



Merri-bek
City Council

Minutes of the Council Meeting

Held in Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre,
90 Bell Street, Coburg
on Wednesday 11 March 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE	4
DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	4
MINUTE CONFIRMATION	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS	5
PETITIONS	6
PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	6
ITEM TO BE TABLED UNDER THE <i>LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020</i>	15
COUNCIL REPORTS	
7.1 CENTRAL COBURG PROGRAM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY	16
7.2 568 SYDNEY ROAD - PARK CLOSE TO HOME – PRELIMINARY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	19
7.3 BREESE STREET MASTERPLAN	21
7.4 DRAFT LIBRARY STRATEGY 2026-2031	22
7.5 ART AND HISTORY AT THE BRUNSWICK TOWN HALL	23
7.9 2026 ANNUAL AND WINTER SPORTS GROUND TENANCY ALLOCATIONS	24
7.6 RAMADAN NIGHTS AT BONWICK STREET FAWKNER	25
7.7 ADDENDUM TO THE COBURG NORTH MASTERPLAN ZONE 2	27
7.8 ADDING SEATS AND SHELTERS TO MORE BUS STOPS IN THE CITY OF MERRI-BEK	28
7.10 VISIBLE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS IN HERITAGE OVERLAY	30
7.11 PROPOSED SALE OF COUNCIL LAND AT THE REAR OF 436-442 SYDNEY RD COBURG	31
7.12 PROCUREMENT POLICY 2025-2029	32
7.13 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 JANUARY 2026	34
7.14 GOVERNANCE REPORT - MARCH 2026 - CYCLICAL REPORT	34
7.15 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2024-26 - PANEL OF ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY SERVICES	36

NOTICES OF MOTION		
8.1	ADVOCACY PIECE FOR THE LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL PROJECT	42
8.2	LANEWAY BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM	43
8.3	SUPPORT FOR VICHEALTH - PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE	43
8.4	NATIONAL GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY	45
NOTICE OF RESCISSION		46
FORESHADOWED ITEMS		46
URGENT BUSINESS		46
CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS		46
APPENDIX 1 – ARBITER’S DETERMINATION AND STATEMENT OF REASONS		47

The Mayor opened the meeting at 6.34 pm and stated the Council meeting is being held on the traditional country of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people and acknowledged them as Traditional Owners. The Mayor paid respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.

Present	Time In	Time Out
Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor	6.34 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Dr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor	6.34 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Sue Bolton	6.37 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Helen Davidson	6.34 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Liz Irvin	6.34 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Chris Miles	6.34 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Helen Politis	6.34 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Adam Pulford	6.34 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Ella Svensson	6.34 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Katerine Theodosis	6.34 pm	9.56 pm
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	9.20 pm	9.56 pm

OFFICERS

Acting Chief Executive Officer – Sue Vujcevic
 Acting Director Business Transformation – Anita Curnow
 Acting Director City Infrastructure – Greg Rodwell
 Director Place and Environment – Pene Winslade
 Director Community – Eamonn Fennessy
 Manager Governance and Strategy – Yvonne Callanan
 Unit Manager Governance and Risk – Sophie Barison
 Risk and Resilience Officer – Glen Moore

APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Nil.

DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Cr Irvin disclosed a material conflict of interest in reports 7.3 Breese Street Masterplan and 7.15 Contract Award: RFT-2024-26 - Panel of Engineering Consultancy Services due to her employer being involved in the project associated with Report 7.3 and has been awarded a contract under Report 7.15.

6.37 pm Cr Bolton entered the meeting.

MINUTE CONFIRMATION

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Politis seconded -

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11 February 2026 and the Special Council Meeting held on 25 February 2026 be confirmed.

Carried

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS

Cr Politis:

- Attended a Council organised Women's Forum held on 12 February, facilitated by Maria Dimopoulos, CEO of the Settlement Council and a well-known advocate for gender equality. The forum focused on women's safety at a grassroots community level and was held at Balam Balam Place in Brunswick. Cr Politis noted it was a meaningful lead into International Women's Day, during which she attended several events alongside fellow Councillors. Cr Politis highlighted one event at the Lefkadian Club, where 86-year-old Chryssoula Kominatou spoke about the history of the suffragette movement, noting that despite 2000 years of democracy, women have only had the vote for just over 100 years. Cr Politis commended the inspiring speech and acknowledged Council's ongoing work to improve gender equality and community wellbeing through a broad range of events.
- Attended an event hosted by local historian Dr Themistocles Kritikakos, who has produced significant work documenting the history of the Assyrian, Armenian and Greek genocides through the oral histories of local community members. Cr Politis noted that Dr Kritikakos grew up in Brunswick and was inspired by the stories heard in his father's barbershop on Sydney Road. Cr Politis highlighted the importance of preserving this history within a contemporary Australian context and acknowledged the continuing work occurring in partnership with the Indigenous community. Cr Politis commended Dr Kritikakos' work and encouraged others to engage with it.
- Acknowledged the commencement of the holy month of Lent, as well as the beginning of Ramadan, and extended wishes of peace to all during these significant observances.

Cr Theodosis attended:

- A lecture hosted by the Pallaconian Brotherhood in Brunswick on the Parthenon Marbles, which were taken from Athens 200 years ago and remain in the British Museum and commended the Brotherhood's cultural work and encouraged all levels of government to continue advocating for the marbles' return to Athens.
- The inaugural Pan Hellenic Women's Federation of Australia International Women's event in Brunswick. Cr Theodosis noted that the event celebrated trailblazing women and reflected on the continued challenges in achieving gender equality, particularly in addressing family and domestic violence.
- The opening of York Street Park in Pascoe Vale South alongside the Mayor, Cr Abboud, Cr Politis and Cr Yildiz. Cr Theodosis welcomed the transformation of the long abandoned former greengrocer site into a public open space as part of the Parks Close to Home program, noting her personal connection to the area and expressing her appreciation that the community can now enjoy the revitalised space.

Cr Davidson outlined that community consultation is currently underway regarding proposed improvements to Post Office Place in Glenroy, noting that this well-loved local shopping strip has \$2 million allocated for upgrades aimed at revitalising the area and creating a vibrant connection between Post Office Place and the Glenroy Train Station. Cr Davidson highlighted that whilst the post office is no longer located there, the strong advocacy that had been made to retain it and emphasised that the forthcoming streetscape works are an important way for Council to support the precinct and encouraged community members to participate in the consultation and share their ideas, noting that Glenroy is a much-loved area and that local input is essential.

Cr Bolton noted that Council is currently consulting the community on the proposed move to fortnightly landfill waste collection and clarified that while trials have been undertaken in northern and southern areas of the municipality, no final decision has been made, with a report scheduled for the June Council meeting. The consultation seeks feedback on resident support needs and practical implementation, with information available online and at in-person sessions.

Cr Bolton further expressed concern about the recent rise in attacks on religious and other marginalised communities, referencing incidents following the Bondi attack, a terrorist attack on a First Nations protest in Perth, and the recent invasion of a community iftar event in Ballarat; and stressed the importance of taking all racist and discriminatory attacks seriously and promoting solidarity, vigilance and support across communities.

Cr Irvin thanked all community members who attended the Sydney Road Street Party and the wider Brunswick Music Festival over the past week. Cr Irvin noted that the street party was a vibrant and well attended event, with the community embracing the celebrations despite rain later in the day and also acknowledged the Merri-bek festival team for delivering an outstanding program, highlighting the value of Council being able to provide such high-quality events and opportunities for the community.

PETITIONS

5.1 PETITION REQUESTING COUNCIL INSTALL NO PARKING SIGNS ON ONE SIDE OF WHEATSHEAF RD, GLENROY

A Petition has been received containing 18 signatures requesting Council to install No Parking signs on one side of Wheatsheaf Rd to allow traffic to flow through easily.

Also, it would reduce the congestion and also reduce the incidents of road rage and allow better access for emergency vehicles to get through without any problems.

Resolution

Cr Miles moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

- 1. Receives the petition, requesting Council install No Parking signs on one side of Wheatsheaf Road.**
- 2. Refers the petition requesting Council install No Parking signs on one side of Wheatsheaf Road to the Director Place and Environment for consideration and response.**

Carried

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A summary of questions and the responses provided, and items for which community statements were made is provided below. Questions submitted in writing and not asked are taken On Notice.

Public Question Time commenced at 6.52 pm.

Report 7.2 568 Sydney Road - Park Close To Home – Preliminary Community Engagement

Council received 4 questions, they were presented to Council. Three statements were presented to Council and one was taken on notice.

Question 1

Aglaia Nikas asked Council:

In regards to the impact of the east side of Staley Street. The proposal does not talk to any changes – can it be assumed that the parking and existing parking restrictions (8am to 6pm) for that side of the road remain the same?

Question 2

Will there be any changes introduced, including restrictions for Sundays?

At the request of the Mayor, Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade responded:

There are no changes proposed as a part of this project regarding parking on the east side of Staley Street. The report does not propose any changes to the parking restrictions that are already in place.

Statement 1

Voula Allimonos made the following statement:

Firstly, I would like to thank the council for purchasing the new land for a local park. A new park with trees, shade, and seats for people to pause on Sydney Road would be wonderful for the area. After speaking with lots of people about the proposal, I would like to express my support for Option 1. I believe this option offers the best outcome of having a new park and keeping carparking spots, which support local businesses and the church.

It is often difficult to find a parking spot in the street. Sydney Road is a busy commercial strip, and local businesses rely on convenient access for customers, deliveries, and visitors. Also the church is busy every day of the week. Keeping the parking spaces ensures that the park improvement does not unintentionally harm local traders, the church, medical clinics, or community activities that depend on access.

I also support the indented parking on the street, this will not only provide more spots, but present an opportunity to calm traffic and make the street safer as many cars speed through .

By introducing carpark lines, landscaping, and pedestrian-focused design, vehicle speeds can be reduced naturally. Slower traffic improves safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and families using the space. It also makes the street more comfortable and welcoming.

Option 1 achieves these important outcomes: it creates new green public space, and supports support everybody in the community.

For these reasons, I encourage Council to proceed with Option 1 as the preferred outcome but also implement indented parking lines and traffic calming on the street.

Question 3

Fr Efraim Theodoros Kourtoglou asked Council:

Why he has not received a reply to an email from the Council from last November, which related to human rights assessment undertaken for the project?

Mayor, Cr Abboud responded, there is a human rights issue that forms part of what we are discussing here, but it is much more complex than it may seem. I acknowledge that I haven't replied to an email, but I have had a conversation with you about the implications of what the consultation is seeking to determine—namely, the impacts on everyone in the community, now and into the future.

As Councillors, we have to find that balance. While we understand the importance of, and respectfully acknowledge, the input and legacy of the Greek community and the effect that changes may have on the Greek community—particularly those involved in the church—we also have obligations to the neighbours on the street who have no connection to the church. We must also consider the people who may move into the area in the future, the traders, and the community members who rely on the mental -health benefits of open space, which is why we endeavoured to purchase that piece of land in the first place.

From my perspective, I do feel that I have considered the human-rights impacts of a decision like the one we are making.

At the request of the Mayor, Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade, responded:

Staff will always assess any recommended policy or project to determine whether there is a human-rights impact associated with what is being proposed. If an impact is identified, then a more detailed assessment is undertaken.

In this case, the proposal being brought to the chamber is recommending a new park and additional parking. The initial assessment indicates that this does not negatively impact any human rights. In fact, it increases the service offering to all parts of the community. On that basis, a more detailed assessment is not required at this stage. That initial screening forms the first level of assessment.

When we move into the development of the full designs and detailed project plans, we will of course undertake much more comprehensive assessments—gender impact assessments, human-rights assessments, and other relevant analyses—once we reach the final stage leading up to implementation. But at this early stage, we do not undertake that level of detail.

Question 4

Sought detail on the outcome of the survey and the preferences of the majority of the Community?

At the request of the Mayor, Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade, responded:

We ran a very extensive consultation process on the park. We received over 2,300 pieces of feedback, including around 2,000 survey responses, as well as many in-person conversations, letters, and various other forms of feedback.

We did not run an election or a ballot asking people to choose between fixed options. Instead, we asked for feedback on that spectrum. The engagement summary attached to the Council report provides a summary all of that feedback.

The most quantitative element in the summary is the slider chart. We asked people to indicate, on a scale, what was more important to them: a larger park or more parking, how they would like us to allocate the available space. That chart is reproduced in the report, and it shows that there were spikes, a larger number of people at the extreme end who wanted all 'more parking' or all 'more park'. The remainder of responses were distributed fairly evenly across the middle, reflecting a range of views.

Statement 2

Peter Nikolakakos - Committee Vice President of St Vasilios Greek Orthodox Church Brunswick made the following statement:

Firstly, I would like to thank the Council for acquisition of the land and the proposal to create a new park on Sydney Road, complete with trees shade and amenities for the community to enjoy. I believe this will be a wonderful addition to the area and a very valuable asset that benefits the wider community.

From the moment the proposed changes to the small car-park area were first advertised, the view of the St Vasilios Greek Orthodox community—and the broader neighbourhood surrounding the parish—has been consistent: Option 1 has always been, and remains, the preferred option.

Throughout every consultation process we have participated in, the Greek Orthodox community, together with surrounding residents, has overwhelmingly supported Option 1. In addition, the proposal to remark the west side of the street into angled parking provides a number of benefits. It creates additional parking, which is desperately needed to cater for the ever-increasing demand from shoppers, visitors, and local residents. Importantly, it also increases the total number of available car spaces.

