plan proposes to test the development of a Resilient Neighbourhood Hub model in Fawkner.

2. ‘Energy transition: efficient and 100 per cent renewably powered energy’

This direction focuses on addressing the dominant sources of direct greenhouse emissions in Merri-bek, being electricity use (36 per cent) and fossil gas use (26 per cent) (source – 2022/23 profile snapshotclimate.com.au). Residential energy use accounts for most of these emissions. As grid electricity transitions to 65 per cent renewably powered by 2030 and 95 per cent renewable by 2035, gas use (especially by households) will become the dominant source of energy-related emissions. As such, priority actions are focused on enabling households to benefit from health and financial savings possible through transitioning to efficient and all-electric homes. Through collaboration, innovation and advocacy, we will progress smart energy solutions that could work at the community scale, as well as seek to overcome barriers preventing residents living in existing apartments from making their homes more energy efficient and sustainable.

3. ‘Sustainable transport: active or zero emissions transport’

As emissions from electricity use decrease, transport emissions – from the combustion of diesel and petrol by cars, vans, and trucks – will account for a growing proportion of community (and Council) climate pollution. Actions under this strategic direction focus on creating a more pedestrian and bike-friendly city, with better public transport. This could enable many more local trips to be safer, healthier, cheaper and pollution-free. Initiatives are proposed to support young people to ‘ride and stride’ to and from school actively and provide innovative services to ensure that all members of our diverse community can benefit from active travel. Council will also continue promoting the shift to zero emissions vehicles by expanding and promoting affordable access to public EV charging, powered by renewables.

4. ‘Waste and consumption: circular economy with zero waste’

The actions under this section reflect four of the five focus areas identified in the draft Circular Economy Strategy. The shift to a circular economy requires extensive cultural and economic change, much of which Council’s may influence but cannot control. Hence ‘advocacy for system change’ is a priority focus, calling on state and local government to incentivise innovation and robustly regulate economy-wide elements of design, manufacturing, distribution and disposal that are causing social and environmental harm. Locally, engagement with community and businesses will encourage waste avoidance and circular economy participation, with potential cost-of-living and health co-benefits. More directly in Council’s control, initiatives are proposed to continue evolving our kerbside waste services to deliver the best possible waste and recycling outcomes and community value, with cost recovery through the service fees and charges.

5. ‘Council as role model: creating a zero carbon, circular and climate resilient city’ (NEW)

This new strategic direction brings together the ways that Council can ‘walk the talk’ by holding ourselves accountable for embedding responsive climate action and circularity principles across high-impact functions of city planning, our building and infrastructure projects, our fleet, services, operations, and climate governance. It recognises that Council has significant potential to evolve our approach to capital and goods procurement to ‘green our supply chains’ while delivering infrastructure projects and services that are climate-ready and have a much lighter ecological footprint. It includes actions (focused on building and fleet electrification) required to achieve Council’s corporate 2030 emissions reduction goal.

### Action plan draft goals for 2030

In addition to the updated ZCM goals for community and Council emissions reduction by 2030, the draft action plan proposes a series of goals across each strategic direction:

 A total of 14 ‘Community 2030 goals’ which we invite everyone (community and other levels of government) to adopt and help achieve.

 A total of 15 ‘Council 2030 goals’ which Council could achieve, pending successful delivery/resourcing of proposed actions.

### Advocacy for climate and nature

We cannot achieve our goals and outcomes in isolation. Effective collaboration and mobilisation of civil society and businesses in campaigning for urgent and effective action by state and federal governments is critical. It is the foundation for the ‘political will’ required to prioritise zero carbon, zero waste and climate resilience.

Some policy and regulatory progress has been made over the past five years, and so the draft documents reflect an updated suite of priority ‘advocacy asks’ across each of the strategic directions.

### Economic sustainability implications

Merri-bek has a rapidly growing and diverse population experiencing housing and cost of living pressures. At the household level, more thoughtful consumer behaviours can offer ways to sustainably reduce household costs. Our local economy provides employment, goods and services to the community. Merri-bek is experiencing a shift from its historical reliance on manufacturing to a focus on service-oriented sectors. The circular economy presents many opportunities for local businesses to improve resource efficiency, lower costs, mitigate risks, and explore new revenue streams. Emerging business models can redefine product-consumer relationships and foster markets for services like sharing, leasing, repairing, reusing, remanufacturing, and resource recovery.

### Legal and risk considerations

Where legal or risk-related matters arise, delivery of actions will involve consultation with the relevant internal officers or specialists. This ensures that actions are developed and implemented with appropriate oversight and alignment with Council’s legal and risk frameworks. Examples of potential legal and risk issues include insurance coverage for new or non-standard infrastructure or assets (e.g. boom EV charging) or contractual risks in partnership or procurement arrangements.

Action delivery will also consider climate risks, including physical risks and transition risks, and continue to integrate these into Council's risk management framework, including the operational risk register.

### Human Rights consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The draft Circular Economy Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan aim to have a broadly positive impact on human rights as defined in the Charter such as the ‘right to life’ (e.g. through advocating and acting to improve the thermal performance of homes and Council facilities), the ‘right to protection of families and children’ (e.g. through action and advocacy to minimise the extent of climate impacts on current and future generations) and ‘cultural rights’ (e.g. through engaging with Traditional Owners and other First Nations people on climate and care for country).

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Community engagement and communications activities are planned for the endorsed draft strategy and action plan (pending any final adjustments). Engagement is planned to launch on Monday 23 June and close on Sunday 20 July, providing opportunity for community feedback across a 4 week period.

Community engagement activities will include:

 An updated (stage 2 engagement) Conversations Merri-bek project page for the draft Circular Economy Strategy, with a survey seeking feedback.

 A separate but linked Conversations Merri-bek project page for the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030, with a survey seeking feedback.

 An in-person workshop with interested community and targeted stakeholders, including past and present members of the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee and community groups that are part of the Merri-bek Climate Coalition.

 Social media posts will promote opportunities for engagement and awareness of the draft strategy and action plan

 Direct engagement with neighbouring councils.

**Affected persons rights and interests**

Before making a decision that affects a person’s rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views. There are no individual rights or interests affected.

## 5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

The proposed consultation process will be undertaken within existing resources. Proposed actions have been listed as either within existing resources or subject to a future internal business case or external grant funding.

## 7. Implementation

Community and stakeholder feedback will be sought on the draft strategy and action plan as outlined in Section 4.

We will review the engagement outcomes and refine the draft strategy and action plan before preparing a report for Council to present the final versions for adoption at the September 2025 Council Meeting.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Circular Economy Strategy 2025 - Draft for endorsement to consult | D25/181646 |  |
| **2** | Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030 - Draft for endorsement to consult | D25/183789 |  |
| **3** | ZCM Action Plan 2020 - 2025 Outcomes - summary | D25/186018 |  |

7.5 Community Grant Program Annual Round Recommendations 2025

**Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy**

**Community Wellbeing**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Allocates Community Strengthening Grants to the value of $89,365 for projects delivered in 2025/26:

a) Australia Nepal Public Linc Inc $3,911

b) Celebrating & Conserving Cultures $7,000

c) Culture, Arts & Language Academy $7,000

d) Estrela do Mar Inc $5,100

e) KindSugi Upcycling (auspiced by Social Health Australia) $7,000

f) Merri Community Shed $7,000

g) Merri Creek Management Committee $7,000

h) Multi Art and Culture Association Inc $7,000

i) Nepalese Association of Victoria $7,000

j) Northern and Inner North Multiple Birth Association Inc $7,000

k) Pink Ember Studio Co-operative Ltd $6,500

l) Rain Moth Community Nursery (auspiced by NECCHi) $6,677

m) U3A Merri-bek Inc $6,077

n) Women`s Housing LTD $5,100

2. Allocates Organisational Establishment Grants to the value of $40,000 per year for 3 years; 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28:

a) Merri Community Shed $10,000

b) Oddany Inc $10,000

c) Styling Station Melbourne Ltd $10,000

d) Vixen - Peer-Led Health and Support Network (Auspiced by Scarlet Alliance) $10,000

3. Allocates a total of Facility Improvement Grants to the value of $353,740 for projects delivered in 2025/26; the two types recommended under this category are:

Smaller Facility Improvement Grants (up to $10,000 per project)

a) Coburg Primary School $10,000

b) Cretan Brotherhood of Melbourne and Victoria $10,000

c) Moomba Park Tennis Club Inc $9,790

d) Newlands and East Coburg Community Hubs Inc (NECCHi) $9,972

e) Norm Warehouse $10,000

f) Transgender Victoria $10,000

Larger Improvement Grants (up to $40,000 per project).

a) 5th Brunswick Scout Group (auspiced by Scouts Victoria) $24,078

b) Bioquisitive LTD $30,816

c) Ceres Earth Limited (t/a CERES Inc) $40,000

d) Parish of St Vasilios Brunswick - Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia $40,000

e) Hadfield Tennis Club $32,620

f) Kevin Heinze Grow $22,013

g) Northern Schools Early Years Cluster Inc. (Glenroy Central Kindergarten) $25,125

h) Pascoe Vale Sports Club Inc $39,300

i) Sussex Neighbourhood House $40,000

4. Notes Facility Improvement Grants second round for smaller projects up to $10,000 per project. Recommendations to value of $46,122 were endorsed by Director Community for projects delivered in 2024/25:

a) Newlands and East Coburg Community Houses Inc. (NECCHi) $9,122

b) Pascoe Vale Sports Club Inc $10,000

c) Schoolhouse Studios $7,000

d) St Matthews Anglican Church Glenroy Hadfield with St Linus Merlynston $10,000

e) Sussex Neighbourhood House $10,000

5. Notes the updated Community Grants Guidelines for 2025-2026.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The Community Grant Program offers a range of community grants for not-for-profit community organisations to apply for funding towards initiatives that benefit the Merri-bek community.

This round of applications opened for a period of over 9 weeks from 1 January for groups to apply for funding to support the delivery of projects between 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 and support of new organisational between 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2028. Applications for this round, support one-off project implementation, the development and delivery of facility improvements, and new organisations that benefit and engages the Merri-bek community through community led initiatives.

This report provides recommendations for funding in relation to three categories:

• Community Strengthening Grant (up to $7,000 per application),

• Organisational Establishment Grant (up to $10,000 per year for 3 years),

• Facility Improvement Grant

o Smaller projects (up to $10,000 per application),

o Larger projects (up to $40,000 per application, with a minimum 25 per cent contribution from the applicant towards the project).

For the 2025 annual program:

• Nineteen (19) applications, to the value of $121,408.50 were received under the Community Strengthening Grant category. Fourteen (14) projects to the value of $89,366 are recommended for funding.

• Five (5) applications to the value of $50,000 per year were received under the Organisational Support Grant category. Four (4) applications to the value of $40,000 per year totally in $120,000 over 3 years are recommended for funding.

• Sixteen (16) applications requesting $385,506 were received for the Facility Improvement Grant funding program. Fifteen (15) projects to the value of $353,724.00 are recommended for funding.

Following Council endorsement, all successful applicants will be advised of the outcome of their applications and the necessary funding requirements will be put in place. Unsuccessful, withdrawn and incomplete applicants will be given feedback or relevant advice on how these can be strengthened for future rounds or redirected to other funding sources.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Community Grant Program Annual Round Recommendation 2024** – 8 May 2024

*That Council:*

*1. Thanks applicants of the Community Grants Program for their time and contribution to Merri-bek’s community life.*

*2. Allocates Community Strengthening Grants to the value of $118,000 for projects delivered in 2024/25*

*a) AGAPI Care Inc $7,000*

*b) Alevi Community Council of Australia $7,000*

*c) Arts Pie Australia Inc $7,000*

*d) Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Multifaith Council $7,000*

*e) Australian Skateboarding Federation $6,600*

*f) Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria $7,000*

*g) Ethnic Community Broadcasting Association of Victoria (3ZZZFM) $7,000*

*h) Fawkner Food Bowls $7,000*

*i) Federation of Nepalese Community Associations of Victoria Inc $7,000*

*j) For Change Co. $6,400*

*k) Help Himalayan Youth Foundation Inc $7,000*

*l) Moomba Park Tennis Club Inc $7,000*

*m) Mulberry Community Garden Glenroy $7,000*

*n) Open Table $7,000*

*o) Schoolhouse Studios Inc $7,000*

*p) The Bike Recycle Shed Inc*

*q) Victorian Skateboard Association $7,000*

*3. Allocates Organisational Establishment Grants to the value of $39,800 per year for 3 years; 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27.*

*a) CALD Community Voices Australia Inc $10,000*

*b) Merri-bek Netball Association $10,000*

*c) Nourishing Neighbours $10,000*

*d) Plus Sport Victoria Inc $9,800*

*4. Allocates a total of Facility Improvement Grants to the value of $273,818 for projects delivered in 2024/25; the two types recommended under this category are:*

*Smaller Facility Improvement Grants (up to $10,000 per project) and*

*a) East Coburg Tennis Club Inc $10,000*

*b) Fawkner Netball Club $10,000*

*c) Gardening Mob Incorporated $8,313*

*d) Harm Reduction Victoria $9,719*

*e) Lefkadian Brotherhood $9,930*

*f) North Coburg Rebels Baseball Club $7,472*

*g) Northern Schools Early Years Cluster (Will Will Rook Preschool) $10,000*

*h) Northern Schools Early Years Cluster (Lorne Street Kindergarten) $8,346*

*i) Transgender Victoria $6,432*

*Larger Improvement Grants (up to $40,000 per project).*

*a) Brentwood Kindergarten $18,606*

*b) Coburg Basketball Association $40,000*

*c) Coburg Table Tennis Club $15,000*

*d) Federazione Lucana Inc $40,000*

*e) Hadfield Tennis Club Inc $40,000*

*f) Turkish Islamic Society of Victoria $40,000*

*5. Notes the unallocated funds in the Facility Improvement Grants and opens a second round for smaller facility improvement projects for up to $10,000 per project, where applications to open from June to mid-July 2024. Recommendations from an assessment panel to be made to the Director Community for endorsement. The funded projects to be noted in the Community Grants report to Council in May 2025.*

*6. Notes the updated Community Grants Guidelines for 2024-2025.*

## 1. Policy Context

This report is consistent with the Merri-bek Community Grants Policy (DSD1-CL) and the Council Plan 2021-2025.