The angled-parking configuration will also create a natural traffic-calming effect along Staley Street. By effectively narrowing the roadway, it will slow traffic and contribute to a safer and more user-friendly environment for everyone who uses the area—particularly elderly community members and young families.

Our concern with Option 2 is that, although the recommended design technically provides two more parking spaces overall, it relocates half of the current Council-owned parking onto the street. This has always been a key issue for our community. Once existing off-street spaces are removed, they are effectively lost forever. Replacing them with on-street parking also introduces the possibility that these spaces could, at a future time, be converted to residential permit parking. This would place further pressure on an already limited supply of parking, to the detriment of shoppers, visitors and local residents.

Additionally, while the current Council has stated it does not intend to introduce residential parking permits in this area, there is no guarantee that future Councils will not revisit or reverse that decision.

For these reasons, I would like to reiterate that the community's clear preference is Option 1, together with the addition of angled parking on the west side of Staley Street. This approach not only increases the overall amenity of the area, but also provides an effective traffic-calming measure that makes the environment safer and more practical for everyone.

Statement 3

Andy Fergus, on behalf of Better Breese Block made the following statement:

From a Better Breese Block perspective, we are very interested in the creation of additional open space in our community. For many of us who live in apartments, public space is a key part of our daily lives. We don't spend all our time in our apartments—we spend much more time in shared public spaces as a community.

For this reason, the Daley Street project is extremely important. With the Hope Street and West Street corner space now unlikely to proceed as public open space, the opportunity to create open space on Daley Street through Council acquisition becomes even more critical.

We believe several elements of the project are particularly important:

- The length and utility of the open space, extending from Stanley Street to Sydney Road, which would provide greater flexibility and opportunities for community use.
- Flexible parking arrangements, allowing remaining parking to be used for community events—such as Panini and other local activities—while still supporting traders and the church community.
- Safety improvements, especially for people crossing the road. The crossing is currently very dangerous; during site visits with councillors and members of St Cecilia, several noted how unsafe it felt.

While we support an option that delivers a larger amount of open space, we also want to acknowledge that the Greek community present tonight represents the cultural foundation of this area. They are the people who helped make this neighbourhood what it is, and they are the reason many of us newer residents were drawn to live here.

Although this project has created some adversity, it has also opened up opportunities for Better Breese Block to meet with leaders of the Greek community, which has been incredibly special. It is important that this project does not become a case of “one side versus the other.”

We have heard the key priorities of the Greek community:

- physical access
- available parking
- the ability to continue using their facilities
- safe and convenient movement across the street
- space to hold festivals and cultural events

These are just as important to us as the creation of open space.

In conclusion, we are strongly supportive of Council’s initiative. We believe it is essential to take the Greek community’s needs seriously, recognising their long-standing custodianship of the area. They built their church with their own funds, and it has been part of this neighbourhood for generations—an extraordinary contribution.

In a context where there have been two polarised positions, we encourage councillors to consider solutions that can genuinely bring both communities together.

Report 7.3 Breese Street Masterplan

Council received one statement, it was presented to Council

Statement

Andy Fergus, on behalf of Better Breese Block made the following statement:

I wanted to talk to this because it’s an important milestone in this project. A few of you would’ve seen me here quite a few years ago talking about this project when it was initially launching.

Starting in 2022 the Better Breese Block community formed around this issue, specifically around the deplorable state of Breese Street, the absence of a master plan for its transformation and the desire for the community to work closely together to deliver an outcome. As part of that process we worked closely with former Councillors [noting Crs Tapinos, Riley and Conlan] who were really important at that time in helping work with us to get the budget to allow this project to become a reality. As a community group we were interested in small scale wins along the way incremental works, but through our work with the Councillors and staff, we realised a master plan was the best way to look at the long-term transformation of the street.

I wanted to talk today to thank the Councillors and particularly the current Councillors as well as council staff in getting the project at this point. From an engagement perspective there’s being a great process of Bluesky thinking, building community literacy along the way and so now it’s coming to a point where I am the only person that is speaking to the agenda, which is a success in itself. Really what this has meant is a patient process of a community understanding opportunities for the street the testing of options and also the involvement of Melbourne University in testing biodiversity outcomes in the street.

I particularly wanted to thank Edmund Kron and Thea Roberts who are Council staff, they have been incredibly important in building trust in our community, showing what’s possible and helping us understand how the street could be transformed for the better.

From our perspective, we want to note that whether or not it was one way or two way we are happy with the outcome, so long as their objectives are achieved, which is urban greening, a safer street, pedestrian priority ensuring people of all mobility needs and vulnerable road users are able to use the safely, which as we know at the moment is very difficult.

We want to make sure that irrespective of the options as we work into the next phase of development with the team, we ensure these priorities maintained. In moving from a one-way to a two-way option, we think for us the important priorities we can achieve the same urban greening outcome across both of those, so that's an important gesture we think for the next phase to ensure that is delivered.

In conclusion I just wanted to thank you all for your support for this initiative, but also just a highlight there are lessons learned for the Activity Centre Program in this, it's important to highlight this area was upzoned about 15 years ago and it's taken until now to see a masterplan. Councils are not given the resources from the state government to do this work and it requires community initiative to push for the works after. I think there is a really good lesson in the Breese Street Block to think about how you engage with the state and advocate for budgeting to ensure that with 10 with 16 stories of that being delivered across the Neighbourhood ensures that planning for open space is done along the way. So a good outcome but some lessons for the future.

Report 7.8 Adding seats and shelters to more bus stops in the City of Merri-bek

Council received one question that was taken on notice. One statement was received, it was presented to Council.

Statement

Andrea Bunting of Walk on Merri-bek made the following statement:

The reason I became a walking advocate was I had a very serious illness, which meant I could hardly walk. I walked to recover my strength and I needed seats.

I was very lucky to live near a place where I could go to the tram stop seat and to the park seat and then back again. I then walked and walked to recover my strength.

Seats are really important because I know how vital they have been for my health. I can say it for many people, older people or people with illnesses or mobility challenges having public seating is vital, and we've had not enough of it. We have resorted to using community budget ideas to get seats because Council is not installing enough seats, particularly in our public streets. The Merri Creek was where we first had a successful community budget idea. Virtually every year people are suggesting public seats. We should not have to use the community budget ideas for this. This is some essential infrastructure that Council should fund.

About six years ago 2020, we were promised from a budget response that they would agree to install seats on an ad-hoc basis and agreed to make a business case so that it would be put in the budget. This never happened. We've been waiting six years for this.

My request is instead of saying we will fund public seating upgrades out of the existing budget allocation, which is clearly in adequate, is to make a specific budget item. We suggest \$100,000 per year, every year, ongoing so that you can roll out seats on bus stops and on walking routes and everywhere where it's important for us older folk to get around and keep our physical health.

Report 7.9 2026 Annual and Winter Sports Ground Tenancy Allocations

Council received three questions, one was taken on notice. Council received three statements, one was taken on notice.

Statement 1

Clare Brazenor made the following statement

As a parent of an Oak Park Football Club player and a local community member, I am concerned about the 2026 Winter Oval Allocation.

Oak Park Football Club has been allocated a second oval at ATC Cook Reserve in Glenroy, a 10-minute drive (20-minute round trip) from the club's home ground, despite nearby ovals within walking distance having available capacity.

For many families, this 2026 winter oval allocation creates unnecessary logistical and financial pressure. Training that was previously within walking distance at JP Fawkner Reserve will now require regular car trips between suburbs, adding fuel costs and making it harder for families already juggling work, school schedules, and multiple children in sport.

This allocation is difficult to understand when nearby ovals have been allocated to much smaller, school-affiliated clubs. It also appears inconsistent with Council's Fair Access Policy.

Oak Park Football Club, operating from JP Fawkner Reserve East Oval, had 17 teams playing in 2025, including dedicated girls' and women's teams from Under-10s through to seniors. JP Fawkner Reserve East oval is significantly over-utilised.

By comparison:

- Therry Penola, a senior-only school-affiliated club at JP Fawkner Reserve West Oval, had only 3 teams in 2025 and runs no junior programs at this oval. JP Fawkner Reserve West oval is significantly underutilised.
- St Francis, a junior-only school-affiliated club at Oak Park Reserve North Oval, also had only 3 teams in 2025. Oak Park Reserve ovals are significantly underutilised.

Given that these grounds are all within walking distance, it is difficult to understand why the largest community football club is required to travel 10 minutes to another suburb for oval access while nearby ovals, allocated to significantly smaller-school affiliated clubs, remain underutilised.

This allocation also raises environmental concerns.

Merri-bek Council has committed to reducing emissions and encouraging residents to access local facilities without unnecessary car travel as part of its net-zero commitments. Requiring Oak Park families to drive to Glenroy when suitable ovals exist nearby is inconsistent with these goals.

Each training session and game will now involve additional car trips between Oak Park and Glenroy. Over a full season, this adds up to significant avoidable travel, fuel use, and carbon emissions. A simple back-of-the-envelope estimate shows that a 20-minute return urban car trip, taken over a 13-week season by one football team, produces close to one tonne of carbon emissions - roughly the amount that would require 40 trees to offset.

Allocating the nearby and available ovals to Oak Park Football Club would keep training local, cut travel, reduce costs for families, and prevent unnecessary carbon emissions.

Question 1

Given that JP Fawkner Reserve West and Oak Park Reserve ovals are underutilised, and that the allocation decisions are not aligned with the Fair Access Policy or environmental considerations, will Council re-assess the 2026 Winter Oval Allocations to ensure they are fair, practical, and environmentally responsible?

At the request of the Mayor, Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community responded:

In November and December 2025, Council Recreation officers met with representatives from the Oak Park Football Club to discuss their training needs for the upcoming season.

In late January, officers also met with the President of the Oak Park Junior Football Club and continued discussions with the club ahead of the seasonal ground allocations closing.

As part of these discussions, officers identified several potential options or additional training space, including Oak Park West, JP Fawkner West and ATC Cook for various nights, alongside the club's existing use of JP Fawkner East.

Oak Park Football Club included these options in their initial application through the seasonal ground allocation process which closed at the end of February 2026.

Following further discussions about ground availability, the club chose not to proceed with Oak Park West and JP Fawkner West and instead confirmed their interest in using ATC Cook for additional training nights. The proposed allocation was confirmed with the club on 18 February, pending Council approval through this report tonight.

Question Time Extension

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Davidson seconded -

That Public Question Time be extended by 30 minutes at 7.21 pm.

Carried

Statement 2

Kate Lamont made the following statement

Oak Park Football Club operates from JP Fawkner Reserve East and fielded 17 teams in 2025, including 13 junior teams, 4 dedicated girls teams, 1 senior women's team, and 115 Auskick participants. The club is also a Women & Girls Chartered Club, demonstrating a commitment to providing inclusive and accessible football pathways for girls and women.

The home oval at JP Fawkner Reserve East is currently used 20–21 hours per week, well above Council's 11–15 hour sustainable usage benchmark. As a result, the surface deteriorates significantly during the winter season, creating documented safety concerns for players, volunteers and visitors.

Just 15 metres away, JP Fawkner Reserve West is allocated to Therry Penola Football Club, a seniors-only club that fielded just three teams in 2025. The oval is used only 5–6 hours per week, well below the same benchmark, and no junior teams train or play there.

Despite this clear imbalance in participation and usage, Council has allocated ATC Cook Reserve, a 10-minute drive away, to accommodate Oak Park's 2026 winter oval needs.

This decision separates teams from their home facilities, forces families to travel between venues for games and training, and places unnecessary logistical pressure on parents managing children across multiple teams and age groups. It also creates additional travel costs for families during a cost-of-living crisis and increases the burden on the volunteers who run the club.

Question 2

Why has Council allocated Oak Park Football Club to ATC Cook Reserve, a 10-minute drive away, instead of addressing the under-utilisation of JP Fawkner Reserve West just 15 metres from the club's home ground at JP Fawkner Reserve East?

At the request of the Mayor, Eamonn Fennesy, Director Community responded:

As per early response, the Director Community reiterated Council worked with the club who advised that ATC Cook was the preferred ground that they wanted allocated. They were offered Oak Park West and JP Fawkner but chose ATC Cook. If you are happy to talk to your club in more depth about that, we're happy to have another look at it.

Report 7.10 Visible Solar Energy Systems in Heritage Overlay

Council received one statement, it was presented to Council.

Statement

Ian Mack made the following statement:

Solar panels are not a risk to heritage value and can contribute to its conservation.

A key purpose of heritage protection is to maintain heritage fabric - solar panels are not a risk to the fabric. In older houses it is also likely that the roofing material may not be original. Indeed solar panels are easy to upgrade and remove.

Renewable energy by reducing energy costs and increasing reliability (eg in heatwaves) enables people to better maintain their homes. In the context of a Declared Climate Emergency all steps to mitigate climate change are to be encouraged. Publicly visible solar does just that.

It also helps people to live comfortably in older homes because energy costs are reduced

By reducing climate change, renewable energy helps prevent climate disasters such as heat waves, fires, floods and droughts, all of which increase risks to heritage buildings and zones (including natural environments) as well as to people.

Merri-Bek currently has relatively low rates of rooftop solar. Council should be removing barriers to rooftop solar, in line with its commitment to Zero Carbon and its climate emergency commitments.

Council officers state the current system is not deterring people from installing solar because permit applications are low. However, on the face of it, this does not make sense and could mean the opposite - that people are reluctant to go through the permit application process and are therefore not installing solar. We are aware this occurs in some cases.

Officers also claim that enforcement is infrequent, however we are aware of a case where a resident has encountered enforcement from installing a significant number of panels. This resident is a renewable energy expert, former Young Australian of the Year, and founder of Beyond Zero Emissions. This is the type of demonstration project which can inspire Merri-bek households.