The Community Grants Policy (DSD1-CL) outlines clear funding criteria and provides suitable direction for officers to promote and for the community panel to evaluate applications to fund locally based not-for-profit organisations. The assessment criteria ensures that there is equity, transparency and accountability.

Council adopted the 2021-2025 Council Plan in 2021 which has integrated the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. The Community Grant Program is aligned with Theme 3 of the Council Plan 2021-2025:

Theme 3: A healthy Caring Merri-bek aims to support Merri-bek to become a more inclusive, connected, healthy and caring community through providing equitable access to community facilities and services, facilitating local partnerships and programs, mitigating the effects of climate change and supporting the community to adapt and build climate resilience.

## 2. Background

Merri-bek City Council (Council) provides annual and multi-year funding to support the community to; respond to community needs, provide programs and services that strengthen the Merri-bek community and deliver strategic outcomes for Council. This program provides support for new and innovative initiatives that respond to emerging community needs.

The Community Grants Program is one of the main community-strengthening initiatives run by Council and has been in existence since 1996. Council is committed to providing this funding efficiently, equitably and ethically.

This Annual Grant round was open to receive submissions over a period of 8 weeks from 1 January to 28 February 2025.

The 2024-2025 budget includes the following allocations for the Community Grants Program:

• $547,709 for the Community Grants Program

• $377,000 in the CAPEX as Partnership Grants that is allocated to Facility Improvement Grants

The Community Grants Program incorporates a range of funding categories and subcategories including:

• Community Participation Grants

o For Individuals

o For Groups

• Membership Activity Grants

• Community Strengthening Grants

• Organisational Establishment Grants

• Facility Improvement Grants

o Smaller projects

o Larger project

This report relates to the Community Strengthening Grant, Facility Improvement Grant and Organisational Establishment Grants only.

For categories open all year round, Community Participation Grants: for groups, for individuals and Membership Activity Grants, these are approved all year round under delegation as per the Policy (DSD1-CL). The successful listing of these categories can be viewed on Council’s website. https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/my-council/grants-and-awards/community-grants-program/all-year-round-grants/

The funding categories included in the Community Grants Program that are open all year round or operate on different timeframes are not being considered as part of this report.

**Assessment**

Following an assessment against funding eligibility, an external multi-disciplinary assessment panel of community members was formed to consider and assess applications against the funding criteria. Relevant Council officers were consulted where specialist advice was required.

Council engaged Inner North Community Foundation (The Foundation) to facilitate the assessment part of this round of annual grants. The Foundation has a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) of local people who volunteer to assess grants, and for this round eight community members participated in this process.

Submissions were assessed against the following criteria:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **% of Score** | **Criteria** | **How we assess applications** |
| 40% | Supports Community Grants Objectives and Funding Priorities | How does the application meet one or more of the Community Grants Objectives?  To what extent does the project address the Funding Priorities? |
| 35% | Demonstrates community need | Why is the project needed?  How many local people will benefit from the project?  What benefits will the project have for the community?  Has the applicant asked local people or groups if this project is needed?  Is there anything else like this project in Merri-bek? |
| 25% | Has capacity to implement the project | Is the project well planned and achievable within the timeframes?  Does the organisation have the resources and experience to manage the program?  Does the budget reflect value for money?  Is there evidence of in-kind contribution? |

**Grant compliance**

Not all applications provided the required information in the initial application. To enable a fair and comprehensive assessment to occur, applicants whose submissions did not initially comply with policy requirements were given opportunities and were offered additional assistance to submit the mandatory information and documentation.

Some applicants were advised to directly address issues, provide specific documentation, consult with a Council officer or provide the specific number of quotes and costings to substantiate their budget. These were direct outcomes from the eligibility check conducted by Council officers. This advice was to assist the group to comply with the category objectives and to align their application to specifically address the assessment criteria.

Non-compliant applications were minimal due to Council’s online Grants Management program parameters. The online program does not allow submission of an application where mandatory fields are left blank, or an attachment is not supplied. This resulted in minimal follow up requests.

## 3. Issues

### Community impact

A number of applications have been recommended with specific feedback for the applicant and conditions to support of the application and delivery of their project.

**Community Strengthening Grant**

Community Strengthening Grants are designed to support one-off community projects that benefit the Merri-bek Community and aim to address areas such social inclusion and community participation, environmental sustainability, healthy and active living and creating vibrant spaces as well as strengthen community and organisational capacity.

This category can fund up to $7,000 per project. Projects must be delivered between 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026.

Nineteen (19) applications were received under this category requesting funding to the value of $121,408.50. Fifteen (15) projects to the value of $96,908.50 were assessed and fourteen (14) projects to the value of $89,366 are recommended for funding. One application has not been recommended for funding with encouragement to submit an application for consideration under the Merri-bek Flourish Art Grants.

The total value of the projects recommended is $249,766. This amount represents the calculated value that includes Council funding; significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributions by the Applicant; collaborative partnerships and other contributors to these projects.

Detailed listings of recommendations for Community Strengthening Grant projects are listed in **Attachment 1**.

There were four applications that were not assessed for the following reasons: One application was withdrawn; one application did not meet the eligibility criteria as they did not submit mandatory information to proceed for assessment; both applicants will be supported and encouraged to submit an application to the Participation Grant category. One organisation requested funds to support a project identified as contributing to core business outcomes. One application requested funding to support members activities this applicant is already receiving funding under the membership activity category.

**Organisational Support Grant**

Organisational Establishment Grants are designed to support newly established organisations with funding up to $10,000 each year for 3 years to grow and become independent. Community groups must be based within the Merri-bek municipality and be no more than three years old to be eligible for consideration. Funding will support the organisation between 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2028.

Five applications were received under this category requesting funding to the value of $50,000. Four were forwarded for assessment. All four are recommended for funding to the value of $40,000 per year for the next 3 financial years; 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28, this equates to $120,000 over 3 years.

There was one application that was not assessed for the following reason: The application was transferred to the Community Strengthening Grant category to support pop-up events and to assist the group to build an identity in Merri-bek.

Detailed listings of recommendations for Organisational Establishment Grants are listed in **Attachment 1**.

**Facility Improvement Grant**

This funding supports changes to community facilities or assets that will help community members participate more in community life. Priority is to support community-led projects that increase community access and participation, demonstrate collaboration between groups and result in greater use of facilities.

Projects must be delivered between 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026. Two types of grants are available under this category.

Smaller Projects

This category can fund up to $10,000 per project. Six (6) applications were received under this category; all were eligible for consideration and have been recommended to the value of $59,790.

The total value of these projects is $77,917 this amount represents the total project value that includes Council funding; significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributions by the Applicant; collaborative partnerships and other contributors to these projects.

Larger Projects

This category can fund up to $40,000 per project. The applicant must contribute a minimum of 25 per cent of the total project value.

Twenty-one (21) expressions of interest were received seeking $797,303.60 of funding. Of the twenty-one submissions, seventeen (17) eligible applications were invited to submit a full application.

Ten (10) full applications were received and nine (9) were forwarded for consideration all assessed submissions and have been recommended to the value of *$293,952*.

One applicant withdrew indicating their intention to apply in a future round.

The total value of these projects is $607,044 this amount represents the total project value that includes Council funding; significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributions by the Applicant; collaborative partnerships and other contributors to these projects.

Detailed listings of recommendations for Facility Improvement Grants are listed in **Attachment 1**.

It is worth noting, the combined recommendations for Facility Improvement Grants is $353,742 this represents $23,258 unallocated. It is proposed the unallocated amount is declared as savings.

**Facility Improvement Grant Smaller Projects Round 2, 2024-2025**

Five (5) projects to the value of $46,122 were endorsed by Director Community on 28/08/2024. These projects are to be delivered during FY 2024/25.

The total value of these projects is $65,430 this amount represents the total project value that includes Council funding; significant cash, in-kind and volunteer contributions by the Applicant; collaborative partnerships and other contributors to these projects. The detailed listing of approved applications is listed in **Attachment 2**.

**Community Grant Guidelines for 2025-2026**

The revised Community Grant Guidelines for 2025-2026 has been attached for noting with minor changes that includes timing for grants in 2026-2026. **Attachment 3.**

Community Grant Program Guidelines may change to reflect the new Council Plan when endorsed later this year and the program priority groups may change to reflect the Human Rights Plan when reviewed.

**Diversity of Applicants**

Applications from a diverse range of applications representing and supporting priority groups including multicultural and migrant and refugee groups, children and childcare centres, artist groups, youth organisations, LGBTIQA+ groups, food access groups, people with disability, seniors and sporting organisations have been received and recommended for funding. Community organisations that support the wider community are strongly represented. This demonstrates that Council supports a diverse range of local organisations via the various grant categories. It is worth noting culturally diverse groups are heavily represented and supported in a number of other funding categories included in the Community Grant Program.

The applications recommended for funding in this Grants round reflect a good geographical spread across the municipality.

### Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been considered in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

The proposal supports Sections 12 and 18 of the Human Rights Charter which relate to freedom of movement and taking part in public life respectively.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

The community grant program was well advertised within the community. The program was distributed through the following various publications, media, social media between August 2024 and March 2025:

 Facebook channels (MCC and libraries) – reaching over 34,100 accounts

 Instagram channels (MCC and libraries) – reaching over 14,600 accounts

 Business e-news - 5,837 subscribers

 Library e-news - 7,116 subscribers

 My Merri-bek - 32,198 subscribers

 Sustainable e-news 5,256 subscribers

 Arts Merri-bek - 2,850 subscribers

 Article in summer 2025 Merri-bek Community News

 Merri-bek Council website, Active Merri-bek’s websites Instagram and Twitter accounts.

The program is also advertised to community networks, the community grant and other relevant mailing lists, printed post cards were distributed to Oxygen Youth Space, neighbourhood houses, libraries, customer service centres as well as electronic adverting at Council’s leisure centres.

All prospective applicants were encouraged to contact relevant subject expert Council officers to discuss their application prior to submission, enabling greater alignment with Council’s strategic objectives and improving the likelihood of success.

Information sessions for community members were held regularly, from September 2024 to February 2025, 8 sessions were held (4 in-person and 4 online), with 57 community members registered to attend.

There were a number of direct emails sent to community providing information and funding opportunities available through the Merri-bek’s community grants program. The community grants emailing list has 640 registered recipients to receive news about community grants. In addition, using our grants management program (SmartyGrants) previous applicants to the Community Grant Program were sent notification informing of the grant round and upcoming funding opportunities. There were also targeted reminder emails to unsubmitted applicant to each category including EOI’s of closing dates and application requirements.

## 5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

This report relates to the Community Strengthening Grant, Organisational Establishment Grant and Facility Improvement only. The other funding categories included in the Community Grants Program operate on a different timeframe and are not being considered as part of this report.

The 2024-25 Council budget includes $547,709 to the Community Grants Program; this incorporates an allocation towards Community Strengthening Grants and Organisational Establishment Grants; unallocated amounts in this annual round will be available for allocation under the all-year-round grant categories. There is $377,000 in the CAPEX budget labelled as Partnership Grants that is allocated to Facility (Structural) Improvement Grants.

The recommendation for Facility Improvement Grants is $353,742; this represents $23,258 unallocated. It is proposed the unallocated amount is declared as savings for this FY.

## 7. Implementation

Following Council endorsement, all successful applicants will be advised of the outcome of their applications and the necessary funding requirements will be put in place. Unsuccessful, withdrawn and incomplete applicants will be given feedback or relevant advice on how these can be strengthened for future rounds or redirected to other funding sources.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Merri-bek Community Grant Program - Grant Recommendations 2025 | D25/264470 |  |
| **2** | Facility Improvement Grant Smaller Projects - Round 2 2024-2025 - endorsed | D25/255047 |  |
| **3** | Community Grant Program Guidelines 2025-26 | D25/255099 |  |

**7.6 Carbon Offsets Policy update**

**Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade**

**Sustainability and Climate**

**Officer Recommendation**

That Council:

1. Endorses the updated Carbon Offsets Purchase Policy (Attachment 1), with minor updates.

2. Notes that officers will continue to investigate reporting and offsetting solutions, working with neighbouring councils and the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) to develop possible alternatives, and monitoring market developments for improved options over time.

3. Receives a further report in the financial year 2026-27 at a briefing or similar.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

In 2008, Council set its ambition to be carbon neutral as an organisation by 2012. This was achieved and Council certified as carbon neutral in 2012 by the Federal Government’s Climate Active Program (previously NCOS), the third Local Government Area (LGA) in Australia to do so and the second in Victoria.

Under the Climate Active Standard, in order to be certified as carbon neutral organisations must measure their greenhouse gas emissions, reduce these where possible, offset their remaining emissions and prepare a publicly available report on their emissions trajectory.

Merri-bek City Council first adopted its Carbon Offsets Policy (Policy) in 2015, and this Policy was last updated and endorsed by Council 12 August 2020 (Attachment 2). The Policy is supported by Merri-bek Zero Carbon – 2040 Framework, Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020-21 – 2024-25 and the current draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-26 – 2030-31.

Council has adopted an ambitious corporate carbon target, of 80-100 per cent reduction by 2030, against a 2011-12 baseline. This excludes offsets.

The Policy outlines Council’s approach to, and criteria for, the purchase of carbon offsets.

The process of purchasing is therefore guided by the Policy using:

1) mandatory criteria (offsets from Standards approved by Climate Active (e.g., Gold Standard, Australian Carbon Credit Units, Verified Carbon Standard); and

2) desirable criteria (co-benefits including location, reliability, affordability.

Indicative of the strong interest in local and affordable offsets, the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) is currently leading a project to explore whether a consortium of councils could develop a local carbon offsets project. Merri-bek will continue to monitor progress, however any outcome from this work will likely be several years away.