Overall we support removing permit requirements (except where there is an extraordinary need for special measures to maintain heritage fabric, which should be a pro-active process of support for correct installation rather than a negative process) We also support having a moratorium on enforcement during the process.

Wide and genuine consultation with stakeholders, including the solar industry and community groups should be an integral part of the examination of this issue during the moratorium.

Report 7.13 Financial Management Report for the period ended 31 January 2026

Council received one statement, it was presented to Council.

Statement

Stephanie Vear made the following statement:

Statement in support of extending the Brunswick baths which is often very crowded at peak times, limiting members' ability to train and train safely. Often long wait times for machines, dodging people lifting weights and no floor space to stretch afterwards as the dedicated space is tiny and always full. Northcote membership fees are less than Brunswick Baths membership fees, and they have a whole new facility.

Notice of Motion 8.1 – Advocacy piece for the Level Crossing Removal Project

Council received one question and one statement. They were presented to Council.

Statement

Jack Amanatidis made the following statement:

It is very important that we have a genuine consultation process. We've spoken about human rights. We've spoken about consultation. I don't think we had a proper consultation process for the actual level crossing removal in Brunswick. My understanding is that there's an EES—an Environmental Effects Statement that the Minister is considering at the moment.

I've been around for 40 years. I ran for Council over 20–25 years ago. Nothing should ever be considered "safe"—whether you're Liberal, Labor or Greens. It should never happen in politics. You should never say a Council seat is safe.

We heard earlier tonight about the need for genuine consultation processes, and I don't think the level crossing removal authority in Brunswick is genuine.

We voted in 2018 expecting change. It's been nearly eight to ten years, and I haven't seen it. I'm talking about major issues—major changes—in Brunswick.

Question

If a decision is already made why have not "All 3 Options" – 1-Underground Tunnel – 2 – Trench – 3 – Overhead Sky Rail been considered during the Consultative Process for this project?

Mayor, Cr Abboud responded, last time I was on Council, as a Green, there was a project undertaken by Council on the State Government's Level Crossing Removal Project to remove those stations. Council got together and produced a piece of work that looked at trenching or elevated rail. What we decided back then, and some Councillors will remember this, is that an all of line solution was our priority: do the whole thing in one fell swoop, go up at Park Street and come down just after Batman Station. That piece of work still exists somewhere.

Your point about consultation is very relevant and important, and we've been working hard to improve how we consult with communities. I believe we have improved, but this is a State Government project, and we have to hold tightly to the reins so that we can ensure we protect the fabric of the community that exists around here while those changes are made.

From my perspective I remember us discussing it when we knew the project was coming and considering what we thought was the best idea, and we presented that outcome to the State Government at the time.

At the request of the Mayor, Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade, responded:

As this is a State Government project, Council can only advocate and request and suggest. There was consultation undertaken with the original level crossing proposals, and Council did go through a consultation process, brought the matter to the chamber, and adopted an advocacy position.

Ultimately, my understanding is that Council did support the elevated rail option that the State was proceeding with, on the basis that it was a better outcome for the community than not having the level crossing removed at all. However, Council cannot make the final decision on what the State will deliver.

NON-AGENDA ITEMS - QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Council received a further three questions that were taken on notice relating to:

- Parking enforcement and use of dashboard cameras
- Footpath accessibility

Public Question Time concluded at 7.47 pm.

ITEM TO BE TABLED UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020

In accordance with section 147(4) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, a copy of the Arbiter's determination and statement of reasons in the matter of Cr Oscar Yildiz and Cr Jay Iwasaki was tabled for recording in the Minutes of this meeting.

COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1 CENTRAL COBURG PROGRAM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Executive summary

Council undertook a six-week public engagement program from 6 November to 18 December 2025 to hear feedback from community and stakeholders on the draft framework for central Coburg (the draft plan), known as 'Coburg is here'.

The draft plan follows extensive testing of a range of scenarios, and balances the community's and Council's aspirations to:

- Create more jobs and a thriving economy in central Coburg.
- Deliver great design and built form with a vibrant, aesthetically appealing streetscape and identify for Coburg.
- Create beautiful and inviting new parks and open spaces for the community.
- Improve and redistribute public car parks, roads, and pedestrian access to make sure central Coburg is convenient and accessible.
- Provide diverse housing choices for families and other future Coburg residents and contribute to closing Merri-bek's social housing gap.
- Deliver a financially sustainable outcome where revenue from the development funds the delivery of public infrastructure (including open space, community infrastructure, roads, drainage and public realm), as well as enabling the provision of social and affordable housing options.

Community members were encouraged to provide feedback on the themes of the draft framework including open space, housing, access and movement, and the mix of community and commercial spaces proposed in the draft framework.

Council raised awareness of the draft plan by delivering over 1,000 postcards to local residents, door knocking, letters to businesses, social media and media posts.

A range of engagement methods and promotional techniques were used to encourage Merri-bek's diverse communities to participate. These included online polls and surveys, pop-ups, drop-ins, visits to local businesses, roundtable conversations and stakeholder meetings.

Council received over 1,300 feedback contributions which have been analysed and synthesised into a comprehensive engagement summary report (Attachment 2). A diverse range of feedback was received from both public participants and private stakeholder meetings.

Throughout the engagement program Council heard a wide range of views that both aligned with and diverged from the draft concept.

Across the range of feedback channels, there was general support for key outcomes including:

- A greener, livelier, cleaner precinct with a diversity of retail
- Ensuring new buildings and urban design meet high quality standards
- Spaces for community organisations and artists in the precinct
- The new library and piazza, and
- Continued engagement with impacted stakeholders including local businesses and adjacent property owners.

There were also areas where there were more divergent views, particularly in relation to:

- the provision, design and management of traffic and car parking, and
- the amount and type of new housing.

The engagement program has helped Council understand that generally, the draft framework plan balances the issues that are important for the community. However, there are areas of further investigation that Council should pursue to implement a project which delivers the best outcomes for the community.

After consideration of the above feedback received from community and stakeholders, the following high-level areas for further investigation have been identified:

- Continue to engage with highly impacted stakeholders
- Review the approach to public parking provision and distribution
- Review the provision of commercial, retail and community use to diversify retail and create affordable spaces for a vibrant community
- Develop design standards to ensure high quality building and urban design outcomes
- Identify preferred bicycle routes and locations for bicycle parking
- Explore opportunities for increased greening in the precinct
- Further thinking on the layout of the streets and managing traffic impacts
- Continue to test and refine the mix of social, affordable and market housing
- Carefully plan out construction and staging to minimise impacts on neighbours, and
- Continue to test and refine building height and car parking provision feasibility modelling.

During the period that the Coburg is Here framework was being developed and consultation undertaken, the State government has been undertaking a wide range of reforms to the planning system. This includes changing settings in Activity Centres including Coburg. These changes have occurred rapidly and will also need to be considered.

The investigation areas identified above, along with updated State policy settings and the full set of feedback received from the community and stakeholders will inform updates to the framework plan to bring the plan to life.

Council is continuing to work with stakeholders to understand their views and explore potential updates. An updated framework plan is planned to be presented to Council in the coming months.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Thanks the many community members, local businesses and stakeholder organisations who provided feedback on the draft concept for Coburg and the draft framework for central Coburg in late 2025.
2. Notes the feedback provided during the engagement in the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2).
3. Publishes the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2) on Council's Conversations Merri-bek page.
4. Receives an updated central Coburg framework plan following community feedback in the coming months.

Motion

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Abboud seconded -

That Council:

1. Thanks the many community members, local businesses and stakeholder organisations who provided feedback on the draft concept for Coburg and the draft framework for central Coburg in late 2025.
2. Notes the feedback provided during the engagement in the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2).
3. Publishes the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2) on Council's Conversations Merri-bek page.
4. Receives an updated central Coburg framework plan following community feedback in the coming months.

Amendment

Cr Politis moved, Cr Theodosis seconded -

That Council:

1. Thanks the many community members, local businesses and stakeholder organisations who provided feedback on the draft concept for Coburg and the draft framework for central Coburg in late 2025.
2. Notes the feedback provided during the engagement in the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2).
3. Publishes the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2) on Council's Conversations Merri-bek page
4. Abandon the 8 story tower immediately opposite the Orthodox church and redistribute height to other parts of the precinct. This land can be reserved for future community need as the precinct grows, including open space, community uses, including artist spaces and services.
5. Receives an updated central Coburg framework plan following community feedback in the coming months.

Cr Bolton called for a division.

For	Against	Abstain
Cr Davidson	Cr Pulford	Cr Bolton
Cr Miles	Cr Svensson	
Cr Politis	Cr Iwasaki	
Cr Theodosis	Cr Abboud	
	Cr Irvin	
Total For (4)	Total Against (5)	Total Abstain (1)

Lost

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Abboud seconded -

That Council:

1. **Thanks the many community members, local businesses and stakeholder organisations who provided feedback on the draft concept for Coburg and the draft framework for central Coburg in late 2025.**

2. **Notes the feedback provided during the engagement in the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2).**
3. **Publishes the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2) on Council's Conversations Merri-bek page.**
4. **Receives an updated central Coburg framework plan following community feedback in the coming months.**

Carried unanimously

7.2 568 SYDNEY ROAD - PARK CLOSE TO HOME – PRELIMINARY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to present the outcomes of recent community engagement to Council and to seek endorsement of a schematic design identifying the proposed site layout for the Park Close to Home at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.

In January 2025, Council purchased a site at 568 Sydney Road through Open Space Reserve funds with the intention of delivering a new 'Park Close to Home' project.

The program aims to address open space gaps in high-density precincts, ensuring all residents live within 300 metres of a park. A new Park Close to Home in this location will reduce high priority gap areas in the open space network, as identified in the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy 2024.

In November 2025, Council began conversations with the community to better understand their aspirations for the new park. Over the 6-week engagement period, 2,073 survey responses and hundreds of in-person and email feedback points were received, providing clear insight into our community's priorities. The feedback highlighted that both public open spaces and access to public carparking are very important to our community. Community members also shared their preferred features for the future park, with the highest priorities including shade, places to sit, native planting and safe lighting.

Based on this consultation feedback, Council's designers have developed a schematic design option that balances the priorities of the community including the importance of carparking provision and maximising green space. The schematic design will result in both more public car parking and a larger park. By reorganising parking along the street, more public and accessible parking delivered for the local area, as well as a 1,550 square metre new park.

The parking provision will ensure that current numbers of timed public access parking will be retained and increased. Some on-street parking will be signed to prevent longer stay parking by vehicles with residential permits. The numbers of parking spaces available to residents and traders will be unchanged. An additional accessible space will also be created. Council's endorsement is sought on a schematic design, enabling work to move forward on a full concept design for the project.

Council has been successful in securing a State Government Pick My Park grant of \$250,000 to help fund the delivery of the park. Initial budget estimates for the park are in the order of \$1.1 million – with a simple green open space model intended. Park works will be funded through the Open Space Reserve. Minor works proposed on Staley Street including line marking and transport safety improvements are estimated at approximately \$30,000 and will be funded through Council's Capital Works Program. Costings will be refined during the design process.

Subject to Council's endorsement of the schematic design, work will progress to develop a concept design for the new park. Community engagement on the draft concept design is planned for later in 2026, with construction anticipated to begin in 2027.

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the community engagement report on options for the new park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.
2. Endorses the schematic design for 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick (Image 3 in this report).
3. Endorses the approach to report back to the community, including the schematic design being publicly available on Conversations Merri-bek.
4. Receives a future report on the results of a second round of community engagement, with a recommended concept design for endorsement.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the community engagement report on options for the new park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.**
2. **Endorses the schematic design for 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick (Image 3 in this report), with any future changes to parking on Staley St to come back to council for a decision.**
3. **Endorses the approach to report back to the community, including the schematic design being publicly available on Conversations Merri-bek.**
4. **Receives a future report on the results of a second round of community engagement, with a recommended concept design for endorsement.**
5. **Explore further traffic calming measures for Staley Street.**

Cr Iwasaki called for a division.

For

Cr Bolton
Cr Davidson
Cr Pulford
Cr Svensson
Cr Iwasaki
Cr Abboud
Cr Irvin

Total For (7)

Against

Cr Miles
Cr Politis
Cr Theodosius

Total Against (3)

Carried

- 8.38 pm Cr Bolton left the meeting.
8.38 pm Cr Miles left the meeting.
8.38 pm Cr Theodosius left the meeting.
8.39 pm Cr Politis left the meeting.
8.39 pm Cr Miles returned to the meeting.
8.39 pm Cr Theodosius returned to the meeting.

Having declared a conflict of interest in Report 7.3, Cr Irvin left the meeting at 8.39 pm.

7.3 BREESE STREET MASTERPLAN

Executive summary

The Breese Street Masterplan arose following a community campaign for improvements to the street following a period of rapid urbanisation and poor-quality road asset condition. Budget was allocated in the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years to undertake concept designs and community engagement to make improvements to the street.

In November 2024, Council asked the community for their lived experiences of Breese Street. The findings from this round of community engagement were used to produce two concept designs. These concept designs were consulted during September-October 2025. Option 1, which featured a one way south bound treatment and Option 2 featuring a central shared zone around Bulleke-bek Park were presented. A total of 226 people completed the survey, providing feedback on the two concept designs. Both concept designs were well received by the community.