During FY 2025-26 council officers will explore alternatives to Climate Active certification, developing reporting tools and templates, and building consensus among interested Victorian councils.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Updated Carbon Offsets Policy 2020 - 2024 – For Adoption** - August 2020

*That Council:*

*1. Adopts the updated Carbon Offset Policy 2020/21-2024/25*

*2. Notes that Council offsets currently cover scope 1,2 and 3 emissions across a broad range of environmental aspects and that the details of this are available on Council’s website under the annual National Carbon Offset Standard public disclosure.*

*3. Notes the desire to procure domestic offsets and brings forward a range of options (both domestic and international offset procurement) to Council for decision on a biennial basis. The ZCM Action Plan also currently recommends Gold Standard.*

**1. Policy Context**

Council was certified as carbon neutral in 2012 by the Federal Government’s Climate Active Program (previously NCOS), the third Local Government Area (LGA) in Australia to do so and the second in Victoria. Of the 79 Victorian Local Government Areas (LGAs), ten are certified to Climate Active[[1]](#footnote-1).

Certification allows Council to be publicly recognised for its achievements, helping the community recognise that Council is carbon neutral, and that this has been achieved in a credible and transparent way. There are other approaches for carbon reporting to be transparent and externally validated, and we will continue to explore these alternatives.

The Policy is supported by Merri-bek Zero Carbon – 2040 Framework, Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020-21 – 2024-25 and the current draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-26 – 2030-31.

Council has adopted an ambitious corporate carbon target, of 80-100 per cent reduction by 2030, against a 2011-12 baseline. This excludes offsets.

Merri-bek City Council first adopted its Carbon Offsets Policy in 2015, and this Policy was last updated and endorsed by Council 12 August 2020.

The Policy outlines Council’s approach to, and criteria for, the purchase of carbon offsets.

Under the Climate Active Standard, in order to be certified as carbon neutral organisations must measure their greenhouse gas emissions, reduce these where possible, offset their remaining emissions and prepare a publicly available report on their emissions trajectory.

**2. Background**

Since 2019, we have changed all our electricity use in Council buildings to come from 100 per cent clean renewable energy. This is because of our involvement in the group purchasing project the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project (MREP), this facilitated the construction of a purpose-built 39 turbine, 80 MW windfarm. The MREP group includes Melbourne local governments, universities, cultural organisations and corporations. The turbine and wind farm are at Crowlands, which is near Ararat in north-west Victoria.

Through a range of initiatives including MREP, purchase of electric vehicles, electrification of heating and energy efficiency (a Council program operating since 2011), Council has reduced its operational emissions by 63 per cent since the 2011/12 FY.

Council spent $65,000 on offsets (on 6,600 offset units) in 2024. If we had not reduced our emissions so significantly, we would have needed to spend significantly more on offsets to achieve our certified carbon neutral status.

All Council’s annual carbon reports are publicly available from the Climate Active website (<https://www.climateactive.org.au/buy-climate-active/certified-members/merri-bek-city-council>).

**3. Issues**

**Updates**

Changes to the Policy have been minimal, since it continues to effectively guide our purchasing decisions. However, a number of minor updates have been made:

 Provided further examples of desirable criteria for buying offsets;

 Language nuanced to reflect the changing views of Climate Active certification since the last update. Refer to discussion part of this paper;

 New sub-heading and some reordering of content to provide context to above changes;

 Addition to the list of ‘definitions’ to ensure clarity of language;

 Deleted ‘*Bring forward a range of options (both domestic and international offset procurement) to Council for decision on biennial basis’* from section 5: Roles and Responsibilities table. The selection criteria clearly outlines methodology, and cost often prohibits procurement of domestic offsets;

 Alignment with industry and emerging trends; and

 Editorial changes.

**Carbon Offset Pricing Variation**

The price of carbon offset units has increased over time, albeit with fluctuations. When new projects are launched, supply increases and price drops. In recent years several large corporations have offset their emissions, reducing supply and increasing price.

Once an organisation chooses to certify under Climate Active, they are committed to the purchase of carbon offset units from specific approved standards. The more stringent the carbon offset standard and the greater the co-benefits (for example biodiversity, social benefits), the more expensive the offsets are.

Offset schemes which are based in countries with relatively high cost of living such as Australia (e.g., offsets from savannah burning), will generally be more expensive.

**Carbon Offset Selection Criteria and Standards**

The ideal carbon offset project would be based in Australia, have offsets at an affordable price (less than $15/tonne greenhouse gases), store carbon rather than avoid the release of carbon (e.g., revegetation rather than renewable energy project), and be certified against a well-recognised and stringent standard. This type of offset project does not currently exist.

The process of purchasing is therefore guided by the Policy using:

1) mandatory criteria (offsets from Standards approved by Climate Active (e.g., Gold Standard, Australian Carbon Credit Units, Verified Carbon Standard); and

2) desirable criteria (co-benefits including location, reliability, affordability).

Three key offset standards recognised by Climate Active:

 Gold Standard (GS) is considered to be the most reliable certification scheme for international offsets, with a high degree of transparency and stringent checks. There have not been any concerns raised in the media regarding GS projects, many of which are based around renewable energy projects in low and lower-middle-income countries. Due to the accessible price of its offsets and high reliability of the methodology, Council has tended to purchase Gold Standard offsets in recent years.

 Verified Carbon Standard (VCS or Verra) is used for certain international projects, particularly those relating to revegetation. The price is more affordable, however there have been significant concerns raised in the media about VCS methodologies

 Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) are expensive ($25-$45/tonne) in comparison to overseas VCS or GS. Most offsets relate to savannah burning, where controlled burns are carried out to reduce the risk of larger fires. While ideal from several respects, the price is currently unaffordable. Even City of Melbourne does not purchase ACCUs.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) | Verra (VCS) | Gold Standard (GS) | Local offset scheme |
| Local to Australia | ✓ | × | × | ✓ |
| Reliable | ✓ | × | ✓ | ? |
| Affordable ($/tCO2e) | ×  c.$25-45 | ✓  c.$5/t | ✓  c.$7/t | ? |
| Currently recognised by Climate Active | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | × |

**Local industry and future direction**

The Federal Government’s Climate Active Program has over the past decade been the most well-established and well-recognised certification scheme for carbon neutrality in Australia. However, within Australia in the past year or two, there has been growing concern that Climate Active certification is no longer providing good value for money and regarding the integrity of some offset projects.[[2]](#footnote-2)

There is also concern that the Climate Active methodology does not encourage reporting that is sufficiently ambitious and thorough, particularly in relation to expanding reporting boundary to include Scope 3 emissions.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Many councils in Victoria are in a similar position to Merri-bek, where they wish to be publicly certified as carbon neutral using local offsets, but find the resource and financial costs of Climate Active and Australian-based carbon offsets to be high. This remains a challenge.

Indicative of the strong interest in local and affordable offsets, Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) is currently leading a project to explore whether a consortium of councils could develop a local carbon offsets project. Merri-bek will continue to monitor progress, however any outcome from this work will be several years away.

The purchase of carbon offsets is constantly evolving, and council officers will continue working to develop more optimal reporting and offsetting solutions, work with neighbouring councils to develop possible alternatives, and will watch the market closely for changes which may trigger us to reconsider our current position.

Specifically, during FY2025-26 council officers will explore alternatives to Climate Active certification, developing reporting tools and templates, and building consensus among interested Victorian councils. Officers will also work with Climate Active to explore other alternatives and or improve their certification process.

**Community impact**

There is not expected to be any impact to the community resulting from the review of the Carbon Offsets Policy.

**Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications**

The Carbon Offset Policy directly addresses climate action through supporting Council’s decision to be certified as carbon neutral and to reduce its carbon emissions (in turn reducing number of offsets required).

**Economic sustainability implications**

Council spent $65,000 on offsets (on 6,600 offset units) in 2024. In seeking to meet its carbon reduction target of 80 – 100 per cent by 2030, Council has reduced its operational emissions by 63 per cent. If we had not reduced our emissions so significantly, we would have needed to spend significantly more on offsets to achieve our certified carbon neutral status.

**Legal and risk considerations**

The policy helps officers select high quality offsets that achieve carbon savings as well as social co-benefits. Climate Active certification involves third party checks of the offset registries, and Council’s annual report includes links to the available offset project documentation, thus ensuring verification and transparency.

**Human Rights Consideration**

The implications of this Policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

The Council Plan 2021-2025 notes that:

 Climate change does not affect everyone equally. People suffering from socioeconomic inequality feel the effects of climate change more than others. Our commitment is to provide strong leadership by reducing the greenhouse gas pollution that causes climate change and by proactively preparing to avoid, withstand and recover from the inevitable impacts of climate change.

**4. Community consultation and engagement**

No community consultation was undertaken for the update of this Policy as it is administrative in nature.

**Affected persons rights and interests**

Before making a decision that affects a person’s rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

**Communications**

No communications plan has been developed for the update of this Policy as it is administrative in nature. The promotion of Council’s current and any future policy communication opportunities will be promoted through a range of channels including newsletters and social media as the opportunity or need arises.

**5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

**6. Financial and Resources Implications**

The funds required of $70,000 to action this resolution are budgeted for within existing budgets.

We are not requesting any additional funds to implement the outcomes of this review and Policy update.

Using the criteria outlined in the Policy, the expected funding required to implement this policy will remain around $70,000 per year plus CPI increases (under the Offset Policy Implementation budget (6435031). Climate Active Certification costs $8,000 per year and $6500 for verification every three years. The remainder of the funds are used to purchase carbon offsets.

Council spent $58,000 on Gold Standard (international) carbon offsets in 2023, $68,000 in 2024 and $65,000 in 2025. When the price is high ($10/tonne in 2023, purchasing 6,000 offsets) we spend less, and when the price is lower $7/tonne in 2024, purchasing 9500 offsets) we spend more and bank offsets for use in future years.

Local carbon offsets (ACCUs) are currently roughly five times more expensive than Gold Standard international offsets. If Council were to purchase entirely ACCUs, this would cost approximately $165,000. In 2025 Council purchased 481 ACCUs (7% of the total), at a cost of $24,000.

Quotes will continue to be sought for Gold Standard (international) and ACCU (local) carbon offsets each year to ascertain availability and prices.

**7. Implementation**

Council officers will execute the Carbon Offsets Policy as part of the annual Climate Active Carbon Neutral Certification.

Officers to continue working to investigate more optimal reporting and offsetting solutions, to work with neighbouring councils and the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) to develop possible alternatives and will watch the market closely for changes which may trigger us to reconsider our current position.

Officers will provide an update to Councillors in 2026-27 on this work.

**Attachment/s**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Carbon Offsets Purchase Policy updated - April 2025 | D25/214863 |  |
| **2** | NCOS - Carbon Offsets Purchase Policy 2020-2024 August 2020 Council Endorsed | D20/360228 |  |

7.7 Procurement Policy

**Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic**

**Finance and Procurement**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council adopts the revised Procurement policy, at Attachment 1 of this report.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of a revised Procurement Policy (Policy), shown at Attachment 1. The current policy was approved by Council in June 2021 and has been amended by Council a number of times since.

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council must review its Procurement Policy at least once during each year term of Council. The current policy is due for review by 30 June 2025. The purpose of the policy is to:

 Provide a procurement framework for Council to achieve value for money in the procurement of goods and services, including for carrying out works;

 Assist in advancing the Council’s sustainability and social objectives;

 Ensure continuous improvement in the provision of services for the community; and

 Ensure that Council resources are used efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the community.

The proposed revised policy includes the below key changes:

 A succinct and more user-friendly policy that removes repetition, which works better for our potential suppliers as well as internal officers;

 A new exemption to support spending with local businesses;

 Increases to the procurement threshold, including a $350,000 (including GST) public tendering threshold to align with the cost escalation impacts on procuring goods and services;

 Setting a minimum weighting of pricing as 50 per cent;

 Revisions to ensure compliance requirements are clearer and not open to misinterpretation from both council officers and potential suppliers.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Notice of Motion - Amend procurement policy to include consultancy engagement** – 11 September 2024

*That Council receives a report that considers the amendment of its Procurement Policy to include a section on Consultancy Engagement and Definition as set out below:*

*Consultancy Engagement*

*The engagement of Consultancy service involves additional approvals and procurement reporting.*

*Council staff will follow standard procurement practices identified in this Policy for the engagement of Consultancy services.*

*In addition, prior to engaging a supplier to perform a Consultancy service, Council will consider and document:*

*• the reasons why the service is required to be performed by a Consultant.*

*• whether the skills required for the Consultancy project exist internally; and*

*• if the skills required do exist internally, whether Council Staff have the capacity to undertake the Consultancy service and, if not, whether the Consultancy service can be delayed until such time that internal capacity is available.*

*Despite any other delegation to the contrary, where it is considered that the skills required for a Consultancy service do exist internally, the decision to engage a Consultant must be approved by the CEO in advance.*

*All Consultancy engagements greater than $10,000 must also be listed in a Consultancy Register. As a minimum the Register will record the following information,*

*• description of the Consultancy service*

*• name of the firm*

*• contract value and end cost; and*

*• start and completion dates.*

*A list of completed and current consultancy engagements for the periods ending 30 June and 31 December every year must be reported to Council biannually.*

*Definition*

*A service that facilitates decision making through:*

*• provision of expert analysis and advice; or*

*• development of a written report or other intellectual outputs.*

*For clarity, Consultancy does NOT include:*

*• building and works design, construction and related services including fit out.*

*• research or project management where recommendations are not provided.*

*• routine accounting, audit and taxation services that provide advice on day-to-day issues; and*

*• routine legal services (conveyancing, document drafting and litigation services).*

## Procurement policy, community flag schedule and national general assembly of Local Government Matters – 13 March 2024

*That Council:*

*1. Amends the Procurement Policy in relation to future contracts and purchases by adopting Option A: ”Council is committed to ensuring Council purchases goods and services from suppliers not engaged in manufacturing, supplying, distribution, benefitting and/or associated with nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, biological weapons, landmines, cluster munitions and other weapons used in war and to harm civilians.”*

*…*

**Revised Procurement Policy 2021-2025** – 10 May 2023

*That Council adopts the revised Procurement Policy 2021-2025, at Attachment 1 to this report.*

**Revised Procurement Policy - Responses to Indigenous Procurement Targets** - 10 November 2021

*That Council:*

*1. Notes that the Merri-bek Council Plan 2021 - 2025 includes a Strategic Indicator to increase Merri-bek Council’s active partnerships with First Nations Business.*

*2. Endorses proposed changes to the current Merri-bek Procurement Policy 2021 – 2025; the proposed changes were:*

*a) Inclusion of a target to increase First Nations Procurement to 1 per cent by 30 June 2025; and*

*b) Inclusion of a Council Procurement Exemption to allow for the direct appointment of suitable First Nations businesses where the value of the expenditure does not exceed $300,000 (excluding GST) and is considered low risk.*

**Procurement Policy 2021-2025** –24 June 2021

*That Council resolves to adopt the draft Procurement Policy 2021-2025 with effect from 1 July 2021.*

## 1. Policy Context

The Procurement Policy is made under Section 108 of the[*Local Government Act 2020.*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020/003) The Act requires each council to:

 Prepare and adopt a procurement policy which specifies the principles, processes and procedures applying in respect of the purchase of goods and services and carrying out of works by the Council.

 Review its Procurement Policy at least once during each 4-year term of the Council.

The current procurement policy has a review date of 30 June 2025.

## 2. Background

Under the *Local Government Act 2020* (2020 Act) Council is required to prepare and adopt a Procurement Policy:

 Which specifies the principles, processes and procedures applying in respect of the purchase of goods and services by Council, including for the carrying out of works (section 108); and

 That Council must review every four years.

Council’s Procurement Policy must include the following:

 The contract value for which Council must invite a public tender or seek an expression of interest;

 Description of the criteria used by Council to evaluate whether a proposed contract provides value for money;

 Description of how Council will seek collaboration with other Councils and public bodies;

 Conditions under which Council may procure without inviting tenders or expressions of interest;

 Description of public tender process; and

 Any other matters prescribed by the regulations (note the regulations relating to procurement have not been set and are not anticipated to have any impact at this stage).

## 3. Issues

### Standalone policy and simplified approach

### The current policy was a policy that was developed and shared between the Northern Councils Alliance (NCA), which includes common aspects including the same public tender thresholds. However, the appendices of the policy included, for each Council, Council specific contents that were unique for each of the Northern Councils, including Merri-bek. A key driver for the collaborative policy was to facilitate future smooth collaborative procurement processes.

### The NCA procurement leads have had several workshops to review the existing policy. A key driver for Council officers proposing a standalone policy Merri-bek policy, is to streamline the policy, creating a much more user-friendly policy that works better for our potential suppliers as well as internal officers, including removing large volumes of repetitive content. The proposed policy aims to create an easy to read and interpret policy for both Council officers as well as potential suppliers. The proposed policy ensures that collaborative procurement both with NCA and other Councils and public bodies is still able to be facilitated smoothly.

### One of the key drivers for a standalone policy Merri-bek policy is also to drive an increase in local business spend via a new exemption within the policy. This is detailed below.

**Supporting local businesses**

The proposed policy includes an exemption within the procurement policy for local businesses.

The proposed policy change would allow for a direct appointment of local businesses where the value of the spend does not exceed $50,000 (including GST). Rather than needing to seek two quotes for works below $50,000 (including GST) this would encourage officers to seek local businesses first, both streamlining the process as well supporting local businesses. Officers report internally on local spend; last financial year (2023-24), Council procured goods and/or services from 205 suppliers totalling $26.9 million, in comparison to this year (as at April) 270 local suppliers have been used, totalling $12.6 million. The comparative data can be skewed by a small number of contracts being awarded to local suppliers. The aim of this proposed exemption is to continue to grow the number of suppliers used within Merri-bek as well as the dollar spend.

The current policy had a similar exemption for First Nation businesses (at a higher threshold), which has resulted in year-on-year increased spending with first nation businesses (originally $124K in 2020-21 and most recently $1.0 million in 2023-24). This data shows that an exemption of a similar nature for local businesses could really increase support for our local economy and have a tangible and important impact.

**Procurement thresholds**

The proposed policy includes increased procurement thresholds. The proposed procurement thresholds have allowed for consumer price index (CPI) increases that have occurred over the past four years, as well as balancing the risk associated with higher thresholds.

The increased public tender threshold is $350,000 which is less than the current threshold if you accounted for annual inflation costs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Current** | **Proposed** |
| **One verbal quote** | <$1,000 | <$1,000 |
| **1 quote** | $1,001 -$10,000 | $1,001 - $15,000 |
| **2 quotes** | $10,001 - $30,000 | $15,001 - $50,000 |
| **3 quotes** | $30,001 - $300,000 | $50,001 - $350,000 |
| **Public tender** | $300,000+ | $350,000 + |

**Weighting of pricing criteria**

The current policy does not set the minimum pricing criteria, however internal framework documents had set the minimum pricing at 40%. The proposed policy has set the minimum pricing criteria to 50% and states that any pricing lower or higher than this requires approval. A key requirement under the Act is for the criteria used by Council to evaluate a proposed contract to demonstrate value for money. Based on this, officers are recommending including the minimum pricing criteria within the policy.

Should a requirement for the weighting be lower (or higher) than 50 per cent, this change is required to be approved by both procurement and the relevant director approving the Procurement and Probity Plan.

**Compliance requirements**

The previous policy had several compliance requirements throughout the document, and the proposed revisions include putting key compliance requirements in one section to improve useability.

Suppliers also had difficulty understanding the compliance requirements within the tender submission documents. There were instances were a supplier interpreted the compliance requirements differently to officers, resulting in time being wasted by the supplier who submitted a tender that they were deemed non-compliant. Officers also had difficulty interpreting the wording and applying this to suppliers.

Section 4.17 of the policy now includes all compliance requirements in this section of the policy, this includes both legislative requirements such as child safety and wellbeing and other compliance items. The proposed policy now states *Our procurement approach excludes procuring with companies whose main business is or specialises in:*

 *Gambling industry;*

 *Coal mining, including the development of coal mines;*

 *Onshore or offshore detention of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia;*

 *Weapons used in war and to harm civilians.*

Following the endorsement of the revised policy, tender submission documents will be amended to the above wording. This change to the policy is required to ensure the clear interpretation by both suppliers and internal staff. The proposed wording does not alter Council’s approach to seeking to maximise positive social, environmental, and economic outcomes through procurement; the proposed wording continues Council’s action and commitment in these areas. What the proposed change does do is ensure that suppliers do not waste time putting in submissions that are not compliant with Council’s policy positions.

**Consultancy engagement**

On 11 September 2024 Council resolved to receive a report that considers amending the procurement policy to include a section on a consultancy engagement and definition.

Officers have considered this when preparing the revised procurement policy and are not recommending including requirements in the policy which would have included:

 A register of all consultancies engaged at a value greater than $10,000;

 A list of completed and current consultancy engagement biannually;

 CEO approval if a decision is made to engage a consultant where the skills required are available internally.

Officers have considered the requirements of this versus the value for money for ratepayers. If these additional reporting and approval requirements were required, an additional full-time staff member would be required to coordinate this (not budgeted for.) Officers have also reached out to the Victorian local government which have had this proposed wording in their procurement policy and it was confirmed that this has not resulted in any change or reduction in the consultancy spend.

As a part of the annual 4-year budget development, officers and the executive team review in extensive detail the proposed consultancy budget. For the 2025-2026 budget the consultant budget is less than 2% of the overall operating budget. This includes both one off/temporary expenditure for a project such as the elevate program (endorsed by Council in March 2025) as well as ongoing expenditure such as consultants that undertake asset and property valuations.

Council also reports publicly on contracts awarded above the public tender threshold on the website, as well as contracts awarded under officer delegation as a part of the monthly financial report.

When officers considered the above as well as key elements governing the procurement policy already as listed below, the recommendation to not include this change to the policy is being made.

 Section 4.8 of the policy includes the procurement methodology and the thresholds requirements for all services and works, which includes the engagement of consultants. This section of the policy stipulates the number of quotes required, as well as when a formal request for quote of public tender process is required.

 Section 4.1 of the policy includes the procurement principles which sets out the fundamental best practice principles to procurement, irrespective of the type of work, value and complexity.

### Community impact

Council's Community Engagement Policy 2020 states that for policy matters related to Council’s internal organisational operations Council will not engage the community. Therefore, as this revised policy has a negligible impact on the community more broadly, nor can the policy be influenced significantly by the community; Council has not carried out any community engagement.

### Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The policy implications in relation to the climate emergency and environmental sustainability are included throughout the policy. This includes but not limited to a minimum weighting criteria of 10 per cent for sustainability for all public tender procurement activities. This is not a change from the current policy and the minimum weighting remains the same. Should a requirement for the weighting be lower than 10 per cent, this change is required to be approved by both procurement and the relevant director approving the Procurement and Probity Plan.

### Economic sustainability implications

The policy implications include in relation to economic sustainability are embedded throughout. This includes a key principle of the policy being value for money as well as section 4.15 which talks through what value for money means and the consideration of financial and non-financial costs when demonstrating value for money.

### Legal and risk considerations

The policy has been developed in alignment with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

### Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Council's Community Engagement Policy 2020 states that for policy matters related to Council’s internal organisational operations Council will not engage the community. Therefore, as this Procurement Policy applies only to Council's internal operations, no community engagement process is required as set out in the issues section of this report.

In developing the updated policy, consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders including procurement leads within NCA, executive team and council staff. Councillors were briefed on the proposed policy on 28th April ahead of this report.

**Affected persons rights and interests**

Before making a decision that affects a person’s rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

## 5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

There are no direct financial implications or resource implications related to this policy. Proper application of the policy will continue to improve general financial outcomes relating to purchasing and contract management.

## 7. Implementation

Subject to Council’s decision, when endorsed, the policy will be uploaded to the internet as a public policy and communicated to all Council officers.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Procurement Policy | D25/129203 |  |

7.8 Contract Award: RFT-2025-2 Holbrook Reserve Pavilion and Gender Inclusive Change Rooms

**Director City Infrastructure Anita Curnow**

**Capital Works Planning and Delivery**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:

a) Make a formal offer to **Notion Partners** – ABN 30 328 629 266 (Contractor) to award to the Contractor contract RFT-2025-2 Holbrook Sports Pavilion (Contract) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of the resolution:

i. For the total contract value of $1,695,229.00 (excluding GST), comprising of $1,395,229 fixed lumpsum (excluding GST) and a provisional amount of $300,000 (excluding GST)

b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:

i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and

ii. other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer;

2. Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution:

a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; and

b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.

REPORT

## Executive Summary

Holbrook Sports Pavilion is in the Holbrook Reserve Park, Brunswick West. This facility is home to cricket and soccer but longer meets the needs of the sporting codes and Council’s policy to support gender diversity in sport. This new Pavilion will bring the facility up to current standards by delivering all gender change rooms, a social room and umpire rooms and an externally accessible public toilet. Also in scope are storerooms and all civil, services and landscape works.

Design of the pavilion commenced in September 2024 and was completed in consultation with key stakeholders and feedback from the community. The construction of this new pavilion is expected to commence in July 2025 and expected to be completed by June 2026.

The proposed pavilion will be compliant with the current standards. The designs have been finalised and approved by key stakeholders.

To secure a contractor to deliver the project, an advertisement was placed in *The Age* newspaper on Saturday, 25 January 2025 inviting tenders from suitably experienced contractors via the e-tender portal.

**Previous Council Decisions**

There are no prior decisions relating to this contract.

## 1. Policy Context

This report is in keeping with Council’s commitment to accountability and sound financial management. It also addresses the requirement under section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* which requires Council to conduct a public tender for goods, services and works where once-off or ongoing cumulative spend over the life of the contract is expected to exceed $300,000 (incl GST) as well as the policy commitments contained in the Procurement Policy.

## 2. Background

The purpose of the report is to award tender for the construction of the new Holbrook Sports Pavilion in the Holbrook Reserve. The project is included as a deliverable within Council’s Developer Contributions Plan.

The scope includes female friendly changing rooms, male changing rooms, a social room and umpire room, including all associated facilities required, such as storerooms and all civil, services and landscape works. Finally, all areas affected will be subject to make good before the termination of the works.

An advertisement was placed in *The Age* newspaper on Saturday, 25 January 2025 inviting tenders via the e-tender portal for suitable experienced contractors to undertake Holbrook Sports Pavilion Project. The tender closed on Wednesday, 26 February 2025 and 13 tenders were received.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Tenderer Name** | **ABN Number** |
| MISR Engineering and Constructions | 25 079 136 084 |
| Schultz Building Group Pty Ltd | 66 107 918 856 |
| Black Sheep Construction Pty Ltd | 75 639 577 825 |
| Notion Partners | 30 328 629 266 |
| Circon Constructions Pty Ltd | 44 113 265 044 |
| FIMMA Constructions Pty Ltd | 22 101 232 320 |
| Key Integrated Pty Ltd | 38 615 422 930 |
| Constructive Group Pty Ltd | 40 102 865 074 |
| 2MORO Group Pty Ltd | 43 609 597 524 |
| Harris HMC Interiors (VIC) Pty Ltd | 77 130 177 614 |
| Simbuilt Pty Ltd | 86 140 288 080 |
| Rossiter Constructions Pty Ltd | 30 111 035 413 |
| WP Contractors Aust Pty Ltd | 20 668 895 118 |

The tenders were evaluated in accordance with Council’s Procurement Policy, at the time of tendering.

One (1) tender was non-conforming due to failing to provide all mandatory information on the Tender Response.

### Tender Evaluation

Tenders were evaluated in accordance with Council’s Procurement Policy and in accordance with the approved Procurement Evaluation and Probity Plan for this contract.

The tender evaluation was based on the following the evaluation criteria:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Weighting %** |
| **Pricing Response** |  |
| Price | 40% |
| **Qualitative Criteria Response** |  |
| Capability | 20% |
| Capacity | 10% |
| Tender Program / Works Program | 10% |
| Construction Methodology and Task Appreciation | 10% |
| Social Sustainability | 3% |
| Economic Sustainability | 3% |
| Environmental Sustainability | 4% |
| Total Qualitative Criteria Response | 60% |
| Total Scores | 100% |

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **Full Voting / Advisory Member** |
| Project Manger | Full |
| Senior Project Manger | Full |
| Senior Project Manger | Full |
| Senior Project Manger | Full |
| Head of Building Projects | Technical member |
| Sustainable Building Officer | Technical member |
| Procurement Partner | Procurement Compliance |

The evaluation process that included a supplier interview identified Notion Partners as the preferred tenderer based on the results of the evaluation matrix, included as **Confidential Attachment 1**.