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1) detailing the methodology and finding of the second round of community engagement on the Breese Street Masterplan.
2. Endorses Option Two – Central Shared Zone for detailed design for the Breese Street Masterplan, with minor changes based off community engagement.
3. Authorises the CEO to make minor changes to the proposed design subject to detailed design and coordination with the Level Crossing Removal Project.
4. Endorses the Parking Plan (Attachment 2) to introduce new parking conditions in Breese Street prior to construction of capital works improvements along Breese Street.
5. Notes that delivery of the capital works be aligned with the construction of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.

Resolution

Cr Iwasaki moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1) detailing the methodology and finding of the second round of community engagement on the Breese Street Masterplan.**
2. **Endorses Option Two – Central Shared Zone for detailed design for the Breese Street Masterplan, with minor changes based off community engagement.**
3. **Notes that proceeding with Option Two as a first stage does not preclude possible future consideration of Option 1 (subject to State government consultation and Council decision making) at a later date.**
4. **Authorises the CEO to make minor changes to the proposed design subject to detailed design and coordination with the Level Crossing Removal Project.**
4. **Endorses the Parking Plan (Attachment 2) to introduce new parking conditions in Breese Street prior to construction of capital works improvements along Breese Street.**

5. Notes that delivery of the capital works be aligned with the construction of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.

8.40 pm Cr Politis returned to the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

7.4 DRAFT LIBRARY STRATEGY 2026-2031

Executive Summary

The previous Library Services Strategy was developed in 2019 and required updating to reflect the existing needs and community aspirations for Merri-bek Libraries.

Following extensive community consultation, staff engagement, benchmarking and research in 2025, a draft Library Services Strategy 2026-2031 has been developed to guide positive outcomes at Merri-bek Libraries across the coming five years.

The draft Library Services Strategy 2026 – 2031 has four overarching aims that align with community expectations and will form the basis of annual operational plans for the library service from July 2026:

- Welcoming places: Merri-bek Libraries are welcoming, flexible and inclusive places for everyone in the community.
- Inspiring collections: Our collections inform, inspire and entertain, evolving to meet the changing needs and interests of the community
- Community connections: Programs and services provide more opportunities to create, celebrate, learn and connect at the library.
- Contemporary library service: Library staff reflect our diverse community, and are trained to provide an excellent, tailored service to the Merri-bek community.

Officer Recommendation

That Council endorses the draft Library Services Strategy 2026-2031 for public exhibition in March and April 2026.

Resolution

Cr Miles moved, Cr Theodosis seconded -

That Council endorses the draft Library Services Strategy 2026-2031 for public exhibition in March and April 2026 with wording in the document to indicate that Merri-bek libraries do not intend to adopt the model of unstaffed library hours. In addition that under the heading “Contemporary Library services”, one of the actions to read “Opening hours reflect community expectations, including for staffed library opening hours”.

8.42 pm Cr Irvin returned to the meeting during the debate.

8.42 pm Cr Bolton returned to the meeting during the debate.

8.44 pm Cr Pulford left the meeting during the debate.

8.45 pm Cr Pulford returned to the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

7.5 ART AND HISTORY AT THE BRUNSWICK TOWN HALL

Executive Summary

Brunswick Town Hall has the potential for increased usage, especially considering its central location and vital services which include Brunswick Library, Counihan Gallery and Council Customer Service.

This report proposes low-key activation opportunities to increase awareness and usage of the building, including creating a welcoming entrance, providing much-needed artists' spaces, and improving the look and amenity of the main foyer. Much of the work can be delivered within operational budgets.

Planning to increase community spaces at Brunswick Library and co-locate the Council Customer Service will begin in 2027 as part of planning for capital works in subsequent years; an expansion of the Counihan Gallery will be explored once the critical library project is established. Increased opportunities to celebrate heritage will be investigated as part of the planning for the Brunswick Library works.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes that expansion of the Brunswick Library will be considered in 2027, including possible relocation of town hall customer service functions to within the library.
2. Notes that any potential expansion of the Counihan Gallery will occur following the library redevelopment.
3. Notes that a future report will be presented to Council in 2027 that considers how through the Library renewal, future Counihan Gallery expansion or a public art outcome, Council could formally recognise and acknowledge local activists and artists who have made a significant contribution to Brunswick over time
4. Endorses the following activations of the Brunswick Town Hall that can be achieved within current resources and will commence in 2026:
 - a) A public art commission to create a welcoming appearance for the Town Hall.
 - b) Increased marketing of the Brunswick Town Hall as a venue for hire.
 - c) Improvements to the amenity of the foyer.
 - d) Provision of time-limited artist residencies in offices.
5. Endorses further activation of Brunswick Town Hall through:
 - a) Creation of new pop-up exhibition spaces and programming in the Brunswick Town Hall foyer.
 - b) Performing artists residency in the town hall.
6. Refers the financial implications of this report of up to \$73,000, year 1 and up to \$32,000 ongoing, to the 2026-2030 budget process for consideration.

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes that expansion of the Brunswick Library will be considered in 2027, including possible relocation of town hall customer service functions to within the library.**
2. **Notes that any potential expansion of the Counihan Gallery will occur following the library redevelopment.**

3. **Notes that a future report will be presented to Council in 2027 that considers how through the Library renewal, future Counihan Gallery expansion or a public art outcome, Council could formally recognise and acknowledge local activists and artists who have made a significant contribution to Brunswick over time**
4. **Endorses the following activations of the Brunswick Town Hall that can be achieved within current resources and will commence in 2026:**
 - a) **A public art commission to create a welcoming appearance for the Town Hall.**
 - b) **Increased marketing of the Brunswick Town Hall as a venue for hire.**
 - c) **Improvements to the amenity of the foyer.**
 - d) **Provision of time-limited artist residencies in offices.**
5. **Endorses further activation of Brunswick Town Hall through:**
 - a) **Creation of new pop-up exhibition spaces and programming in the Brunswick Town Hall foyer.**
 - b) **Performing artists residency in the town hall.**
6. **Refers the financial implications of this report of up to \$73,000, year 1 and up to \$32,000 ongoing, to the 2026-2030 budget process for consideration.**

Carried

8.55 pm *Cr Svensson left the meeting.*

ALTER THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

With the agreement of Council, the order of business was altered so that Council Report 7.9 was brought forward for consideration.

7.9 2026 ANNUAL AND WINTER SPORTS GROUND TENANCY ALLOCATIONS

Executive Summary

Council is committed to providing a diverse range of active sport and recreation opportunities and associated facilities to support participation and a healthy and active community.

In the past year, the Merri-bek sporting community has experienced significant growth in participation, with greater numbers than previous years. This has been particularly evident within Football (Soccer). This winter season, Merri-bek will hold a significant number of local sporting teams across the grounds and pavilions. In total, 468 junior teams will compete, including 178 girls' teams, demonstrating the continued growth in female participation.

At the senior level, 148 senior teams will take the field, including 66 women's teams, reflecting the ongoing strength and expansion of women's sport across the municipality.

Council's revised Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions Policy 2025/26 guides the annual and seasonal allocation of sporting grounds and pavilions to clubs through a tenancy agreement. In line with the Policy, facilities are allocated to clubs with sound governance structures, open membership for men, women and juniors, and a demonstrated commitment to social responsibility, including participation in club development programs.

This year, officers began working with winter clubs on championing gender equity and fair access pathways by assisting clubs obtaining 50 per cent or above representation of women, girls, or gender diverse people on Committee/Board and/or Leadership roles (*implemented from September 2024*).

There were 31 annual and seasonal tenancy applications received from clubs.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Allocates sports grounds and pavilions for the 2026 annual and winter season to the clubs shown in Attachment 1 to this report.
2. Authorises the Director Community to make any necessary changes to the allocation of facilities for the 2026 annual and winter season if required and to inform Council of any changes.
3. Notes any club owing ground and pavilion fees from previous seasons, or owing any other debt to Council, will be informed that no ground allocation will be granted until payment is made, or a payment plan has been agreed to.
4. Notes current junior and female participation levels at sports clubs contained within this 2026 Annual and Winter Sports Ground Tenancy Allocations Report.

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Politis seconded -

That Council:

1. **Allocates sports grounds and pavilions for the 2026 annual and winter season to the clubs shown in Attachment 1 to this report.**
2. **Authorises the Director Community to make any necessary changes to the allocation of facilities for the 2026 annual and winter season if required and to inform Council of any changes.**
3. **Notes any club owing ground and pavilion fees from previous seasons, or owing any other debt to Council, will be informed that no ground allocation will be granted until payment is made, or a payment plan has been agreed to.**
4. **Notes current junior and female participation levels at sports clubs contained within this 2026 Annual and Winter Sports Ground Tenancy Allocations Report.**

Carried unanimously

8.56 pm Cr Svensson returned to the meeting.

7.6 RAMADAN NIGHTS AT BONWICK STREET FAWKNER

Executive Summary

This report responds to Council's 12 November 2025 resolution (Item 8.2) to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Ramadan Nights event in Fawkner, including site suitability, delivery requirements, engagement opportunities and funding options.

Benchmarking of comparable events across Melbourne and Sydney demonstrates that large-scale, multi-night street closures require significant financial investment, extensive traffic management and substantial operational resourcing. Given Bonwick Street's narrow road reserve, high parking demand and residential interface, this model is not viable.

Community-led activations delivered within defined sites or venues present a more proportionate and financially sustainable approach. This model reduces traffic and amenity impacts, manages risk more effectively, and allows Council to adopt an enabling, rather than lead, role.

Officers recommend a pilot community-led Ramadan activation in February-March 2027, selected by an Expression of Interest process in July 2026, and supported by \$50,000 seed funding (subject to consideration through the 2026/27 budget process). Council would provide permit coordination and officer support and waive Council permit fees.

The pilot would be evaluated with findings informing future consideration for an ongoing annual activation.

This approach enables cultural celebration and social cohesion outcomes while maintaining financial sustainability and managing operational risk.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the feasibility assessment and benchmarking of comparable Ramadan events undertaken as part of investigating the establishment of a 'Ramadan Nights' event in Bonwick Street, Fawkner (Attachment 1).
2. Supports the delivery of a pilot Ramadan community festival program in 2026/27 as a community-led event, with the service delivery selection to be determined through an expression of interest process in July 2026.
3. Requests officers to assess the feasibility of waiving applicable Council permit fees and charges associated with the event.
4. Refers \$50,000 to support delivery of a community-led Ramadan festival in 2027 to the 2026/27 Council budget process for consideration.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the feasibility assessment and benchmarking of comparable Ramadan events undertaken as part of investigating the establishment of a 'Ramadan Nights' event in Bonwick Street, Fawkner (Attachment 1).**
2. **Supports the delivery of a pilot Ramadan community festival program in 2026/27 as a community-led event, with the service delivery selection to be determined through an expression of interest process in July 2026.**
3. **Requests officers to assess the feasibility of waiving applicable Council permit fees and charges associated with the event.**
4. **Refers \$50,000 to support delivery of a community-led Ramadan festival in 2027 to the 2026/27 Council budget process for consideration.**
5. **Include and consider as part of the festival schedule, Ramadan Nights.**

8.57 pm Cr Miles left the meeting during the debate.

8.58 pm Cr Miles returned to the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

7.7 ADDENDUM TO THE COBURG NORTH MASTERPLAN ZONE 2

Executive Summary

The Commonwealth Government has now approved Merri-bek City Council's variation request to adjust the scope of the Coburg North Athletics Gym and Conditioning Centre project within the short-term development plan of the Coburg North Masterplan. This approval follows significant and mandatory changes issued by Melbourne Water, whose updated flood planning advice requires a minimum finished floor level of 43.9m AHD approximately 1 metre higher than the current gym design. Melbourne Water has confirmed that no exemptions to the required freeboard will be granted.

Complying with this new requirement would have necessitated substantial architectural redesign, new planning approvals, major cost increases, long-term accessibility issues, and a high likelihood of delays and budget overruns. As a result, Council sought a variation to deliver the Athletics Track remediation in the short-term and moving the Gym to the long-term vision.

With the Commonwealth now having endorsed this revised approach, Council is requested to formally adopt the adjusted project scope within the masterplan timeline. Track remediation is a priority short-term action in the endorsed Coburg North Masterplan and offers a more feasible, cost-effective and wider community-beneficial outcome.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the revised project scope for the Coburg North Athletics Precinct, (Zone 2) with attached signed deed of variation from the federal government.
2. Notes strong sport stakeholder support from Coburg Little Athletics Centre and the Coburg Athletics Grounds Management.
3. Notes that the Gym and Conditioning Centre component will be incorporated into the long-term vision and funding model outlined in the Coburg North Masterplan, consistent with strategic planning and future precinct development sequencing.
4. Notes that the variation was required due to updated mandatory flood planning requirements issued by Melbourne Water, which rendered the gym design unfeasible without substantial redesign, cost escalation and significant project delays.

Resolution

Cr Politis moved, Cr Bolton seconded -

That Council:

1. **Endorses the revised project scope for the Coburg North Athletics Precinct, (Zone 2) with attached signed deed of variation from the federal government.**
2. **Notes strong sport stakeholder support from Coburg Little Athletics Centre and the Coburg Athletics Grounds Management.**
3. **Notes that the Gym and Conditioning Centre component will be incorporated into the long-term vision and funding model outlined in the Coburg North Masterplan, consistent with strategic planning and future precinct development sequencing.**
4. **Notes that the variation was required due to updated mandatory flood planning requirements issued by Melbourne Water, which rendered the gym design unfeasible without substantial redesign, cost escalation and significant project delays.**

9.03 pm Cr Iwasaki left the meeting during the debate.
9.04 pm Cr Iwasaki returned to the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

7.8 ADDING SEATS AND SHELTERS TO MORE BUS STOPS IN THE CITY OF MERRI-BEK

Executive summary

At the October 2025 Council Meeting, Council resolved to receive a report on the status of bus shelters within the City of Merri-bek and identify actions Council can take to increase the number of seats and shelters at bus stops.