## 3. Issues

### Collaboration

Note that section 109(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that any report to the Council that recommends entering into a procurement agreement must include information in relation to any opportunities for collaboration with other councils or public bodies which may be available.

Under this contract there are no opportunities to collaborate with other Councils or public bodies, because it is a local, stand-alone project with specific timing requirements.

### Social Sustainability

In addition to supporting Youthworx and the indigenous owned Panku Safety Solutions Pty Ltd, Notion Partners is committed to Corporate Social Responsibility, focusing on environmental sustainability and community development. This extends to project outcomes and creating an inclusive environment for staff with special needs.

### Environmental Sustainability

Over the past year, Notion Partners implemented a comprehensive recycling program that has successfully diverted 75 per cent of the company’s waste from landfill, contributing to a 20 per cent reduction in overall carbon footprint. Some initiatives Notion Partners carries out across all projects as a standard plan for reducing carbon emissions are:

 Low-embodied energy material selection

 Low energy LED temp lighting

 Encourage site staff to use public transport

 Eliminate single use consumables on site

 Exceed 50 per cent recycled water content in concrete

 Source only responsibly accredited raw materials

 80 per cent construction waste recycling

### Economic Sustainability

Notion Partners is committed to engage approximately 80-90 per cent of subcontractors and materials within the Northern Metropolitan Region.

### Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

## 4. Consultation / Recommendation from Management

Consultation with key stakeholders was undertaken via public consultation and Conservations Merri-bek page from November 2024, the community was also informed of the project via letter drop on December 2024.

In response to feedback from the community, a public toilet that will be accessible to the public during daylight hours and maintained by Council has been incorporated into the design.

Nearby property owners and residents will be informed prior to the works commencing on site via a letter drop from Council and the contractor. Sporting clubs have previously been engaged on scope and timing of works, the sporting clubs at Holbrook Reserve will receive updated advice regarding the impending works to ensure impacts on their activities are understood and planned for.

Building Projects Unit as the leading service unit for this tender process consulted internally with:

 Recreation Services

 Community Development and Social Policy

 Sustainable Built Environment

In addition, the clubs who use the current Holbrook Reserve Pavilion were consulted.

It is recommended that the Contract be awarded to Notion Partners and that the project progress in line with the plans that have been agreed with the key stakeholders and community.

## 5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council Officers, external consultants and all other parties involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

The adopted budget has the below figures included in the capital works program for Holbrook Reserve Female Friendly change Rooms, Brunswick:

| **Budget and expenditure** | **Amount** |
| --- | --- |
| 2023/24 forecast | 40,997 |
| 2024/25 forecast | 405,990 |
| Carry forward funding into 2025/26 | 700,000 |
| 2025/26 budget (proposed) | 800,000 |
| **Total Budget** | **$1,946,987** |
| Project expenditure to date | $156,206 |
| **Total Available Budget** | **1,790,781** |
| **Less** |  |
| Maximum Contract Sum, made up of: | **1,695,229** |
| *Recommended contract with Notion Partners – tendered lump sum amount* | *1,395,229* |
| *Contract Provisional sum* | *300,000* |
| Other project costs | 95,552 |

The project is expected to be delivered within the available budget subject to discovery of any significant site related latent condition.

## 7. Implementation and Timeline

This report is seeking a Council resolution that the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to do all things necessary to execute the contract and any other required documentation.

Upon approval by Council of these this report recommendations, contract between the Contractor and Council is estimated to be executed by 30 June 2025. The site preparation works will follow around the end of mid-July 2025.

Construction of this new pavilion is expected to start late July 2025 with anticipated completion date of March 2026.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Tender Recommendation Report - New Holbrook Reserve Sports Pavilion and Gender Inclusive Change Rooms  *Pursuant to section 3(1)(g(i)) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that relates to trade secrets.* | D25/252208 |  |

7.9 Contract Award RFT-2024-45 - Cleaning Services - Collaborative Procurement

**Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic**

**Finance and Procurement**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:

a)Make a formal offer to **GDM Group Pty Ltd ATF Gagovski Family Trust (Cleaning Melbourne)** (**Contractor**) **ABN 54 160 063 325** to award to the Contractor contract **RFT-2024-45** for the **Provision of Cleaning Services** (**Contract**) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:

i. For a supply contract for an initial contract term of 3-years ending 30 June 2028 with the option for Council to extend the contract for a further 2x1 year period.

ii. On a lump sum pricing basis for routine services and on a schedule of rates basis for additional reactive services. The total estimated spend for the 5 years is $7,900,000 (excluding GST).

b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:

i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and

ii. other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer.

2. Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution:

a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract;

b) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to exercise the option to extend contracts in accordance with the provisions within the Contract; and

c) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.

REPORT

## Executive Summary

This purpose of this report is to recommend the awarding of contract No RFT-2024-45 Cleaning Services Collaborative Procurement for the provision of cleaning services. Council, in collaboration with four northern region Councils, undertook a tendering process to seek submissions from suitably qualified and capable contractors to provide cleaning services to the four municipalities.

Council requires the provision of cleaning services across 110 sites comprising administration offices, community/recreation facilities, libraries, maternal and child health centres and public toilets and barbecues. The anticipated expenditure on this contract is forecast to be a maximum spend of $7,9000,000 (excl. GST).

A key requirement of the tender submissions was to demonstrate how they would deliver on Council’s social, environmental, and economic priorities, including strong environmental management practices and social and economic initiatives across the northern region community. The preferred tenderer has committed to employing a percentage of its workforce from within the northern region, including five per cent of employees from disadvantaged backgrounds. The preferred tenderer is also committed to the use of Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) certified cleaning products and the use of sustainable consumable products.

The potential term for the contract is five-years, with an initial period of 3 years and the option to extend for a further period of 2x1 years. The anticipated contract commencement date is 1 July 2025, which aligns across the other Councils and ensures a common end date of 30 June 2028 for the initial contract term.

The tender complies with section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020.*

**Previous Council Decisions**

Nil.

## 1. Policy Context

## This report is in keeping with Council’s commitment to accountability and sound financial management. It also addresses the requirement under section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* which requires Council to conduct a public tender for goods, services and works where once-off or ongoing cumulative spend over the life of the contract is expected to exceed $300,000 (incl GST) as well as the policy commitments contained in the Procurement Policy.

## 2. Background

The purpose of this report is to recommend the awarding of contract No. RFT-2024-45 Cleaning Services Collaborative Procurement for the provision of cleaning services.

In August 2024, Banyule as the Lead Council, along with Merri-bek City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council and a new inclusion of the Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries initiated planning of a new tender process to continue with the collaborative approach for cleaning services. Other Councils in the Northern Region elected not to participate.

The established tender panel consisted of a group of subject matter experts from within the day-to-day operational requirements for each participating organisation, as well as key procurement officers and an independent (external) Probity Advisor.

Nillumbik Shire Council was appointed to function as a tendering agent on behalf of Banyule, Merri-bek and Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries for seeking tenders for the Contract. The intention of the collaborative tender process was to:

 make the contract more attractive to the market;

 achieve better value than would be possible if the market were approached individually;

 encourage sharing and implementation of best practice learnings, and

 maximise innovation and value-added benefits.

Council sought submissions from suitably qualified and capable contractors to provide a wide range of cleaning services as follows:

 facility cleaning services (administration buildings, community buildings, convention centres, family buildings/MCH centres, recreational buildings, libraries)

 public toilet cleaning services

 public BBQ cleaning services

 set ups and set downs

 after function cleans

 consumables and

 periodical cleaning services.

The services comprise:

 Part A - Fixed routine services, periodical services, and reactive services, and

 Part B - Supply of consumables.

A key requirement in the tender specification included the use of environmentally friendly cleaning products and consumables to minimise the environmental impact of Council’s cleaning activities.

The (RFT) event was released on 16 November 2024, a virtual tender market briefing was held on 20 November 2024, which was hosted by Banyule City Council.

The initial tender closing date was 12 December 2024. Due to request by industry to extend the closing date, the RFT event closed at 2:00pm on Thursday 19 December 2024, with submissions received via the electronic tender box from 23 suppliers.

The tender evaluation criteria included cost, capacity, capability, and social / environmental / local considerations. In particular, tenderers were asked insert number questions which cover the consideration of capacity, capability, and social / environmental / local aspects.

Detailed evaluation criteria and weighting are provided in the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Weighting** |
| Cost | 40% |
| Technical criteria, made up of:   Capacity and capability (55%)   Customer Service (30%)   Sustainable procurement (15%) | 60% |

The membership of the tender evaluation panel from Merri-bek was as follows.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Title and/or company** | **Project Manager/ Generalist or Nominated Speciality** | **Full Voting / Advisory Member** |
| Coordinator Council Facilities | (Chair) | Full |
| Glenroy Community Hub Coordinator | Generalist | Non-scoring member |
| Team Leader Community Venues | Generalist | Non-scoring member |
| Unit Manager Maternal Child Health and Immunisation | Generalist | Non-scoring member |
| Events and Facilities Team Leader | Generalist | Non-scoring member |
| Inclusive City and Community Coordinator | Generalist | Non-scoring member |
| Unit Manager Aquatic and Leisure Services | Generalist | Non-scoring member |
| Unit Manager Library Services | Generalist | Non-scoring member |
| Senior Procurement Partner | Procurement | Advisory |
| ArcBlue, Probity Advisor | External, probity | Advisory |

The evaluation process is included at **Confidential Attachment 1.**

## Issues

A Tender Evaluation Panel (TEP) comprising representatives from each of the participating Councils evaluated the tenders in two stages using the below listed compliance and evaluation criteria. One voting member was nominated from each of the participating Councils to score on behalf of the relevant Council.

A Tender Evaluation Plan which included the agreed selection criteria and weightings was prepared and signed off by the TEP prior to tenders closing to ensure transparency, objectivity and fairness to all tenderers involved in this Request for Tender process.

**Compliance and Comparative Criteria**

Compliance criteria:

 conformance with Councils’ terms and conditions (or acceptability of proposed amendments)

 conformance with Councils’ specification of works/ services (or acceptability of proposed amendments)

 ABN Registration;

 acceptable OHS standards and systems;

 commitment to provide evidence of insurances to the satisfaction of the Council

 satisfactory financial assessment outcome.

**Collaboration**

Section 109(2) of the Local Government Act 2020 requires that any report to the Council that recommends entering into a procurement agreement must include information in relation to any opportunities for collaboration with other Councils or public bodies which may be available.

In line with the *Local Government Act 2020*, Merri-bek City Council collaborated with 2 other local Councils within the NCA region and Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries.

### Social, Environmental, Local Implications

Cleaning Melbourne has provided a comprehensive Strategic Plan for Reducing Carbon Emissions and addressing environmental sustainability. They are committed to transitioning to hybrid and electric fleet vehicles, the use of Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) certified cleaning products and the use of sustainable consumable products, and integrating energy-efficient equipment.

All senior managers within the company are actively engaged in ongoing education and training related to environmental sustainability.

Cleaning Melbourne has committed to delivering meaningful social benefits to the Northern Region Councils’ communities and libraries by implementing an employment program that provides opportunities for jobseekers from disadvantaged backgrounds and have confirmed and committed to the requirement to create a minimum of two positions within Merri-bek City Council annually. This aligns with their Social Employment Policy, which promotes a fair, inclusive, and equitable working environment and a commitment to corporate social responsibility.

Cleaning Melbourne will leverage existing partnerships with social enterprises and job placement agencies such as the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC), Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), Salvation Army Employment Plus, and Himilo Community Connect.

### Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

## 4. Consultation and Engagement

Advice was sought from officers across Council involved in cleaning services.

## 5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council Officers, external consultants and all other parties involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

## Over the five-year term of the contract, the maximum spend is expected to be $7,900,000 (excluding GST) which is within the existing operating budget.

## 7. Implementation and Timeline

It is proposed that the CEO be authorised to do all things necessary to execute the contract and any other required documentation.

The contract will commence on 1 July 2025 following Council endorsement.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Tender\_Evaluation\_Report\_for\_1397-2024\_Cleaning\_Services  *Pursuant to section 3(1)(g)(ii) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.* | D25/243761 |  |

7.10 Financial Management Report for the period ended 30 April 2025

**Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic**

**Finance and Procurement**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ended 30 April 2025, at Attachment 1 to this report.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

This report presents the Financial Management Report for the financial year to date period ending 30 April 2025. A detailed financial review was undertaken across the organisation at the end of February 2025. The results of this review are included in this report as the Full Year Revised Forecast.

The 30 April 2025 Income Statement shows that Council has recorded a surplus of $58.7 million, $2.3 million higher than the year-to-date budget of $56.4 million, as a result of higher overall revenue and lower overall expenditure. These differences are considered largely timing in nature. As set out in the Issues section of this report, operating surplus funds do not convert to immediately available cash to Council; they are used to fund important community infrastructure project like the Coburg Library and Piazza Redevelopment or recently completed projects like Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment and Balam Balam Place, Brunswick.