There are an estimated 653 bus stops in Merri-bek. Of these, an estimated 283 (43%) have a seat or shelter. While bus seating and shelters are a State responsibility, Merri-bek Council has in fact funded or facilitated the majority of shelters and seats in Merri-bek. The distribution of waiting areas across providers is summarised below:

- Merri-bek Council provided waiting areas: 154 (65 shelters and 89 seats) – funded and maintained by Council.
- Merri-bek Council auspiced waiting areas (delivered and maintained by JCDecaux under a contract that includes advertising rights and a fee payable to Council for the use of land by the contractor: 99 shelters
- DTP provided waiting areas (delivered and maintained for DTP by a third-party oOh!media): 26 shelters

A map of bus stops in Merri-bek and the type of waiting area facilities provided are shown in Attachment 1. These figures are estimates based on available Council asset management records and provider asset data, which contain some gaps and inconsistencies.

The installation of bus shelters and seats are primarily the responsibility of Department of Transport and Planning. However, Council has installed bus shelters and seats to cover the significant gaps in the network of State provided bus shelters and seats around Merri-bek.

Bus shelters and seats can be complex and quite costly. To manage high costs, installation is typically integrated into road reconstruction programs – particularly where extensive civil works are required. There are opportunities to accelerate delivery by prioritising installing seats at bus stops on wide footpaths that do not require preparatory concreting works. However, as bus seating and shelter delivery is a service which primarily sits with the state government, any Council investment has an opportunity cost.

Officers have commenced works to install 15 new seats near bus stops in Merri-bek. These installations will be completed in this financial year using existing transport program budget. Attachment 2 also identifies 35 additional locations where seats could be installed and will be prioritised for future years subject to availability of appropriate funding.

The report also outlines longer-term considerations, including the expiry of the JC Decaux – Merri-bek Council Bus Shelter Agreement in December 2027, and flags contract renegotiation as a potential opportunity to work with external providers to increase the number of shelters provided across the network.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes that bus stops and bus seating are a State government responsibility, but that council:
 - a) Has entered into a contract with JC Decaux for the provision, installation and maintenance of additional bus shelters and seats with advertising, and a lease amount payable to Council for the provision of the land.
 - b) Delivers public seating upgrades, including choosing to deliver seating at bus stops to meet community need that is not met by the State government, via existing budget allocations within the transport program.
2. Notes that Council is installing fifteen new seats this financial year near bus stops identified in Attachments 1 and 2, as part of the regular transport program.
3. Receives a report in early 2027 that considers:
 - a) A Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport audit for Merri-bek provided waiting areas;
 - b) Ongoing advocacy to the State government to invest in bus seating in Merri-bek; and
 - c) Procurement options following the end of Council's bus shelter contract with JCDecaux in December 2027.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes that bus stops and bus seating are a State government responsibility, but that council:**
 - a) **Has entered into a contract with JC Decaux for the provision, installation and maintenance of additional bus shelters and seats with advertising, and a lease amount payable to Council for the provision of the land.**
 - b) **Delivers public seating upgrades, including choosing to deliver seating at bus stops to meet community need that is not met by the State government, via existing budget allocations within the transport program.**
2. **Notes that Council is installing fifteen new seats this financial year near bus stops identified in Attachments 1 and 2, as part of the regular transport program.**
3. **Receives a report in early 2027 that considers:**
 - a) **A Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport audit for Merri-bek provided waiting areas;**
 - b) **Ongoing advocacy to the State government to invest in bus seating in Merri-bek; and**
 - c) **Procurement options following the end of Council's bus shelter contract with JCDecaux in December 2027.**
 - d) **Standards for bus stops on main roads with advertising which could impede sight lines for traffic entering from adjoining streets.**

9.07 pm Cr Pulford left the meeting during the debate.

9.09 pm Cr Pulford returned to the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

The order of business was altered so that Item 7.9 *2026 Annual and Winter Sports Ground Tenancy Allocations* was brought forward and considered as the sixth item.

7.10 VISIBLE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS IN HERITAGE OVERLAY

Executive Summary

This report responds to Council's Notice of Motion seeking to commence a review of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to remove planning permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay.

Council has consistently demonstrated leadership in climate action, including declaring a climate emergency and committing to Zero Carbon 2040. Supporting renewable energy uptake, including on heritage buildings, is an important part of this commitment. Visible solar energy systems can contribute to the long-term sustainability and ongoing use of heritage buildings while enabling residents to reduce emissions and energy costs.

Council has already taken proactive steps in this area. In September 2025, Council resolved to initiate Amendment C233mbek, which proposes to remove permit requirements for certain visible solar energy systems on contributory and non-contributory heritage buildings where defined siting and design criteria are met. The Amendment represents a meaningful step toward reducing regulatory barriers while continuing to appropriately manage heritage significance.

The Notice of Motion seeks to build on this work by exploring whether permit requirements could be further reduced or removed. Officers have reviewed the available planning scheme mechanisms and emerging Victorian precedents. Reform in this area is progressing, with councils adopting different models through either Heritage Overlay schedule exemptions or criteria-based incorporated documents. Planning panel outcomes in other municipalities will provide important guidance for future change.

Current permit data indicates that the existing framework is not constraining solar uptake. Applications for visible solar energy systems in the Heritage Overlay are low (approximately 6–8 per year), all applications have been approved through the VicSmart fast-track process, and enforcement matters are rare.

Officers recommend continuing the Amendment C233mbek process while establishing a pathway for further reform. A further report will be provided to Council by late 2027 outlining options to amend the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, informed by the outcomes of Amendment C233mbek, planning panel precedents and independent heritage advice.

This staged and evidence-informed approach builds on Council's climate leadership and positions Merri-bek to progress further change in this area, if required.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes that Amendment C233mbek seeks to reduce planning permit requirements for some visible solar energy systems on contributory and non-contributory heritage buildings.
2. Receives a further report by late 2027 on further options to amend the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, including the potential removal of permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay, informed by planning panel precedents, independent heritage advice and the outcomes of Amendment C233mbek.
3. Notes that consultation with Council's *Liveability Advisory Committee* will be undertaken as part of the preparation of the further report.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. Notes that Amendment C233mbek seeks to reduce planning permit requirements for some visible solar energy systems on contributory and non-contributory heritage buildings.
2. Receives a further report by late 2027 on further options to amend the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, including the potential removal of permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay, informed by planning panel precedents, independent heritage advice and the outcomes of Amendment C233mbek.
3. Notes that consultation with Council's Liveability Advisory Committee and Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee, and the Brunswick History Group and the Coburg Historical Society will be undertaken as part of the preparation of the further report.

Carried unanimously

7.11 PROPOSED SALE OF COUNCIL LAND AT THE REAR OF 436-442 SYDNEY RD COBURG

Executive summary

As a result of a series of historic road discontinuances, Council has retained ownership of a relatively small parcel of land, located at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg ('the Property'). The Property was formerly a road and now runs along the back of 4 properties fronting Sydney Road, which appear to have been encroaching on the Property since at least the 1970s.

The owner of the abutting 4 properties has expressed a desire to purchase the Property from Council and has agreed in principle to purchase it at market value, plus provide reimbursement of Council's legal and valuation fees.

The Property has been assessed by internal Council stakeholders as having no other use or obvious strategic benefit to Council, given its size, the position of the abutting road and the boundaries of the neighbouring properties.

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement from Council to commence the statutory sale process for the Property in accordance Section 114 of the *Local Government Act 2020* by publishing written notice on its website and undertaking community engagement in line with Council's community engagement policy.

Whether to proceed with the sale of the Property will be the subject of a future Council decision, following the receipt of feedback from the community on the proposal.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Declares the property at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg, formally known as Lot 2 on Plan No. TP4689V, as surplus to Council's needs.
2. In accordance with section 114 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, publishes notice of its intention to sell the property on Council's website and invites feedback from the community.

3. Receives a further report outlining any feedback received and presenting a recommendation as to whether or not to proceed with the proposed sale of the property.

Resolution

Cr Miles moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. **Declares the property at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg, formally known as Lot 2 on Plan No. TP4689V, as surplus to Council's needs.**
2. **In accordance with section 114 of the Local Government Act 2020, publishes notice of its intention to sell the property on Council's website and invites feedback from the community.**
3. **Receives a further report outlining any feedback received and presenting a recommendation as to whether or not to proceed with the proposed sale of the property.**

Carried unanimously

7.12 PROCUREMENT POLICY 2025-2029

Executive Summary

At the meeting on 8 October 2025, Council resolved to investigate the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System such as Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE) for future contracts and provides a report back to Council by December 2025.

A confidential report on *Procurement Matters* was considered in December and Council sought an additional report by March 2026.

The current Procurement Policy was adopted in June 2025. Section 4.16 of the policy states *Merri-bek City Council aims to use procurement processes to drive sustainability, using our buying power to make a difference beyond the financial value of the goods and services we purchase. We aim to contribute to a fair, inclusive, economically, environmentally and socially sustainable community for all, via our suppliers and supply chain, supporting the targets and measures established by Council...*

Merri-bek City Council recognises its obligations under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and Australia's International Human Rights treaty commitments and respects, protects and promotes human rights when making procurement decisions.

Currently suppliers are required to provide yes or no answers in relation to their compliance with:

- *Fair Work Act 2009*
- *Modern Slavery Act (Cth) 2018*

As the Supported Wage System is lawful under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, potential suppliers do not need to declare if they utilise prison industries and or an Australian Disability Enterprises.

Officers recommend a change in process that does not require a change to the Procurement Policy. Subject to Council endorsement, the public tender documentation can be amended to add a question for all suppliers above the public tender threshold. The question would be scored under the mandatory sustainability weighting. The question would ask whether the supplier is an Australian Disability Enterprise and if so, whether they utilise the Supported Wage System or pay minimum wage to employees with a disability. If the tenderer answers yes to being an Australian Disability Enterprise that utilises the Supported Wage System, this would result in the tenderer receiving a lower score (scored down) in the sustainability evaluation criteria.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability recommended that the Federal Government aim to reduce workplace segregation and achieve wage parity for people with disability by 2034.
2. Notes that no definitive information exists with respect to current Merri-bek contractors paying sub-minimum wages operating as an Australian Disability Enterprise (and whether they utilise the Supported Wage System) as documented in Confidential Attachment 1 and if sub-minimum wages are paid, this is lawful under the *Fair Work Act 2009*.
3. Notes that for future public tenders, a question will be asked about whether in the delivery of the goods or services to Merri-bek, employees are paid sub-minimum wages under an Australian Disability Enterprise, and that scoring guidance for evaluation panels will specify that if the answer is yes, a reduced score will apply to the mandatory social sustainability criterion in the assessment.
4. Notes that no change to the Procurement Policy is required to implement the change in practice outlined at paragraph 2.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability recommended that the Federal Government aim to reduce workplace segregation and achieve wage parity for people with disability by 2034.**
2. **Notes that no definitive information exists with respect to current Merri-bek contractors paying sub-minimum wages operating as an Australian Disability Enterprise (and whether they utilise the Supported Wage System) as documented in Confidential Attachment 1 and if sub-minimum wages are paid, this is lawful under the Fair Work Act 2009.**
3. **Authorises an amendment to section 4.17 (Compliance Requirements) of the Procurement Policy to add another exclusion under ‘other compliance items’ to be Australian Disability Enterprises who confirm they utilise the Supported Wage System to pay subminimum wages for any future procurement activities undertaking a formal request for quote or request for tender process.**
4. **Notes that the amendment at section 4.17 is to apply only to future procurement and that no ongoing monitoring of suppliers will be undertaken.**

9.20 pm Cr Yildiz entered the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

7.13 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 JANUARY 2026

This report presents the Financial Management Report for the financial year to date period ending 31 January 2026. A detailed financial review was undertaken across the organisation at the end of December 2025. The results of this review are included in this report as the Annual Forecast.

For the seven months ended 31 January 2026 an operating surplus of \$102.5 million was achieved, which is \$0.2 million lower than the year-to-date (YTD) budget. As set out in the issues section of this report, operating surplus funds do not convert to immediately available cash to Council. The accounting surplus includes items such as non-cash contributions, capital grants and is used to fund items such as loan repayments, the rates funded capital works program and transfers (savings) via reserves.

Council has spent \$26.1 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking below the YTD budget of \$37.1 million. After the detailed review of the program undertaken at the end of December, a total program of \$80.1 million is forecast, with \$53.9 million remaining.

Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 January 2026, at Attachment 1 to this report.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Pulford seconded -

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 January 2026, at Attachment 1 to this report.

Carried unanimously

7.14 GOVERNANCE REPORT - MARCH 2026 - CYCLICAL 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 Advisory Committees and Groups.
- The Arts Advisory Committee's recommendation to purchase the art work as listed in the officer recommendation.
- Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.
- Proposed topics for the Municipal Association Victoria State Council meeting in May 2026.
- Proposed topics for the Australian Local Government Association, National General Assembly in June 2026.
- Proposed nominations for Mayor and selected Councillors to attend the Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly in June 2026.
- The Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report.