Council has spent $73.7 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking below the year-to-date (YTD) budget of $78.9 million, with $19 million budget remaining.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**2024/25 Third Quarter Financial Review** – 9 April 2025

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the 2024-25 Third Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 28 February 2025, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.*

*2. Notes the status of the capital works program for 2024-25.*

*3. Notes the increase to the full-year forecast for operating income of $2.9 million and the decrease to operating expenditure of $0.5 million arising from the 2024-25 Third Quarter Financial Review.*

*4. Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of $102.2 million, arising from the 2024-25 Third Quarter Financial Review.*

*5. Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*

*a) Fully or partially grant funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*

 *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) – Pavilion Gender Inclusive Facilities - $1,456,539*

 *Shared Zones – Victoria St and Albert Street - $800,000*

 *Dunstan Reserve Childcare - $720,000*

 *Brunswick Early Years Hub - $400,000*

 *Community Battery - $400,000*

 *Bain Avenue from Plaisted to Boundary, Road Reconstruction - $367,590*

 *Gowanbrae Dog Park - $200,000*

 *Wombat Crossings – Barrow St & Blair St, Coburg - $172,960*

 *Wombat Crossing – Dawson St at Melville Road, Brunswick West - $145,390.*

*b) Rates funded projects:*

 *Shore Reserve – Football & Cricket - $704,105*

 *Sim Cr & Victoria St – Engeny Hot Spot No 8 - $491,829*

 *Brunswick City Baths Repainting & Renewal - $300,000*

 *Narre Narre Stadium Floor Renewal - $300,000*

 *Northwest Brunswick Pre-school - $263,323*

 *Urquhart Street from Alva to Keith, Road Reconstruction - $250,000*

 *Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - $250,000*

 *Road Closures - $205,000*

 *Victoria St Bike Lanes – Sydney Rd to Pearson St - $203,527*

 *South Street – Engeny Hot Spot No 12 - $200,000*

 *Merri Trail – Flood Mitigation – Bridge to Darebin - $185,971*

 *Kendall/Harding Footbridge over Merri Creek - $177,000*

 *Balfe Parks Sports Field Lights - $163,929*

 *WSUD Implementation – Various - $134,000*

 *Large Scale WSUD (Sportsfield Stormwater Reuse) - $130,000*

 *Kerbside Waste Reform (waste charge funded) - $102,735*

 *O’Hea St Bike Path Extension – Sussex to Derby St - $100,000*

 *LXRP Equipment - $87,002*

 *Hadfield Depot Masterplan Development & Drainage - $75,000*

 *Craigieburn Shared Path – Stage 4 - $40,000.*

*c) Reserve funded projects:*

 *York Street Park Close to Home - $300,000*

 *Park Renewal – Gervase Reserve - $263,104*

 *Saxon St Community Hub – Northwest Building - $150,000*

 *Minor Park – Tate Reserve (Removal) - $20,000.*

*6. Brings forward the following capital project funding to the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *Brunswick Activity Centre Upgrade Works – Wilson Ave - $372,179*

 *Alva Gr from Urquhart to Bell, Road Reconstruction - $338,661*

 *Urban Forest Strategy – Tricky to Plant Areas - $262,024*

 *Gym Equipment Replacement Program – Various - $251,896*

 *James Martin Reserve (former Pigeon Club) - $250,000*

 *Park Renewal – Cox Reserve (reserve funded) - $59,315*

 *Coburg Library Redevelopment (reserve funded) - $50,227*

 *West Street Intersection and Streetscape - $43,000.*

*7. Approves funding for new projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *Property Purchase (reserve funded) - $1,766,000*

 *40 km/h Rollout – Traffic Calming (76% externally funded) - $409,064*

 *CB Smith – Electrical Works - $300,000*

 *Carelink Go+ Device Purchases - $160,000 (previously budgeted as operating)*

 *Bob Hawke Capital Improvements/Replacements - $95,640*

 *Park Close to Home – 568-574 Sydney Road (reserve funded) - $50,000.*

*8. Approves additional funding for the following existing projects:*

 *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) – Pavilion Gender Inclusive Facilities (externally funded) - $1,456,539*

 *Replace Council Fleet (banked carry forward) - $786,559*

 *Shared Zones – Victoria St and Albert St - $270,000*

 *Raeburn Reserve – Cricket Training Nets (externally funded) - $225,000*

 *Accommodation Changes to Meet Service Demand - $225,000*

 *Merri Trail – Flood Mitigation – Bridge to Darebin - $185,971*

 *Road Closures - $165,000*

 *Installation of Pedestrian Operated Signals - $110,000*

 *Feasibility Study/Investigation/Design – Forward Planning - $100,000*

 *Kent Road – Separated Bike Lane Trial - $100,000*

 *Coburg Library Redevelopment (banked carry forward) - $100,000*

 *Craigieburn Shared Path - Stage 4 - $65,000*

 *Coburg Streetscape Masterplan – Louisa St - $60,400*

 *Wombat Crossing – Albion to Melville - $50,000*

 *Brunswick Activity Centre Upgrade Works – Wilson Ave - $50,000*

 *Park Close to Home – 260 Sydney Road (reserve funded) - $46,000*

 *Woodlands Bridge (50% externally funded) - $30,102*

 *Turner Street Kindergarten Expansion - $30,000*

 *Gym Equipment Replacement Program – FLC - $26,770*

 *Carlise Street – Nicholson – Glenora, Coburg - $23,745*

 *Cole Reserve Upgrade Masterplan – Lighting - $18,804*

 *Gillon Cricket Practice Nets - $13,850*

 *Brearley Reserve – Public Toilets – $9,513*

 *Harding Street Corridor - $9,195*

 *Transport Trial Sites – bike lanes & shared zones - $7,980*

 *Cole Reserve Upgrade Masterplan – Groundworks (banked carry forward) - $6,429*

 *Municipal Art Collection – Various - $1,737*

 *Park Renewal – HW Foletta Park - $840.*

*9. Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment (reserve funded) - $600,000*

 *Dawson St Bike Lanes - $459,250*

 *De Carle Street from Donald to Davies, Road Reconstruction - $260,000*

 *Mitchell Pde Retaining Wall - $230,000*

 *Bendigo Street from Alpine to Cumberland, Road Reconstruction - $210,000*

 *Oak Park Kindergarten - $200,000*

 *De Carle St Bike Lanes – The Avenue to Moreland Rd - $189,679*

 *Merri Creek Trail Access and Safety Upgrades - $185,971*

 *Carnarvon Street from Blyth to Dorothy, Road Reconstruction - $150,000*

 *Furniture & Fittings Replacement Program - $150,000*

 *Park Renewal – Fisher Reserve (reserve funded) - $147,573*

 *Carnarvon Street from Dorothy to Stewart, Road Reconstruction - $115,000*

 *Yungera St from Wyuna to Mutton, Road Reconstruction - $106,339*

 *Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program - $100,000*

 *Peterson Avenue from Mehegan to Jackson, Road Reconstruction - $90,000*

 *Tyson Street from Jukes Rd to Denys Street, Road Reconstruction - $90,000*

 *Derby St Kindergarten Children’s Centre - $70,000*

 *Park Close to Home Frith Street (reserve funded) - $60,000*

 *Raeburn Reserve – Lights - $52,055*

 *Chris Court from Devereaux to Dead End, Road Reconstruction - $41,984*

 *Lonsdale Street from O’Hea to Murray, Road Reconstruction - $40,000*

 *Coburg (Former) Bowls – Upgrades - $35,835*

 *Rayner Reserve – Pavilion Upgrade & Gender Inclusive Facilities - $35,000*

 *Pedestrian Access & Priority Treatments - $33,000*

 *Park Renewal – CB Smith Reserve - $25,000*

 *Coburg Activity Centre Upgrade Works – Victoria St - $25,000*

 *Commercial Tenancy Maintenance Obligations - $17,376*

 *Immunisation Room – Minor Capital - $10,740*

 *Temple Park – Public Toiler Renewal – 24 Gray Street - $4,750*

 *Rayner Reserve – New Public Toilet - $2,000*

 *Oxygen Youth Centre – Accessible Door Installation - $1,878*

 *Kaumple Street, Pascoe Vale, Drainage Works - $1,604*

 *Shore Reserve – Public Toilets – Reynard Street - $634.*

**2024/25 Second Quarter Financial Review** – 12 February 2025

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the 2024-25 Second Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 31 December 2024, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.*

*2. Notes the status of the capital works program for 2024-25.*

*3. Notes the decrease to the full-year forecast for operating income of $5.3 million and the decrease to operating expenditure of $2.7 million arising from the 2024-25 Second Quarter Financial Review.*

*4. Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of $107.1 million, arising from the 2024-25 Second Quarter Financial Review.*

*5. Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*

*a) Grant funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*

 *Oak Park Sports and Aquatic – Electrification (83% grant funded) - $900,000*

 *Cole Reserve Upgrade Masterplan – Groundworks - $816,132*

*b) Rates funded projects:*

 *Shore Reserve – Football & Cricket - $1,207,629*

 *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) – Pavilion Gender Inclusive Facilities - $1,000,000*

 *Replace Council Fleet - $928,755*

 *Dunstan Reserve Childcare (8% grant funded) - $700,000*

 *Holbrook Reserve Female Friendly Change Rooms - $700,000*

 *Glenroy Activity Centre Upgrade – Wheatsheaf Rd - $600,000*

 *Sylvester St Oak Park Land Slide - $600,000*

 *Narre Narre Stadium Floor Renewal - $400,000*

 *Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - $400,000*

 *McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) – Social Room Amenities & Kitchen - $350,000*

 *O’Hea St Bike Path Extension – Sussex to Derby St - $313,850*

 *Hadfield Depot Masterplan Development & Drainage - $300,000*

 *Shared Zones – Victoria St and Albert St - $200,000*

 *Merri Trail – Flood Mitigation – Bridge to Darebin - $200,000*

 *Coburg Library Redevelopment - $100,000*

 *Hosken Reserve Stage 3 Football Pitches - $80,000*

*c) Reserve funded projects:*

 *York Street Park Close to Home - $600,000*

 *Park Renewal – McCleery Reserve - $23,800.*

*6. Brings forward the following capital project funding to the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *Sim Cr & Victoria St – Engeny Hot Spot No 8 - $381,000*

 *Gowanbrae Dr & Birk Ct – Engeny Hot Spot No 6 - $99,000*

 *Kerbside Waste Reform – $48,300.*

*7. Approves funding for new projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *Woodlands Bridge (50% externally funded) - $38,939.*

*8. Approves additional funding for the following existing projects:*

 *Waste Truck Additional – Walter St Depot (waste charge funded) - $1,587,441*

 *Greenbank Crescent Retaining Walls - $831,118*

 *Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades - $372,559*

 *Brunswick Activity Centre Upgrade Works - Stewart St - $294,667*

 *Accommodation Changes to Meet Service Demand - $261,436*

 *Gowanbrae Dr & Birk Ct – Engeny Hot Spot No 6 - $201,000*

 *Feasibility Study/Investigation/Design - Forward Planning - $200,000*

 *Street Landscape Improvements (69% reserve funded) - $162,183*

 *Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal - $148,000*

 *Sim Cr & Victoria St – Engeny Hot Spot No 8 - $140,829*

 *Shore Reserve – Football & Cricket - $123,400*

 *CB Smith Reserve Passive Irrigation Trial (fully grant funded) - $122,073*

 *Dawson St Bike Lanes - $114,500*

 *Toilets Lake Reserve – Adjoining Tool Shed - $70,298*

 *Bonwick St Toilets, Fawkner - $62,875*

 *Carlisle Street – Nicholson – Glenora, Coburg - $60,752*

 *Park Close to Home – 260 Sydney Road (fully reserve funded) - $55,000*

 *Resurfacing Program – Various - $50,000*

 *Derby St Kindergarten Children’s Centre - $50,000*

 *Park Renewal – HW Foletta Park (fully reserve funded) - $37,000*

 *Sportsfield & Ovals Minor Capital Program - $30,582*

 *Sumner Park – 3 Alister Street, North Fitzroy - $22,525*

 *Gillon Oval Cricket Practice Nets - $18,010*

 *Wallace Reserve – North - $11,622*

 *Merri Creek Trail – Seating Installation - $10,000*

 *De Carle Street – The Grove to Rennie – Coburg - $556.*

*9. Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *Replace Council Fleet - $1,587,441*

 *Oak Park Kindergarten - $200,000*

 *Transport Trial Sites – bike lanes & shared zones - $114,500*

 *Allard Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - $70,138*

 *Paisley Court from Bluebell Kerb Line to Dead End - $33,795*

 *Mitchell Pde Retaining Wall - $27,319*

 *Kerb and Channel Repairs – Various Locations - $25,000*

 *Bridge Programmed Maintenance – Various Locations - $25,000*

 *Lorn St – Kiddle – Wilson, Fawkner - $18,350*

 *Holbrook Reserve – Netting - $4,055*

 *Chiller Unit – Civic Centre - $2,296.*

*10. Notes, as at the end of the second quarter, as per Section 97 (3) of the Local Government Act 2020, the Chief Executive Officer is of the opinion that a revised budget is not required, however impacts to the full year forecast will continue to be closely monitored.*

**2024-25 First Quarter Financial Report** – 11 December 2024

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the 2024-25 First Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 30 September 2024, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.*

*2. Notes the status of the capital works program for 2024-25.*

*3. Notes the increase to the full-year forecast for operating income of $12.7 million and the increase to operating expenditure of $4.9 million arising from the 2024-25 First Quarter Financial Review.*

*4. Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of $114.1 million, arising from the 2024-25 First Quarter Financial Review.*

*5. Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*

*a) Grant funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*

 *Brunswick Early Years Hub - $2,100,000*

*b) Rates funded projects:*

 *Dunstan Reserve Childcare - $2,000,000*

 *Kendall/Harding Footbridge over Merri Creek - $800,000*

*6. Brings forward the following capital project funding to the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *South Street from Jensen to West, Road Reconstruction - $952,380*

 *Yungera Street from Wyuna to Mutton, Road Reconstruction - $744,244*

 *Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment - $642,000*

 *Kerbside Waste Reform - $103,510*

 *Charles Mutton Reserve - $50,000.*

*7. Approves funding for new projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *Property Purchase (fully reserve funded) $3,245,000*

 *Coburg North Sport Hub Upgrades (transferred from operating) - $1,780,152*

 *Sylvester Street Oak Park Land Slide - $750,000*

 *Pedestrian Improvements (fully grant funded) - $598,140*

 *Blackspot Project East Street and North Street, Hadfield (fully grant funded) - $88,464*

 *Edgars Creek Corridor Connection Project (fully grant funded) - $77,302*

 *Shade Sail Installation – Anne Sgro Children’s Centre (86% grant funded) - $48,295*

 *Immunisation Room – Minor Capital - $18,000*

 *Oxygen Youth Centre – Accessible Door Installation - $12,000.*

*8. Approves additional funding for existing projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *Hosken Reserve Stage 4 Open Space and Civil Work (fully reserve funded) - $1,678,799*

 *Park Close to Home Frith Street (50% grant funded, 50% reserve funded) - $650,136*

 *Dunstan Reserve Stormwater Harvesting (fully grant funded) - $375,000*

 *Snell Grove – Public Toilet, Oak Park – $155,000*

 *Raeburn Reserve – Lights - $142,150*

 *Shore Reserve – Public Reserve – Reynard Street – $142,000*

 *Fawkner Community Hall – CB Smith Reserve - $120,000*

 *Lake Reserve Toilets – Adjoining Tool Shed - $40,000*

 *Temple Park Public Toilet Renewal – 24 Gray Street - $30,000*

 *Coburg Olympic Pool – Pool Plant and Building Works - $20,000*

 *Commercial Tenancy Maintenance Obligations - $20,000*

 *Hadfield Depot Internal Break Out Area Works - $20,000*

 *Oak Park Kindergarten - $20,000*

 *Parker Reserve – Pavilion South - $10,172*

 *Municipal Art Collection: Various - $8,200.*

*9. Notes savings realised from existing projects in the 2024-25 Capital Works Program:*