- A revocation of the Council endorsed Management of Mobile and Temporary Food Premises Policy noting guidelines have been implemented to replace the provision of this process.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from Advisory Committees at Attachment 1 to this report, as follows:
 - a) First Peoples Advisory Committee held 5 February 2026
 - b) Friends of Aileu Community Committee held 10 February 2026
 - c) Arts Advisory Committee held 17 February 2026
2. Endorses the recommendation of the Arts Advisory Committee meeting held 17 February 2026 and, in accordance with the *Art Acquisition and Collection Development Policy*, approves the purchase of John Englart's portrait by Maggie Cowling as part of the annual art collection acquisition budget.
3. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.
4. Endorses the motions at Attachment 3, to be submitted for the next MAV State Council meeting to be held on 29 May 2026.
5. Endorses the motions in Attachment 4, to be submitted for the next ALGA National General Assembly of Local Government to be held on 23-25 June 2026.
6. Approves interstate travel and registration of Mayor Abboud and Councillor/s _____ to represent Council at the 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra from 23-25 June 2026, noting the travel, accommodation and registration expenses will be met from the Mayor and Councillor Support budget.
7. Notes the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report at Attachment 5 to this report.
8. Revokes the Management of Mobile and Temporary Food Premises Policy.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the summary of minutes from Advisory Committees at Attachment 1 to this report, as follows:**
 - a) **First Peoples Advisory Committee held 5 February 2026**
 - b) **Friends of Aileu Community Committee held 10 February 2026**
 - c) **Arts Advisory Committee held 17 February 2026**
2. **Endorses the recommendation of the Arts Advisory Committee meeting held 17 February 2026 and, in accordance with the Art Acquisition and Collection Development Policy, approves the purchase of John Englart's portrait by Maggie Cowling as part of the annual art collection acquisition budget.**
3. **Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.**
4. **Endorses the motions at Attachment 3, to be submitted for the next MAV State Council meeting to be held on 29 May 2026.**

5. **Endorses the motions in Attachment 4, to be submitted for the next ALGA National General Assembly of Local Government to be held on 23-25 June 2026.**
6. **Approves interstate travel and registration of Mayor Abboud to represent Council at the 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra from 23-25 June 2026, noting the travel, accommodation and registration expenses will be met from the Mayor and Councillor Support budget.**
7. **Notes the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report at Attachment 5 to this report.**
8. **Revokes the Management of Mobile and Temporary Food Premises Policy.**

Carried unanimously

Having declared a conflict of interest in Report 7.15, Cr Irvin left the meeting at 9.25 pm.

7.15 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2024-26 - PANEL OF ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Executive Summary

The increasing scale and complexity of Council's Capital Works Program necessitated the establishment of a new prequalified Panel of Engineering Consultancy Services to support the planning, design, delivery and review of infrastructure project across multiple departments.

The report outlines the procurement process undertaken for RFT 2024-26 and recommends the appointment of preferred tenderers to the Panel of Engineering Consultancy Services. The panel will provide Council with access to a broad and diverse range of engineering services. This arrangement will ensure continuity of service, improved coordination across departments, and the flexibility to respond to changing project demands. The proposed panel will operate for an initial term of three (3) years, with two (2) optional one-year extensions at Council's discretion, providing a maximum overall term of five (5) years. The estimated contract value for the initial three-year term is \$2.93 million (GST Incl.), with a total estimated value of \$4.59 million (GST Incl.) should both extension options be exercised. Expenditure under this contract will be determined by available annual budget allocations and works required during the contract term.

The objective of the panel is to assemble a broad and diverse range of engineering disciplines capable of delivering advisory, consultancy and due diligence services. The panel will support Council in undertaking comprehensive technical assessments to ensure the feasibility, safety, efficiency and long-term sustainability of capital works projects.

The scope of services includes the following disciplines:

- Category A – Civil Engineering
- Category B – Hydraulic Engineering, Flood Modelling and Integrated Water Management
- Category C – Geotechnical Engineering
- Category D – Environmental and Contaminated Soil Services
- Category E – Land Surveying
- Category F – Traffic and Strategic Transport Engineering
- Category G – Structural Engineering
- Category H – Quantity Surveying
- Category I – Forensic Engineering
- Category J – Underground Services Proving

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

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:
 - a) Accept the Schedule of Rates submitted by tenderers and make a formal offer to each of the individual panel contractors listed in Table 1 below according to the various service categories, for the **Contract RFT-2024-26 - Panel of Engineering Consultancy Services (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution
 - i. For a period of three (3) years commencing 1 April 2026, with an option for a further two (2), one (1) year extensions at the discretion of Council.
 - ii. For a maximum amount of \$4,590,000 million (inc. GST) for the term of the contract, including extension options.

Table 1.

Preferred Tenderer Name	ABN	ACN
Category A, Civil engineering design (12)		
Argot Consultants Pty Ltd	39 084 902 974	849 029 974
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
Civil Design Pty Ltd	92 633 472 456	633 472 456
Civil Road Solutions Pty Ltd	13 151 174 104	151 175 104
CRE Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	11 078 132 804	078 132 804
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
HDR Pty Ltd	76 158 075 220	158 075 220
JCA Land Consultants Pty Ltd	75 083 816 915	083 816 915
NK Civil design Pty Ltd	866 748 480 72	674 848 072
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Taylor's Development Strategists Pty Ltd	80 128 948 523	128 948 523
Category B, Hydraulic engineering flood modelling, integrated water management (9)		
Afflux Consulting Pty Ltd	37 166 270 257	166 270 257
Alluvium Consulting Australia Pty Ltd	76 151 119 792	151 119 792
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
Morphum Environmental Ltd	80 159 252 669	159 252 669
Optimal Stormwater Pty Ltd	53 139 725 894	139725894
Rain Consulting Pty Ltd	31 635 469 680	635 469 680
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Water Technology Pty Ltd	60 093 377 283	093 377 283
Category C - Geotechnical engineering (8)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
Geoporte Pty Ltd	82 668 762 972	668 762 972
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
LR Pardo & Associates Pty Ltd	29 133 787 612	133 787 612
Site Geotechnical Pty Ltd	23 114 166 997	114 166 997
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Category D - Environmental engineering & contaminated soil service (8)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
Blue Sphere Environmental Pty Ltd	84 146 980 761	146 980 761
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961

Morphum Environmental Ltd	80 159 252 669	159 252 669
Prensa Pty Ltd	12 142 106 581	142 106 581
Senversa Pty Ltd	89 132 231 380	132 231 380
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Category E – Land surveying (10)		
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
CAF Consulting Services Pty Ltd	37 160 560 556	160 560 556
Earth Civil Surveying	82727689052	Sole Trader
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
JCA Land Consultants Pty Ltd	75 083 816 915	083 816 915
Moonland Group Pty Ltd	97994395762	Not Supplied
Reeds Consulting Pty Ltd	17 251 075 871	079 642 818
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Taylors Development Strategists Pty Ltd	80 128 948 523	128 948 523
Category F – Traffic & strategic transport engineering (9)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
HDR Pty Ltd	76 158 075 220	158 075 220
O'Brien Traffic	55 007 006 037	007 006 037
Ratio Consultants	93 983 380 225	005 422 104
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Trafficworks Pty Ltd	59 125 488 977	125 488 977
Traffix Group Pty Ltd	32 100 481 570	100 481 570
Category G – Structural engineering (11)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
BCE Design Corporation Pty Ltd	12 655 325 929	655 325 929
CAF Consulting Services Pty Ltd	37 160 560 556	160 560 556
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
Hatch Pty Ltd	59 008 630 500	008 630 500
HDR Pty Ltd	76 158 075 220	158 075 220
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
JJ Ryan Consulting Pty Ltd	69 145 797 726	145 797 726
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Category H – Quantity surveying (5)		
Berkowitz	68 204 272 653	105 846 884
Currie & Brown (Australia) Pty Ltd	97 128 823 843	128 823 843
Melbourne Quantity Surveyors Pty Ltd	96 635 662 725	635 662 725
Project Cost Management Group Pty Ltd	68 153 898 974	153 898 974
Rider Levett Bucknall Victoria Pty Ltd	28 006 699 476	006 699 476
Category I – Forensic engineering (2)		
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
Category J – Underground service proving (2)		
Access Utility Engineering Pty Ltd	35 603 853 756	603 853 756
Utility Mapping (AUST) Pty Ltd	60 605 720 401	605 720 401

- b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and each 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, authorise the Chief Executive Officer to:
- a) Do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract;
 - b) Exercise the option(s) to extend contracts in accordance with the provisions within the Contract; and
 - c) To allow contractors to work across different categories if required, ensuring we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council's needs, providing the total contract amount to remain as paragraph 1 (a);
 - d) To accept new panel contractor(s) during the contract term subject to the same public tender/evaluation process as adopted for the original panel contractors, to ensure we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council's needs, providing the total contract amount to remain as paragraph 1 (a); and
 - e) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.

Resolution

Cr Miles moved, Cr Pulford seconded -

That Council:

1. **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:**
- a) **Accept the Schedule of Rates submitted by tenderers and make a formal offer to each of the individual panel contractors listed in Table 1 below according to the various service categories, for the Contract RFT-2024-26 - Panel of Engineering Consultancy Services (Contract) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution**
 - i. **For a period of three (3) years commencing 1 April 2026, with an option for a further two (2), one (1) year extensions at the discretion of Council.**
 - ii. **For a maximum amount of \$4,590,000 million (inc. GST) for the term of the contract, including extension options.**

Table 1.

Preferred Tenderer Name	ABN	ACN
Category A, Civil engineering design (12)		
Argot Consultants Pty Ltd	39 084 902 974	849 029 974
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
Civil Design Pty Ltd	92 633 472 456	633 472 456
Civil Road Solutions Pty Ltd	13 151 174 104	151 175 104
CRE Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	11 078 132 804	078 132 804
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
HDR Pty Ltd	76 158 075 220	158 075 220
JCA Land Consultants Pty Ltd	75 083 816 915	083 816 915
NK Civil design Pty Ltd	866 748 480 72	674 848 072
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Taylor's Development Strategists Pty Ltd	80 128 948 523	128 948 523
Category B, Hydraulic engineering flood modelling, integrated water management (9)		

Afflux Consulting Pty Ltd	37 166 270 257	166 270 257
Alluvium Consulting Australia Pty Ltd	76 151 119 792	151 119 792
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
Morphum Environmental Ltd	80 159 252 669	159 252 669
Optimal Stormwater Pty Ltd	53 139 725 894	139725894
Rain Consulting Pty Ltd	31 635 469 680	635 469 680
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Water Technology Pty Ltd	60 093 377 283	093 377 283
Category C - Geotechnical engineering (8)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
Geoporte Pty Ltd	82 668 762 972	668 762 972
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
LR Pardo & Associates Pty Ltd	29 133 787 612	133 787 612
Site Geotechnical Pty Ltd	23 114 166 997	114 166 997
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Category D - Environmental engineering & contaminated soil service (8)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
Blue Sphere Environmental Pty Ltd	84 146 980 761	146 980 761
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
Morphum Environmental Ltd	80 159 252 669	159 252 669
Prensa Pty Ltd	12 142 106 581	142 106 581
Senversa Pty Ltd	89 132 231 380	132 231 380
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Category E – Land surveying (10)		
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
CAF Consulting Services Pty Ltd	37 160 560 556	160 560 556
Earth Civil Surveying	82727689052	Sole Trader
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
JCA Land Consultants Pty Ltd	75 083 816 915	083 816 915
Moonland Group Pty Ltd	97994395762	Not Supplied
Reeds Consulting Pty Ltd	17 251 075 871	079 642 818
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Taylor's Development Strategists Pty Ltd	80 128 948 523	128 948 523
Category F – Traffic & strategic transport engineering (9)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
HDR Pty Ltd	76 158 075 220	158 075 220
O'Brien Traffic	55 007 006 037	007 006 037
Ratio Consultants	93 983 380 225	005 422 104
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Trafficworks Pty Ltd	59 125 488 977	125 488 977
Traffix Group Pty Ltd	32 100 481 570	100 481 570
Category G – Structural engineering (11)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
BCE Design Corporation Pty Ltd	12 655 325 929	655 325 929
CAF Consulting Services Pty Ltd	37 160 560 556	160 560 556
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185

Hatch Pty Ltd	59 008 630 500	008 630 500
HDR Pty Ltd	76 158 075 220	158 075 220
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
JJ Ryan Consulting Pty Ltd	69 145 797 726	145 797 726
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Category H – Quantity surveying (5)		
Berkowitz	68 204 272 653	105 846 884
Currie & Brown (Australia) Pty Ltd	97 128 823 843	128 823 843
Melbourne Quantity Surveyors Pty Ltd	96 635 662 725	635 662 725
Project Cost Management Group Pty Ltd	68 153 898 974	153 898 974
Rider Levett Bucknall Victoria Pty Ltd	28 006 699 476	006 699 476
Category I – Forensic engineering (2)		
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
Category J – Underground service proving (2)		
Access Utility Engineering Pty Ltd	35 603 853 756	603 853 756
Utility Mapping (AUST) Pty Ltd	60 605 720 401	605 720 401

- b) **Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and each 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, authorise the Chief Executive Officer to:**
- a) **Do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract;**
 - b) **Exercise the option(s) to extend contracts in accordance with the provisions within the Contract; and**
 - c) **To allow contractors to work across different categories if required, ensuring we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council's needs, providing the total contract amount to remain as paragraph 1 (a);**
 - d) **To accept new panel contractor(s) during the contract term subject to the same public tender/evaluation process as adopted for the original panel contractors, to ensure we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council's needs, providing the total contract amount to remain as paragraph 1 (a); and**
 - e) **Advise all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.**

Carried

9.26 pm *Cr Irvin returned to the meeting.*

NOTICES OF MOTION

8.1 ADVOCACY PIECE FOR THE LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL PROJECT

Motion

That Council:

1. In response to community request, advocates to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) to commit to a formal, public-facing Environment Effects Statement for the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.
2. Requests that this statement specifically addresses:
 - a) the unique urban fabric of the North Brunswick Station precinct, focusing on:
 - i. Preservation of current usage of Bulleke-bek Park and preservation of mature trees and guerilla plantings by the Upfield Urban Foresters.
 - ii. Potential integration of a relocated new northern station with the vacant site(s) on the southern side of Hope Street immediately east of the rail corridor.
 - b) Integration with other transport modes.
 - c) Sydney Road impacts in regard to accessibility for all users during and after construction.
 - d) Sydney Road upgrades for all stakeholders (including east-west bus routes, cyclists, pedestrians, businesses).
 - e) Prioritising reopening of the bike lanes as part of construction staging.
 - f) Collaboration with Merri-bek Council about set down sites for the duration of the project.