 *Hosken Reserve Stage 3 Football Pitches - $512,836*

 *Gym Equipment Replacement Program Fawkner Leisure Centre - $374,900*

 *McPherson Street from Dead End to Reynard - $320,628*

 *Carnarvon Street from Blyth to Dorothy, Road Reconstruction - $172,028*

 *Pascoe Vale Community Centre – Children’s Area Refurbishment - $164,266*

 *Kent Road from Bawden to Derby, Road Reconstruction - $158,183*

 *Park Renewal – Evans Reserve - $154,000*

 *Bain Avenue from Plaisted to Boundary, Road Reconstruction - $151,458*

 *Paisley Court from Bluebell Kerb Line to Dead End, Road Reconstruction - $126,978*

 *Beccles Street from Anderson Kerb Line to Lowson Kerb Line - $122,212*

 *Carnarvon Street from Dorothy to Stewart, Road Reconstruction - $110,000*

 *Londsdale Street from Ohea to Murray, Road Reconstruction - $102,559*

 *Chris Court from Devereaux to Dead End, Road Reconstruction - $59,660*

 *Allard Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - $47,362*

 *Carbon Management Strategy: Various - $20,000*

 *De Carle Street: The Grove to Rennie – Coburg - $7,509*

 *De Carle Street: The Avenue to The Grove – Coburg - $5,492.*

**2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statements** – 11 September 2024

*That Council, in accordance with the recommendations of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, and having considered Council’s Financial and Performance Statements for 2023/24 Statements at Attachments 1 and 2 to this report:*

*1. Approves ‘in principle’ the Financial and Performance Statements 2023/24.*

*2. Authorises the Mayor, Cr Adam Pulford, Deputy Mayor, Cr Lambros Tapinos, and the Chief Executive Officer, Cathy Henderson, to certify the Financial and Performance Statements for 2023/24 in their final form.*

*3. Notes the unrestricted surplus of $1.141 million transfers to the Significant Projects Reserve.*

*4. Carries forward the $536,978 of tied grant funding or contributions that were not spent as of 30 June 2024.*

*5. Carries forward the $41.377 million of capital project funds into the 2024/25 Capital Works Program.*

 *Noting that this does not include a carry forward for the Brunswick Velodrome community pump track due to the funding source being grant funding which was not successful.*

*6. Authorises the Principal Accounting Officer to implement any minor administrative changes to the Financial and Performance Statements for 2023/24 if recommended by the Auditor-General upon final review, for approval by the Chief Executive Officer.*

## 1. Policy Context

The 2024-2028 Budget was adopted by Council on 26 June 2024. The Budget sets out the resources required to deliver the Council Plan, Services and Capital Works Program for the 2024/25 financial year.

This report supports Council’s continuing commitment to open and accountable management of the financial resources of Merri-bek on behalf of its ratepayers.

## 2. Background

The Financial Management Report at Attachment 1 provides Council’s financial statements for the year to date (YTD) period ended 30 April 2025. The actual results are compared to the budget in the Executive Summary and compared to the revised forecast in all other parts of the report, which include carry forwards from 2024-25 and the outcomes of the First, Second and Third Quarter Financial Reviews.

## Relevant Council Plan action, strategy, policy, or resolution

## This report supports Council’s continuing commitment to open and accountable management of the financial resources of Merri-Bek on behalf of its ratepayers.

## 3. Issues/Discussion

Council ended April 2025 with a surplus operating result of $58.7 million which is $8.9 million (13%) less than the year to date (YTD) revised forecast of $67.6 million. These differences are due to recognition of asset book value write-offs occurring as a result of capitalisation of recently completed asset renewal projects across roads, footpaths and drainage.

It is important to note that the $58.7 million operating surplus does not convert to immediately available cash to Council. Surplus funds are used to fund important community infrastructure projects like the recently completed Fawkner Leisure Centre redevelopment or Balam Balam Place, Brunswick.

As described above, significant amounts of surplus are restricted by legislation or must be used for future infrastructure investment.

Significant variance explanations are provided below to clarify where the current YTD variances are expected to be a timing or permanent difference by 30 June 2025. A timing variance is a current difference between actual result and budget which is expected to be resolved before the end of the financial year. A permanent variance is a current difference between actual result and budget which will continue to the end of the financial year.

The main items contributing to the overall variance are:

### Revenue

 **Grants Capital** ended $1.9 million (57%) favourable primarily due to the timing of receipt of grant funding for Roads to Recovery projects ($0.8 million), JP Fawkner Sportsfield Lighting ($0.5 million), Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment ($0.3 million) and Oak Park Kindergarten ($0.2 million).

### Expenditure

 **Net Loss on Disposal of Assets** ended $13.1 million (1084%) unfavourable due to recognition of asset book value write-offs occurring as a result of capitalisation of recently completed asset renewal projects across roads, footpaths and drainage (permanent).

### Key Definitions

Surplus – is reported based on the Australian Accounting Standards and includes all operating income and expenditure recognised in the financial period, including gifted subdivisional assets (non-monetary), developer contributions and grants towards capital works projects. It is important to note that the surplus is not a cash surplus. It does not convert to immediately available cash for Council. Significant amounts of the surplus are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure investment.

Adjusted underlying surplus – is the surplus for the year adjusted for non-recurrent capital grants and contributions. It is an accepted measure of financial sustainability as it is not impacted by non-recurring or once-off items of revenue and expenses that can often mask the operating results.

Unrestricted result – this is the net funding result after considering the funding requirements to meet loan principal repayments and transfers to and from reserves.

### Capital Projects – Capital Expenditure

Council has spent $73.7 million on capital expenditure year to date which is tracking $10.0 million (12%) below the YTD forecast of $83.7 million, with $28.6 million (28%) of the revised budget remaining.

### Cash

Council’s cash assets were $93.9 million as at 30 April 2025. This is a $12.8 million decrease on 30 June 2024 cash levels.

Cash fluctuates frequently over the year due to a number of factors, mainly due to the timing of when the rates instalments fall due. It is expected that cash levels will increase during May due to the fourth rates instalment due on 31 May.

### Solvency Assessment

Council officers have reviewed Council’s liquidity (Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities) at 30 April 2025 as 4.1. The Victorian Auditor General’s Office (VAGO) recommends that this ratio be 1.5 or higher. This is a positive result and shows that Council is solvent.

### Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Community consultation and engagement was not required for this report as it reflects the performance against the budget and delivery of the capital works program.

**Affected persons rights and interests**

Before making a decision that affects a person’s rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views. There are no individual rights or interests affected.

## 5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

## Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

The overall corporate objective is to deliver the 2024-25 budget with the best possible outcome for Council and the community and in line with the approved revised forecast targets.

## 7. Implementation

The financial position of Council will continue to be monitored and managed. The progress of the capital works program will continue to be monitored and managed.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Council Monthly Financial Management Report - April 2025 | D25/261548 |  |

7.11 Governance Report - June 2025 - Cyclical Report

**Director Business Transformation, Sue Vujcevic**

**Governance and Strategy**

## Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from Advisory Committees, provided as Attachment 1 to this report, as follows:

a) Arts Advisory Committee held 7 May 2025.

b) Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee held 8 May 2025.

2. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.

3. Notes the response to a question taken on notice during Public Question Time at the April Council meeting, provided as Attachment 3.

4. Revokes the Plaques Policy 2021–2031 and notes it will be replaced with operational guidelines authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

5. Notes that Council's five-year funding agreement with CERES Earth Ltd (CERES) will expire in June 2025.

6. Endorses a grant to CERES Earth Ltd $261,182 (excl. GST) in 2025-26, equivalent to the current year annual funding, noting that this amount is budgeted in Council’s draft 2025-2026 Budget.

7. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to finalise a funding agreement for the 2025-26 grant with CERES Earth Ltd.

8. Notes that a new five-year agreement with CERES Earth Ltd is under negotiation, to start in 2026-27, and a report will be brought back to Council for consideration.

**REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The Governance report is prepared as a monthly standing report to Council which provides a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance related matters.

This Governance report includes:

 A summary of the minutes of the Advisory Committees.

 Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.

 A response to a Public Question Time item taken on notice at the April 2025 Council meeting, with a recommendation that Council notes the response.

 A recommendation to revoke the Plaques Policy.

 A recommendation relating to the 2025-26 funding and proposed 5-year funding agreement with CERES Earth Pty Ltd.

**Previous Council Decisions**

**Ceres Funding Agreement 2019/2020 - 2024/2025 - Draft for Endorsement** – 8 May 2019

*That Council:*

*1. Notes the diverse environmental and social community benefits delivered by CERES as highlighted in their most recent annual report at Attachment 2.*

*2. Endorses the attached draft Funding Agreement at Attachment 1 between Council and CERES Inc. 2019/20 – 2024/25.*

*3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to finalise and sign the Moreland City Council and CERES Inc. Funding Agreement 2019/20 – 2024/25.*

*4. In accordance with the Funding Agreement provisions, authorises the Director City Futures to review and approve an annual program of improvement works or other initiatives over the term of the agreement.*

**Moreland Plaques Policy** – 25 October 1999

*Council adopt the “Moreland Plaques Policy” as provided at Attachment 1.*

**1.** **Policy Context**

Reports from Advisory Committees to Council are provided in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and the Governance Rules set out the requirements for keeping and reporting records of meetings held under the auspices of Council.

Council’s Governance Rules contains provisions which enable the Chairperson to take a question On Notice, with a considered written response being provided to the questioner, in circumstances including where the question requires information that is either not available or accessible at the time of that meeting, or where the time allowed for Public Question Time has elapsed.

The diverse services and mission of CERES Earth Ltd contribute to achievement of Council’s vision and strategic objectives within our Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2030 Framework and draft Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025, Merri-bek Transport Strategy, Draft Circular Economy Strategy 2025 and Food Systems Strategy.

## 2. Background

The Governance Report is prepared as a monthly report to Council to provide a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance related matters.

In accordance with best practice principles and good governance practice, and to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act, this report incorporates matters including reporting of Advisory Committees, records of meetings held under the auspice of Council, items relating to the delegation of Council powers and duties, and policy and strategy reporting.

CERES Earth Ltd is a unique sustainability education organisation, located in Brunswick. They deliver education and training programs in sustainable living, and trade in organic food, permaculture plants and sustainable timber. All the proceeds fund a community visitor centre and 4.5-hectare site that demonstrates sustainable living. The idea for the Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES) took shape in the late 1970s, when a group of local residents and school teachers began to explore ways to address social and environmental issues facing urban communities.

In 1982, the then Brunswick City Council agreed to lease to the community group a barren 4.5-hectare block in Brunswick East, that was a decommissioned rubbish tip and was once a bluestone quarry, on the banks of the Merri Creek.

## 3. Issues

**Advisory Committee minutes**

A summary of the minutes of the Advisory Committees is provided at **Attachment 1** for Council’s information:

a) Arts Advisory Committee held 7 May 2025.

b) Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee held 8 May 2025.

**Records of Meetings held under the auspice of Council**

Records of matters discussed at meetings organised or hosted by Merri-bek that involve Councillors and Council officers are kept in accordance with the Governance Rules.

Meeting Records must include meeting attendees, including organisations represented by external presenters; the title of matters discussed; and any conflicts of interests disclosed and whether the declarant of a conflict of interests recused themselves from the meeting.

Some examples include Councillor Briefings, meetings with residents/developers/ clients/organisations/Government departments/statutory authorities and consultations.

Records of Meetings received since the previous Council Meeting are presented at **Attachment 2** as follows:

 Councillor Briefing – 28 April 2025

 Central Coburg Program Councillor Workshop – 1 May 2025

 Councillor Briefing – 5 May 2025

 Central Coburg Program Councillor Meeting – 8 May 2025

 Councillor Briefing – 12 May 2025

 Councillor Briefing – 19 May 2025

 Activity Centres Advisory Group - 21 May 2025

 Planning Briefing – 26 May 2025

 Merri-bek Affordable Housing Pipeline Councillor Briefing - 28 May 2025.

### Responses to Questions taken On Notice at Council meetings

At Council meetings, questions are taken On Notice during Public Question Time, where persons submitting questions are not in attendance or where the maximum allowable time for public questions has elapsed.

Questions taken On Notice are provided with a written response following the meeting for which they are submitted and reported to Council at the next practicable meeting. The questions are recorded in the meeting minutes.

The response to a question taken On Notice at **Attachment 3** to this report relates to a question from 9 April 2025 Council meeting regarding the McDonald Reserve Feasibility Study.

**Revocation of Plaques Policy**

The Plaques Policy was originally adopted by Council in 1999 and is now out-of-date. It will be replaced with guidelines authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

## The Chief Executive Officer endorsed guidelines will establish how Council considers proposals for, and management of, memorials, monuments; and commemorative plaques or memorials proposed to be sited on or in Council owned or managed public infrastructure and open space.

## The guidelines aim to ensure plaques and memorials appropriately honor individuals or events while maintaining the integrity and aesthetics of Council facilities.

The new Guidelines will include processes not currently contained in the Policy, including:

 A process for memorials requested by the public.

 A process for considering community requests for plaques.

 An outline of criteria to help inform decision making around plaque approval.

 Specific references to plaques relating to public art.

 Alternative ways to memorialise an event, person or organisation before proceeding with a plaque approval.

 Consideration of new and innovative formats to traditional plaques and memorials, such as digital plaques.

Currently there is no register of existing plaques across the City of Merri-bek. The new guidelines require Council officers to add plaques to Council’s asset register.

## In the last 12 months, Council had approximately seven requests for new plaques. Three of these were community requests for plaques.

**CERES Funding Agreement**

CERES is a valued environmental and educational community organisation within our municipality. Council acknowledges CERES’ significant contributions in delivering environmental and sustainability education, advancing climate action, urban agriculture, circular economy innovation and fostering community engagement and connection.