Resolution

Cr Iwasaki moved, Cr Abboud seconded -

That Council:

1. **In response to community request, advocates to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) to commit to a formal, public-facing Environment Effects Statement for the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.**
2. **Requests that this statement specifically addresses:**
 - a) **the unique urban fabric of the North Brunswick Station precinct, focusing on:**
 - i. **Preservation of current usage of Bulleke-bek Park and preservation of mature trees, along the corridor, including in the Jewel Station precinct, and guerilla plantings by the Upfield Urban Foresters, along the corridor, including in the Jewel Station precinct.**
 - ii. **Potential integration of a relocated new northern station with the vacant site(s) on the southern side of Hope Street immediately east of the rail corridor.**
 - b) **Integration with other transport modes.**

- c) **Sydney Road impacts in regard to accessibility for all users during and after construction.**
- d) **Sydney Road upgrades for all stakeholders (including east-west bus routes, cyclists, pedestrians, businesses).**
- e) **Prioritising reopening of the bike lanes as part of construction staging.**
- f) **Collaboration with Merri-bek Council about set down sites for the duration of the project.**

Carried unanimously

8.2 LANEWAY BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM

Motion

That Council receives a report on a project to scope a laneway beautification program, which could:

1. Identify laneways to beautify.
2. Explore laneways that can be better activated.
3. Identify ways to encourage laneway greening projects in appropriate neighbourhoods.

Resolution

Cr Politis moved, Cr Theodosis seconded -

That Council receives a report on a project to scope a laneway beautification program, which could:

1. **Identify laneways and roundabouts to beautify.**
2. **Explore laneways and roundabouts that can be better activated.**
3. **Identify ways to encourage laneway and roundabout greening projects in appropriate neighbourhoods.**

Carried unanimously

8.3 SUPPORT FOR VICHEALTH - PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE

Motion

That Council:

1. Acknowledges the critical role played by VicHealth, Victoria's world leading independent health promotion foundation set up with support across the political spectrum, in keeping the Merri-bek community healthy, active and well.
2. Notes the community initiatives Merri-bek Council has been able to deliver thanks to partnerships with VicHealth, including supporting sustainable food systems, community training, women's and girls' participation in sport, and others.

3. Notes that for every dollar spent on public health, early intervention and prevention, \$14.30 is saved on future health costs by averting more costly and chronic health issues down the line.
4. Calls on the Victorian Government to reverse their decision to abolish VicHealth.
5. Notes the importance of maintaining independent preventive health bodies, particularly where health promotion initiatives may be subject to competing interests.
6. Requests the Mayor write to the Minister for Health, Mary-Anne Thomas MP, to express:
 - a) Council's strong support for VicHealth as a critical partner driving positive health outcomes for our communities.
 - b) Council's support for VicHealth's role as an independent body, that has the ability to challenge the commercial interests of industries such as tobacco, ultra-processed food and alcohol that lead to poor health outcomes in our communities.
 - c) Our concern that any reduction in health promotion activity or funding will harm the health of our communities, leading to poorer social and economic outcomes and worsening inequality, in addition to increasing need for already stretched council services.
 - d) That any funding reduction would also directly undermine council's capacity to deliver critical health prevention projects; shifting avoidable illness into the acute health system and increasing long-term costs both to council and other health partners.
 - e) A call for genuine and adequate consultation with local government and peak bodies, including the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), prior to any changes to VicHealth's role, funding or focus.
7. Requests the CEO write to State MPs that are representatives for electorates that include the Merri-bek municipality to notify them of this motion, Council's position, and seek their advocacy and support on this matter.

Time Extension

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

That the Council meeting be extended by 30 minutes at 9.36 pm.

Carried

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. **Acknowledges the critical role played by VicHealth, Victoria's world leading independent health promotion foundation set up with support across the political spectrum, in keeping the Merri-bek community healthy, active and well.**
2. **Notes the community initiatives Merri-bek Council has been able to deliver thanks to partnerships with VicHealth, including supporting sustainable food systems, community training, women's and girls' participation in sport, and others.**

3. Notes that for every dollar spent on public health, early intervention and prevention, \$14.30 is saved on future health costs by averting more costly and chronic health issues down the line.
4. Calls on the Victorian Government to reverse their decision to abolish VicHealth.
5. Notes the importance of maintaining independent preventive health bodies, particularly where health promotion initiatives may be subject to competing interests.
6. Requests the Mayor write to the Minister for Health, Mary-Anne Thomas MP, to express:
 - a) Council's strong support for VicHealth as a critical partner driving positive health outcomes for our communities.
 - b) Council's support for VicHealth's role as an independent body, that has the ability to challenge the commercial interests of industries such as tobacco, ultra-processed food and alcohol that lead to poor health outcomes in our communities.
 - c) Our concern that any reduction in health promotion activity or funding will harm the health of our communities, leading to poorer social and economic outcomes and worsening inequality, in addition to increasing need for already stretched council services.
 - d) That any funding reduction would also directly undermine council's capacity to deliver critical health prevention projects; shifting avoidable illness into the acute health system and increasing long-term costs both to council and other health partners.
 - e) A call for genuine and adequate consultation with local government and peak bodies, including the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), prior to any changes to VicHealth's role, funding or focus.
7. Requests the CEO write to State MPs that are representatives for electorates that include the Merri-bek municipality to notify them of this motion, Council's position, and seek their advocacy and support on this matter.
8. Liaise with Holstep Health and where possible or feasible work together in their advocacy and support on this matter.

Carried unanimously

8.4 NATIONAL GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Motion

That Council raises the Greek flag on Greek Independence Day on the 25 March.

Resolution

Cr Politis moved, Cr Theodosis seconded –

That Council:

1. Raises the Greek flag on Greek Independence Day on the 25th of March.
2. Raises the Transgender Flag on the International Transgender Day of Visibility on the 31st of March.

3. **Raises the Pride Flag on Idahobit Day on the 17th of May.**

Carried unanimously

NOTICE OF RESCISSION

Nil.

FORESHADOWED ITEMS

Mayor, Cr Abboud foreshadowed the Flag Schedule to come back to Council.

URGENT BUSINESS REPORTS

Nil.

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

In accordance with section 66(2) of the Local Government Act 2020, this Council meeting be closed to the public to consider these reports:

- **12.1 Central Coburg Program because it relates to Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.**
- **12.2 Chief Executive Officer Employment Matters because it relates to personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.**

Carried

The Council meeting closed to the public at 9.45 pm.

OPENING THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

The Council meeting be open to the public.

Carried

The Council meeting opened to the public at 9.55 pm.

The Council meeting closed at 9.56 pm.

Confirmed

**Cr Nat Abboud
MAYOR**

APPENDIX 1 – ARBITER’S DETERMINATION AND STATEMENT OF REASONS

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION FOR AN INTERNAL ARBITRATION PROCESS

MERRI-BEK CITY COUNCIL

IAP 2025-20

HEARING PURSUANT TO DIVISION 5 OF PART 6 OF THE *LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020*

Applicant: Councillor Oscar Yildiz

Respondent: Councillor Jay Iwasaki

Date of hearing: Friday, 6 February 2026

Place of hearing: Brunswick Town Hall (Civic Centre) at 233 Sydney Road, Brunswick

Arbiter: Simon Heath

DETERMINATION:

Councillor Yildiz has made Application for an Internal Arbitration Process seeking a finding of misconduct against Councillor Iwasaki. The finding is sought in relation to three emails sent by Councillor Iwasaki on 4 June 2025.

I determine that the emails collectively constitute a failure by Councillor Iwasaki to comply with the ‘Model Councillor Code of Conduct’. As such, I make a finding of misconduct against him.

I direct that Councillor Iwasaki make a written apology to Councillor Yildiz for the emails.

I also direct that Councillor Iwasaki be suspended from the office of Councillor for a period of one month.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

The Application

1. The ‘Application for an Internal Arbitration Process’ is dated 3 September 2025 **(Application)**.
2. In the Application, the Applicant seeks a finding of misconduct against the Respondent in relation to alleged breaches of the ‘Model Councillor Code of Conduct’ **(Code)**.
3. The breaches of the Code are alleged to be contained in three emails sent by the Respondent on 4 June 2025 **(emails)**. The emails, sent at 3.36 pm, 3.58 pm, and 4.40 pm, relate to a decision by the Council to resurface the gravel car park at De Chene Reserve in East Coburg **(Reserve)**
4. The Reserve is used by the Brunswick Juventus Football Club **(Club)**.

5. The first email was sent by the Respondent on 4 June 2025 at 3.36 pm to the Council's Executive and their Assistants, and to Councillors (**first email**). There were 26 recipients, including the Applicant and the Respondent (**recipients**). The recipients were responsible for the Council's operations.

6. The first email was as follows:

"The fact that this club is so well used and has had one occurrence is really reassuring to me, and frequency of this event shows that the carpark may be relatively safe if people parked correctly and the parking area was enforced properly.

I was under the impression that this had occurred multiple times, but in fact that this was human error only highlights the dangers of cars in general and does not support the idea the carpark is dangerous and in need of urgent resurfacing. I am reassured that this was a one-off incident.

What I am more concerned about is the possibility of corruption in this proposal for resurfacing. It has been brought to my attention from other members in the community that Cr Yildiz has a conflict of interest that may actually be substantive, and as such the carpark resurfacing should never have been proposed in the first place.

This is akin to if I proposed money to fund a research group's project that I was friends or affiliated with and then sat out of the vote. I should never have brought up a proposal that I had a conflict of interest with in the first place, especially that I did not disclose to the other councillors, for them to vote on. And particularly since they may not have known what the conflict was in order to discuss the merits of that proposed use of funding that may benefit me or my friends.

I believe due to concerns of corruption, this should absolutely be deferred to be discussed after more details are discussed and the potential conflicts worked through."

7. At 3.40 pm, the Applicant responded to the first email by sending the recipients the following email:

"I suggest anyone using the term "Corruption" be VERY VERY careful because I won't tolerate any such allegation or accusation and I will take legal action to defend any such assertion/s made by anyone."

8. The second email was sent by the Respondent on 4 June 2025 at 3.58 pm to the recipients (**second email**), and was as follows:

"Cr Yildiz is correct. This is potentially very serious. The stated conflict of interest is public record on a personal interest return, has already been picked up on by a community member, and may very well be picked up wider in the media, especially with this huge amount of money.

It would be prudent to defer this decision to make sure Cr Yildiz' proposal is appropriately vetted and to make sure his name is cleared."

9. In response to the first email and the second email, the Mayor sent the following email to Councillors at 4.35 pm:

"I would like to remind you that our emails should be constructive and respectful and if you have a governance matter, please raise it through the appropriate channels e.g. through the CEO or (Manager Governance and Strategy named)".

10. The Respondent sent the third email at 4.40 pm but only to 17 of the 26 recipients, **(third email)**. That email was as follows:

"I acknowledge that the word corruption was very strong and what I meant was the possibility of conflicts of interest. I did in no way insinuate there was corruption and withdraw the below unconstructive feedback."

11. The Respondent attempted to call that Applicant at 5.02 pm but the call was not answered.
12. In sending the emails, the Applicant alleges that the Respondent has breached the standards of conduct **(Standards)** included in the Code relating to 'Performing the role of a Councillor', 'Behaviours', and 'Integrity'. Details of those standards are set out below.

Arbiter's jurisdiction

13. I was appointed pursuant to sections 144 and 149 of the *Local Government Act 2020 (Act)*.
14. Section 143 of the Act provides that an Arbiter may hear an application that alleges misconduct by a Councillor.
15. Section 143(3) of the Act provides that an Application "must be made within 3 months of the alleged misconduct occurring". The alleged misconduct occurred on 4 June 2025 so this requirement is satisfied.
16. Pursuant to section 147 of the Act, an Arbiter may determine whether or not a Councillor has engaged in misconduct.
17. "Misconduct" is defined in Section 3 of the Act as follows:
"...any breach by a Councillor of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct".
18. Section 139(3)(b) of the Act specifies that the standards of conduct expected to be observed by Councillors in the course of performing their duties and functions are to be included in the Code.
19. The Code is set out in Schedule 1 to the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2020*.

20. As required by section 139(4) of the Act, the Code is published on the Council's website, and a copy thereof is attached as Annexure A.

Hearing

21. The internal arbitration process comprised directions made on 12 November 2025, an in-person directions hearing on 20 November 2025, further directions made on 20 November 2025, even further directions made on 3 December 2025, and an in-person hearing on 6 February 2026.

Applicant's evidence

22. The Applicant's evidence comprised the Application, which was comprehensive. The Applicant also made available documents providing context to the matters set out therein.
23. The Applicant gave oral evidence and made submissions at the hearing.

Respondent's evidence

24. The Respondent's evidence comprised an undated written response to the Application as well as documents in support of the submissions in that response.
25. The Respondent also made submissions at the hearing.