In addition to the 50-year peppercorn Lease Agreement with Council, Council has provided CERES Earth Ltd with a series of 5-year funding agreements since 2008/09, providing a combination of capital and operational funding. The current funding agreement expires in June 2025. Council is currently in discussions with CERES about the next 5-year funding agreement which will not be resolved by the time of expiration of the agreement.

Over recent years, CERES have been making a number of difficult financial and operational decisions to ensure their financial sustainability in post-Covid and cost of living crisis that has been impacting on revenue of functions like the grocery and Merri café. There continues to be a ‘funding gap’ between the revenue CERES is generating through its diversity of social enterprises and activities and the true cost of maintaining and enhancing the site and delivering collective benefits to visitors and customers. Council funding is understood to play a critical role in bridging that gap.

It is proposed to provide a one-off grant to CERES of $261,182 (excl. GST) in 2025-2026. The one-off grant funding is commensurate with previous annual funding and is included in the proposed budget currently out for community consultation. This one-off funding acknowledges the significant contribution CERES makes to climate action, community resilience and environmental innovation, and is aligned with the intentions of our previous five-year funding partnership.

Council has an intention to continue working with CERES on a future five-year funding agreement of similar scale to the current agreement, subject to key performance indicators.

Council has provided CERES with a series of 5-year funding agreements since 2008/09, providing a combination of capital and operational funding. The current funding agreement expires in June 2025.

This funding acknowledges the significant contribution CERES makes to climate action, community resilience and environmental innovation, and is aligned with the intentions of our previous five-year funding partnership.

**Human Rights Consideration**

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

## 4. Community consultation and engagement

Advisory committees provide a valuable communication and consultation link between the organisation, Councillors, Council and the community.

## The following areas of Council were consulted regarding the revocation of the Plaques Policy and in the development of the proposed alternative guidelines:

##  Community Development

##  Cultural Development, Governance

##  Civic Events

##  Places and Property

##  Community Engagement

##  Open Space Design

##  Maintenance.

## 5. Officer Declaration for a Conflict of Interests

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflicts of interest in the matters contained therewith.

## 6. Financial and Resources Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

The total one-off CERES funding proposed for the 2025-26 financial year is $261,182 (excluding GST). This is included in Council’s draft 2025-26 Budget.

Council has an intention to work with CERES on a future five-year funding agreement of similar scale to the current agreement, once CERES has completed a significant current initiative to develop a realistic financial sustainability strategy.

## 7. Implementation

Governance activity, including reports of Committees to Council, Records of Meetings and Community Question Time items will continue to be reported to Council monthly.

Subject to Council’s decision the next steps include:

 The removal of the Plaques Policy from all communication channels.

 Council officers will execute the one-off, one-year CERES grant agreement.

 Working with CERES to negotiate a new five-year funding agreement with CERES which will be brought back to Council at a future meeting.

## Attachment/s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Reports from Advisory Committees to Council - June 2025 | D25/269932 |  |
| **2** | Records of Meetings - June 2025 | D25/269733 |  |
| **3** | Response to a question taken On Notice - June 2025 | D25/270024 |  |

**8. Notices of Motion**

**8.1 Abolishing sub minimum wages for disabled workers**

**Cr Sue Bolton**

## Motion

That Council:

1. Signs the open letter that calls for subminimum wages for disabled workers to be abolished and for these workers to be paid a 100% of the minimum wage instead (as provided <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dj4N8NtD9RKJj7eypPgKkIPggKI2aONCrwBOEzjrEIg/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0>

2. Write to the Federal Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme Mark Butler and the Victorian Minister for Disability Lizzie Blandthorn to advocate for the Australian and Victorian Governments to adopt the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner to increase minimum wages for employees with disabilities to 100% of the minimum wage by 2034.

3. Write to the federal Industrial relations Minister Amanda Rishworth, requesting that the Federal Government urgently implement the recommendations tabled by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and abolish the practice of allowing Australian Disability Enterprises and other Companies to pay disabled workers a sub minimum wage.

4. Requests the CEO to:

a) To provide advice to Council relating to possible amendments to the grants policy and guidelines to ensure that grants aren’t awarded to organisations that are engaged in restrictive practices or pay a subminimum wage.

b) Conduct an Audit of Council web pages and the list of support services for older people and or people with disability to ensure that there are no references to Australian Disability Enterprises.

## 1. Background

Cr Bolton’s background:

For decades, many people with disabilities have worked in segregated workplaces for Australian Disability Enterprises where they earn as little as $3 per hour despite putting in a full days work.

This is way below the Australian minimum wage which was $24.17 in 2025.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability recommended that the federal government reduce workplace segregation and increase minimum wages for employees with disabilities to 100% of the minimum wage by 2034.

The Royal Commission also recommended that government procurement rules should be amended to give preference to enterprises that can demonstrate they provide employment opportunities to people with disability in open, inclusive and accessible settings and pay employees with disability at least the full minimum wage at the time of the procurement process.

Amending council and government procurement processes in this way, will help ensure that all workers with disabilities get at least 100% of the minimum wage.

Australian Disability Enterprises:

 Are tax-exempt

 Receive tens of millions in direct federal funding

 Directly underpay their workers (as little as $3/hr)

 Drain their workers NDIS plans to receive free employees (legally, support persons, but often to pay for business overhead and management)

 Receive free and discounted services from local Councils around the country

 Benefit from community goodwill on the presumption they're helping disabled people

A national campaign has formed to campaign against the subminimum wage paid by Australian Disability Enterprises and to ban procurement from Australian Disability Enterprises if they don’t pay the national minimum wage.

Two local councils – Town of Victoria Park (WA) and City of Sydney (NSW) - have voted to ban procurement from Australian Disability Enterprises because of their payment of subminimum wages.

Almost 300 organisations all over Australia have signed on to an Open Letter titled “Abolish subminimum wage”. The campaign is inviting local councils to sign on to the letter, as well as disability organisations.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Dj4N8NtD9RKJj7eypPgKkIPggKI2aONCrwBOEzjrEIg/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0>

The open letter states:

*We oppose the practice of paying disabled workers subminimum wage. It is unacceptable that in 2025 disabled people living in Australia can be paid* [*as little as $3.01 per hour*](https://library.fairwork.gov.au/award/?krn=MA000103#_Toc175834423)*, while* [*the minimum wage for others is $24.10 per hour*](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/fact-sheets/minimum-workplace-entitlements/minimum-wages)*.*

*These practices don’t help disabled people find work. We know from the Disability Royal Commission that* [*Australia has one of the lowest disability employment rates in the OECD*](https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/news-and-media/media-releases/sobering-employment-rate-people-disability-be-examined)*. As disabled people and allies, we support transition to fairer, equitable work through more modern and just practices to support disabled people in the workplace, such as supported employment and customised employment.*

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

Council officers have a pre-scheduled review of policies and guidelines in the coming months and can consider any necessary amendments to ensure that grants are not awarded to organisations engaged in restrictive practices or those that pay a subminimum wage.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

## The research and advisory components of the motion will not have any financial impact and can be accommodated within the existing budget, along with the preparation of any correspondence as outlined.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

There are no resource implications associated with this proposal.

**8.2 Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund**

**Cr Sue Bolton**

## Motion

That Council:

1. Calls on the State Government to only use the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund for the core activities of the essential services that it is meant to fund such as sufficient safe equipment maintaining minimum staffing levels.

2. Opposes the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund preferring that these emergency services be funded through the State Government’s consolidated revenue fund.

## 1. Background

Cr Bolton’s background:

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (2009-2010) recommended the introduction of a property-based Fire Services Property Levy to provide sufficient resources for the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (since renamed Fire Rescue Victoria) and the Country Fire Authority.

The Fire Services Property Levy was enacted in 2013. The CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria were funded by a combination of the levy, and consolidated revenue.

The Victorian government is in the process of legislating to replace the Fire Services Levy with the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund. The fund is to cover an expanded number of services.

Triple Zero Victoria, Emergency Management Victoria, the State Emergency Service as well as Fire Rescue Victoria and the CFA.

These are services which are currently paid for out of taxes on the community that are paid into consolidated revenue.

The government’s initial proposal for the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund left the door open for a reduction in funding for Fire Rescue Victoria and Country Fire Authority by not including a minimum amount of funding for the fire services. It was only an 11th hour deal.

The worry is that the state government won’t use the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund for core needs such as replacing fire trucks and maintaining minimum staffing levels for fire and other emergency services, but instead use it to pay for massive salaries for top executive positions and lawyers to litigate against workers.

The experience of the Fire Services Property Levy is that it hasn’t been used to replace sufficient numbers of unreliable and unsafe fire trucks. A large portion of the fund was used to fund lawyers, senior executive salaries and other non-core elements.

Currently, 42% of FRV fire trucks are over 15 years old, unreliable and should be off the road. By the end of 2025, two out of three fire trucks will be out of date and unreliable. The high volume of emergency incidents that the FRV respond to  means that the reliability of fire trucks after 15 years in uncertain.

In Merri-bek alone, Fire Rescue Victoria responded to more than 3700 emergency incidents in 2021-2022.

In order to get the  Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund through the parliament, the state government agreed to the reintroduction of a Rolling Replacement Program for the Fire Rescue Victoria Fleet.

However that commitment is for a meagre $10 million a year. Less than one-sixth of one per cent of funds raised over the first three years of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund will be allocated to repairing the FRV’s dangerous fleet of fire trucks.

The Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund is inequitable in that it isn’t a progressive tax. Like council rates, someone on a very low income can live beside someone who is a millionaire and they pay the same amount for the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund.

The exemptions for CFA volunteers are very limited.

The emergency services that are the focus of the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund are vital services for everyone living in and visiting Victoria, so they should be paid for out of the consolidated revenue fund, which all Victorians pay for with our taxes.

While the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund has passed through parliament, it is important that Merri-bek council expresses its view about the fund.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

The Fire Services Property Amendment (Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund) Bill 2025 passed the Victorian Parliament on 16 May 2025 and will replace the Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) with the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund (ESVF) from 1 July 2025.

Council is legislated under the *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012* as the collection agency on behalf of the State Government. If Council did not include this in the Rates Notices we would be in breach of the law.

The levy is an annual levy collected by councils via rates notices. The levy is made up of a fixed charge that varies by property type, and a variable charge based on property values. These amounts are set by the treasurer each year. The ESVF will result in increases on all rates notices across the municipality, with commercial and industrial properties set to be hit the hardest.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

The advocacy in this report has no financial implications. However, it is important to note that the levy will have significant financial implications on the ratepaying community from 1 July 2025.

The below table shows an indicative impact on the average property type for the 2025-26 financial year.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Property type 1** | **Estimated average property value** | **Increase in levy** |
| Residential | $800,000 | $72.80 |
| Commercial | $1,200,000 | $807.20 |
| Industrial | $1,300,000 | $682.70 |

In comparison, the estimated average rates increase is $51.50.

Noting that the average property values and estimated average rate increase are based on the draft budget and are subject to change with the certified valuations included in the adopted budget.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

The advocacy required to state government can be done with existing resources.

It is important to note that due to the significant increase in the levies that will be shown on the annual rates notices being sent out in late July/early August officers are expecting a significant increase in call volumes. Officers are also amending the rates brochure and rates notice to make it clear that this levy is set by the state government and Council has no choice in collecting the levy.

Officers are also anticipating an increased number of ratepayers who may require payment plans as a result of the increased levy. Officers are currently working through the resourcing requirements on both a short-term period as well as any ongoing implications.

**8.3 Community safety forum for road safety**

**Cr Liz Irvin**

## Motion

1. That Council:

1. Requests Officers to host a community forum at Coburg Town Hall to discuss Road Safety matters in Merri-bek, including; Recent trends in road safety incidents throughout Merri-bek. Council efforts to address road safety, including current road safety projects and advocacy.

2. Requests Officers to invite relevant stakeholders such as the Department of Transport and Planning, Victoria Police, the Transport Accident Commission and RACV to attend the forum.

## 1. Background

Cr Irvin’s background:

Two fatalities have occurred on state-managed roads in the Merri-bek Council area in the last month. In an effort to collate data for further council advocacy campaigns, council can hold a community forum to better understand concerns and potential solutions.

## 2. Policy Context

Officer’s comments:

Two fatalities occurred in May this year on state roads in Coburg. These incidents highlighted the increasing road toll in Victoria for 2025. As of 3 June 2025, there have been 134 deaths on Victorian roads. This compares to 119 at the same time in 2024.

Council continues to prioritise road safety through policy, advocacy and council projects. As an inner-urban area, Merri-bek is particularly concerned with vulnerable road user safety including pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, children, older people and people who are mobility impaired or have a disability. Merri-bek addresses road safety through investment in local road infrastructure, acquiring state and federal grant funding for road safety projects, and advocating to state government for policy and regulatory changes such as speed limit reviews, changes to traffic signals and investment in safety improvements to state managed roads.

A community forum with stakeholders and community members can be run to discuss community road safety issues and identify opportunities for partnership with stakeholders and the community to address road safety in Merri-bek.

## 3. Financial Implications

Officer’s comments:

The motion can be delivered within the existing council budget. Expected costs for materials, promotion and equipment are expected to cost less than $1000.

## 4. Resources Implications

Officer’s comments:

The motion can be delivered using existing council resources.

1. City of Melbourne, City of Merri-bek, City of Yarra, Bayside City Council, City of Darebin, Maroondah City Council, Moonee Valley City Council, Surf Coast Shire, Whitehorse City Council, Wyndham City Council [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Age, Feb 7 2025, ‘One hundred ‘carbon neutral’ corporates quit government scheme over integrity concerns and [Is Australia's "carbon neutral" scheme being abandoned? | RenewEconomy](https://reneweconomy.com.au/is-australias-carbon-neutral-scheme-being-abandoned/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Under the GHG Protocol, corporate emission are categorized as Scope 1, 2 and 3:

   Scope 1 is (direct emissions with direct control e.g., gas consumed in Council buildings, diesel consumed by fleet);

   Scope 2 (indirect emissions resulting from purchase of electricity, steam, heat or cooling by the organisation); and

   Scope 3 (emissions that occur in an organisation’s value chain but are not directly owned or controlled by the organization – e.g., embodied emissions in purchased asphalt, emissions from employee commuting). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)