Arbiter's findings

26. I determine that the Respondent breached clauses 1, 2 and 4 of the Standards.

Arbiter's reasons

- 25 The Applicant was the honorary number 1 ticket holder (**role**) of the Club (**Club**) for many years.
- 26 Several hours before the Respondent sent the emails, the Applicant voluntarily resigned from the role.
- 27 A letter from the Club dated 2 September 2025 attached to the Application confirms that the Applicant has not benefited "*financially or otherwise*" from the role. I accept that unchallenged evidence.
- 28 The Club is not situated in the Applicant's ward.
- 29 I accept the Applicant's evidence that he had declared the role in Personal Interest Returns, had at appropriate times sought governance advice, and had made conflict of interest declarations in relation to matters involving the Club.

- 30 I also accept the evidence of the Applicant and the Club that in addition to the “occurrence” the Respondent refers to in the first email, (when a car rolled from the carpark onto the pitch in 2018), there have been documented concerns about safety issues in relation to the carpark at the Reserve since 2012 and that the first request for resurfacing was made about 2013. In this regard, Council’s Director of Community confirmed in an email on 3 April 2025 to Councillors that the Council had received “a range of complaints over a number of years about the car park” at the Reserve. This was the day before the emails.
- 31 The Applicant did not debate or vote on the Council’s decision on 11 June 2025 to fund the resurfacing at the Reserve.
- 32 Despite the Respondent’s contentions to the contrary, I accept that the emails have caused the Applicant considerable distress. The Respondent misguidedly submitted that it was up to the Applicant to prove that the email caused him ‘severe psychological injury’ rather than addressing the issue of whether the emails to the recipients constituted a breach of the Standards in the Code. In relation to the latter, I record that, at the hearing, the Respondent said the following “I make no defence here of my statements”.
- 33 The Respondent submitted that I ought to dismiss the Application because it is “retaliatory or vexatious” and was made in response to a finding of misconduct against the Applicant in an earlier Internal Arbitration Process brought by the Respondent (earlier IAP). The earlier IAP is dated 7 February 2025 and on 30 June 2025 Arbiter Noel Harvey OAM directed that the Applicant be suspended for one month.
- 34 In addition to the fact that the emails were sent prior to the learned Arbiter’s decision in the earlier IAP, I find that the Application was properly made.
- 35 I was not assisted by both parties raising matters outside the issues in the Application. Clearly the relationship between them is and unfortunately continues to be fractious. I encourage them to avoid personal attacks.
- 36 A significant portion of the Respondent’s response material was unrelated to the scope of the Application which was whether or not the emails constituted a breach of the Standards in the Code. The Respondent’s material included allegations about conduct of the Applicant after the emails had been sent, including an allegation that the Applicant had colluded with another individual to set up a retaliatory Application, an allegation of the Applicant’s poor attendance and inattentiveness at meetings, an allegation of continued bullying and intimidatory behaviour by the Applicant, I advised the Respondent at the directions hearing, and again in the hearing, that these were matters outside the scope of the Application.
- 37 I also advised the Respondent that if he believes that the Applicant’s conduct following the emails has been questionable, it is a matter for him as to whether, and where, to pursue those allegations but it was not appropriate to do so in this Application.
- 38 I do not accept the Respondent’s contention that the first email was “appropriate to my role as a councillor and acting in the community’s interests”.

- 39 In the first email, the Respondent uses "*corruption*" twice. This suggests that the use of the word was not merely incidental.
- 40 It is a serious allegation for the Respondent to suggest that the Applicant is potentially or actually "*corrupt*". The word connotes dishonesty or illegality of a trusted public power for private gain. In common parlance, the term is associated with criminal conduct, misuse of public office, receiving undisclosed benefits and the like. Accordingly, it would be highly improper to make such an allegation without having substantiating evidence. Despite being invited to do so, the Respondent has not provided any evidence to support that it was appropriate to use "*corruption*".
- 41 I find that the Respondent's use "*corruption*" in the first email to be unnecessary, inappropriate, inflammatory and damaging.
- 42 I have taken into account that the first email refers to the "*possibility*" of corruption and "*concerns*" of corruption but note the Respondent's concession in the third email that he meant to refer to the "*possibility of conflicts of interest*".
- 43 In view of the evidence that the Applicant had declared the role, and in view that the resurfacing at the Reserve will benefit the community, the Respondent's analogy in the first email is not 'on all fours'.
- 44 The second email contains a clear acknowledgment by the Respondent that the Applicant's "*stated conflict of interest is public record on a personal interest return*". Given the Applicant's caution about repeating an insinuation of "*corruption*", instead of clarifying the first email, the Respondent 'doubles down' by not only maintaining that the resurfacing issue is "*potentially very serious*", but also noting that it has been picked up by an unidentified "*community member*" and may "*very well be picked up wider in media*".
- 45 Additionally, the Respondent states in the second email that the Applicant still needed to be "*appropriately vetted*". I accept the Applicant's submission that, in the absence of any supporting details to support the "*possibility of corruption*", the second email improperly invites speculation about the Applicant's conduct and, indeed, constitutes an implied threat on the Respondent's part that he might involve the media.
- 46 I do not accept the Respondent's assertion that the second email was an "*apology and an immediate retraction*". It was nothing of the sort. In any event, the supposed retraction was not sent to all of the recipients.
- 47 The Respondent's claim in the third email that "*I did in no way insinuate there was corruption*" beggar's belief. That is exactly what the Respondent did in the first email and then repeated the insinuation in the second email.
- 48 While acknowledging that the word "*corruption*" was "*very strong*", the Respondent did not apologise for using it. Further, not all of the recipients were informed that the Respondent had intended to refer to a possible conflict of interest and not corruption on the Applicant's part.

49 Clause 1 of the Standards relates to 'Performing the role of a Councillor' and requires that:

"A Councillor must do everything reasonably necessary to ensure that they perform the role of a Councillor effectively and responsibly, including by-

- (a) ...*
- (b) being fit to perform the role of a Councillor when acting in that capacity or purporting to act in that capacity; and*
- (c) diligently using Council processes to become informed about matters which are subject to Council decisions; and*
- (d) ...*
- (e) ...*
- (f) ... "*

50 I find that the emails constitute a failure by the Respondent to do "everything reasonably necessary" to perform the role of a Councillor "effectively and responsibly" as well as a failure to "diligently use council processes". As the Mayor appropriately pointed out to the Councillors, emails are not an appropriate channel to raise governance issues. The issue should have been raised privately with Council's governance officer and not in an email to the recipients. The Respondent failed to use 'council processes' and, as such, the emails are a breach of Clause 1 of the Standards.

51 Clause 2 of the Standards relates to 'Behaviours' and requires that:

"(1) A Councillor must treat others, including other Councillors, members of Council staff and members of the public, with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect by-

- (a) not engaging in demeaning, abusive, obscene or threatening behaviour...*
- (b) not engaging in behaviour that intentionally causes or perpetuates stigma, stereotyping, prejudice or aggression against a person or class of persons; and*
- (c) ...*
- (d) ...*
- (e) ...*
- (f) ...*

(2) A Councillor, as an individual at the workplace, must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons by-

(a) adhering to applicable systems and policies put in place by the Chief Executive Officer to manage risks to health and safety in the workplace; and

(b) ...

(3) A Councillor must act in accordance with any policies, practices and protocols developed and implemented under section 46 of the Act that support arrangements for interactions between members of Council staff and Councillors".

52 I find that the Respondent's references in the first email to the resurfacing of the Reserve raised "the possibility of corruption" and "concerns of corruption", was a failure by the Respondent to treat the Applicant with "dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect". The evidence confirms that the Respondent knew that the Applicant had previously declared

the role and conflicts of interest yet chose to insinuate to the recipients, absent any details or information, that the Applicant was corrupt. The Respondent has breached Clause 2 of the Standards.

53 Clause 4 of the Standards relates to 'Integrity' and includes the following:

"(1) A Councillor must act with integrity, exercise reasonable care and diligence and take reasonable care to avoid any action which may diminish the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of local government, including by-

- (a) ensuring that their behaviour does not bring discredit upon the Council; and*
- (b) not deliberately misleading the Council or the public about any matter related to the performance of their public duties; and*
- (c) ..."*

54 I also find that the Respondent has breached Clause 4 of the Standards. The first email was unnecessarily sent to 26 recipients. Asserting in emails that a Councillor may have acted corruptly, without providing any supporting details, the Respondent's implication of improper motives on the Applicant's part is a failure to take "reasonable care to avoid any action which may diminish the public's trust and integrity of local government". The Respondent's failure to advise the recipients that he unconditionally withdrew his unsubstantiated insinuations that a Councillor may have been involved in corrupt conduct does not assist in restoring the public's "trust and confidence" in relation to the integrity of Council. Also, in the absence of supporting details, I remain unconvinced that the Respondent has not deliberately misled the Council.

55 Pursuant to section 147(2)(a) of the Act, I direct that the Respondent provide a written apology to the Applicant which acknowledges and apologizes for the emails which failed to treat him with "dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect" and that the Respondent regrets any distressed caused (**apology**). The apology is to be emailed to the recipients by 6 March 2026.

56 Pursuant to section 147(2)(b) of the Act, I also direct that the Respondent be suspended from the office of Councillor for a period of one month (**suspension**). While that section provides for a suspension for a period "not exceeding 3 months", I have taken into account the fact that the Respondent has undertaken governance training since sending the emails. The suspension is to take effect the day after this determination is tabled at the next Council meeting, (presently scheduled for 11 March 2026), or from 12 March 2026, whichever is sooner.

Simon Heath

Arbiter

Dated: 26 February 2026

Model Councillor Code of Conduct

Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2024

Definitions

In this Schedule—

discrimination means unfair or unfavourable treatment of a person on the grounds of an attribute specified in section 6 of the **Equal Opportunity Act 2010**.

Standards of Conduct

1. Performing the role of a Councillor

A Councillor must do everything reasonably necessary to ensure that they perform the role of a Councillor effectively and responsibly, including by—

- (a) representing the interests of the municipal community by considering and being responsive to the diversity of interests and needs of the municipal community; and
- (b) being fit to perform the role of a Councillor when acting in that capacity or purporting to act in that capacity; and
- (c) diligently using Council processes to become informed about matters which are subject to Council decisions; and
- (d) not performing or purporting to perform any responsibilities or functions of the Chief Executive Officer; and
- (e) acknowledging and supporting the Mayor in the performance of the role of the Mayor, including by—
 - (i) respecting and complying with a ruling of the Mayor as the chair of Council meetings (unless dissenting from the ruling in accordance with the Council's Governance Rules); and
 - (ii) refraining from making public comment, including to the media, that could reasonably be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of the Council where the Councillor has not been authorised by the Mayor to make such a comment.

2. Behaviours

- (1) A Councillor must treat others, including other Councillors, members of Council staff and members of the public, with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect, including by—

- (a) not engaging in demeaning, abusive, obscene or threatening behaviour, including where the behaviour is of a sexual nature; and
 - (b) not engaging in behaviour that intentionally causes or perpetuates stigma, stereotyping, prejudice or aggression against a person or class of persons; and
 - (c) not engaging in discrimination or vilification; and
 - (d) supporting the Council, when applying the Council's community engagement policy, to develop respectful relationships and partnerships with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and the Aboriginal community; and
 - (e) supporting the Council in fulfilling its obligation under the Act or any other Act (including the **Gender Equality Act 2020**) to achieve and promote gender equality; and
 - (f) ensuring their behaviours and interactions with children are in line with the Council's policies and procedures as a child safe organisation and obligations under the **Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005** to the extent that they apply to Councillors.
- (2) A Councillor, as an individual at the workplace, must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons by—
- (a) adhering to applicable systems and policies put in place by the Chief Executive Officer to manage risks to health and safety in the workplace; and
 - (b) complying, so far as the Councillor is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by the Chief Executive Officer to manage risks to health and safety.
- (3) A Councillor must act in accordance with any policies, practices and protocols developed and implemented under section 46 of the Act that support arrangements for interactions between members of Council staff and Councillors.

3. Good governance

A Councillor must comply with the following Council policies and procedures required for delivering good governance for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community—

- (a) the Council's expenses policy adopted and maintained under section 41 of the Act;

- (b) the Council's Governance Rules developed, adopted and kept in force by the Council under section 60 of the Act, including in relation to—
 - (i) conduct in Council meetings or meetings of delegated committees; and
 - (ii) requesting and approval of attendance at Council meetings and meetings of delegated committees by electronic means of communication; and
 - (iii) the Council's election period policy included in the Council's Governance Rules under section 69 of the Act, including in ensuring that Council resources are not used in a way that is intended to influence, or is likely to influence, voting at a general election or by-election;
- (c) the Council's Councillor gift policy adopted under section 138 of the Act;
- (d) any direction of the Minister given under section 175 of the Act.

4. Integrity

- (1) A Councillor must act with integrity, exercise reasonable care and diligence and take reasonable steps to avoid any action which may diminish the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of local government, including by—
 - (a) ensuring that their behaviour does not bring discredit upon the Council; and
 - (b) not deliberately misleading the Council or the public about any matter related to the performance of their public duties; and
 - (c) not making Council information publicly available where public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.

Note

See the public transparency principles set out in section 58 of the Act.

- (2) A Councillor must not, in their personal dealings with the Council (for example as a ratepayer, recipient of a Council service or planning applicant), expressly or impliedly request preferential treatment for themselves or a related person or entity.

5. The Model Councillor Code of Conduct does not limit robust public debate

Nothing in the Model Councillor Code of Conduct is intended to limit, restrict or detract from robust public debate of issues in a democracy.