



**Merri-bek**  
City Council

## **Minutes of the Council Meeting**

Held in Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre,  
90 Bell Street, Coburg  
on Wednesday 8 April 2026

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE</b>	4
<b>DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST</b>	4
<b>MINUTE CONFIRMATION</b>	5
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS</b>	5
<b>PETITIONS</b>	6
<b>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</b>	7
<b>COUNCIL REPORTS</b>	
7.1 DOG WALKING IN MERRI-BEK PROJECT	11
7.2 SHARED E-BIKE SCHEME FOR MERRI-BEK	12
7.3 PROPOSED AMENDMENT C239MBEK – BRUNSWICK AND COBURG ACTIVITY CENTRES HERITAGE PROJECT: DECISION GATEWAY 1	13
7.4 DRAFT CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES STRATEGY 2026-2029	14
7.5 PRESERVING MERRI-BEK'S PROUD MIGRANT HISTORY THROUGH ART AND STORY TELLING	15
7.6 SUBURB BOUNDARY REALIGNMENT BRUNSWICK/BRUNSWICK EAST - 251-265 LYGON STREET AND 1A PITT STREET	16
7.7 DRAFT RATES HARDSHIP POLICY	17
7.8 2025-26 THIRD QUARTER FINANCIAL REPORT	18
7.9 GOVERNANCE REPORT - APRIL 2026 - CYCLICAL REPORT	23
7.10 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT 2026-4 - BRUNSWICK BATHS 50 METRE OUTDOOR POOL RETILE AND ASSOCIATED WORKS	25
7.11 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2026-1 - ROAD RECONSTRUCTION NORTH STREET, HADFIELD (SOUTH BOX COURT TO EAST STREET)	27
<b>NOTICES OF MOTION</b>	
8.1 SUPPORTING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND STAFF	28
8.2 ADVOCATING TO THE STATE GOVERNMENT ON THE REMOVAL OF DEVON ROAD AND GAFFNEY STREET, PASCOE VALE RAILWAY CROSSINGS	29
8.3 ENFORCEMENT OF CONTAMINATION AT DEMOLITION SITES IN MERRI-BEK	30

<b>NOTICE OF RESCISSION</b>	30
<b>FORESHADOWED ITEMS</b>	30
<b>URGENT BUSINESS</b>	30

The Mayor opened the meeting at 6.31 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.

<b>Present</b>	<b>Time In</b>	<b>Time Out</b>
Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor	6.31 pm	8.25 pm
Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor	Leave of absence	
Cr Sue Bolton	6.31 pm	8.25 pm
Cr Liz Irvin	6.31 pm	8.25 pm
Cr Chris Miles	6.31 pm	8.25 pm
Cr Helen Politis	6.31 pm	8.25 pm
Cr Adam Pulford	6.31 pm	8.25 pm
Cr Ella Svensson	6.31 pm	8.25 pm
Cr Katerine Theodosis	6.31 pm	8.25 pm
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	6.31 pm	8.25 pm

## **OFFICERS**

Acting Chief Executive Officer – Sue Vujcevic  
 Acting Director Business Transformation – Anita Curnow  
 Acting Director City Infrastructure – Greg Rodwell  
 Acting Director Place and Environment – Indivar Dhakal  
 Acting Director Community – Lisa Dempster  
 Manager Governance and Strategy – Yvonne Callanan  
 Acting Unit Manager Governance and Risk – Glen Moore  
 Team Leader Governance – Naomi Ellis

## **APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Cr Davidson sought a leave of absence for the period 7 April to 11 April 2026 (inclusive).

## **Motion**

**Cr Politis moved, Cr Irvin seconded -**

**That Cr Davidson be granted a leave of absence for the period 7 April to 11 April 2026 (inclusive).**

**Carried**

## **DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Cr Irvin disclosed a general conflict of interest in Item 7.8 2025-26 Third Quarter Financial Report as her employer is involved in one of the projects listed under that item.

Cr Theodosis disclosed a general conflict of interest in Item 7.8 2025-26 Third Quarter Financial Report as her employer is potentially involved in one of the projects listed under that item.

## MINUTE CONFIRMATION

### Resolution

Cr Politis moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

**The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11 March 2026 and the Special Council Meetings held 25 March, 26 March and 27 March 2026 be confirmed.**

**Carried**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS

Cr Politis:

- Acknowledged the Ride and Stride program, which encourages children to walk, ride, or scooter to school. The program aims to reduce reliance on cars and make our streets safer for children and congratulated St Fidelis' Catholic Primary School in Coburg as this year's winner of the Ride and Stride program. Cr Politis expressed her support for seeing this program expanded to more schools across Merri-bek and acknowledged Council for running an initiative that truly makes a positive difference for the lives of children.
- Celebrated Greek Independence Day on 25 March, which honours the Greek Revolution of 1821 and marks the end of a 400 year struggle against Ottoman occupation and rule. The day stands as a symbol of resilience, freedom, democracy, and self-determination. Cr Politis acknowledged that these principles have never been more relevant, particularly in Merri-bek, as one of the most multicultural communities.
- Acknowledged that we are currently in a holy period of Easter Lent, and recent celebrations for Ramadan, Lunar New Year, Passover, and Western Easter. This is a time of reflection, sharing, warmth and hospitality.

Cr Yildiz acknowledged and noted Ms Anita Curnow, Director City Infrastructure and the recent announcement regarding the decision to leave Council after five years of service to take up a role at another Council. Cr Yildiz thanked Ms Curnow for outstanding leadership, professionalism, and commitment to Council, recognising responsibility for leading hundreds of staff and the achievements of the team, particularly through challenging years. Cr Yildiz further highlighted the critical importance of the City Infrastructure portfolio—covering roads, facilities, and open space, as one of the most significant areas of local government and central to the work of this Council. On behalf of Council, Cr Yildiz sincerely thanked Ms Curnow for her service and expressed that she will be greatly missed:

Cr Theodosis:

- Attended Pups by the Pool at Pascoe Vale Pool with her dog Archie. The event attracted approximately 260 dogs and 450 people throughout the day and created a fun environment for the community.
- Acknowledged the recent opening of the Urgent Care Clinic on Sydney Road in Coburg and commended the efficiency and quality of the service provided. Cr Theodosis noted that the clinic offers an important option for residents, providing care between the services of a GP and an emergency department, and encouraged the community to be aware of its availability.

Cr Bolton:

- Acknowledged the conclusion of the early morning swimming trial at Fawkner and Coburg pools. Noting the strong community campaign by Friends of Coburg Olympic Pool and the demonstrated strength of grassroots, word of mouth promotion at both locations. Cr Bolton also noted advocacy by the Pascoe Vale pool group for early morning swimming and observed growing community support, particularly in Fawkner and potentially Coburg, for year round early morning access. Cr Bolton further noted emerging interest in swim squads and broader community programs, commended community members for coming together to demonstrate what is possible through local advocacy.
- Recognised the struggles being faced by people due to the war on Iran, which is leading to global crises including in Australia, leading to rising fuel costs that flow through to the cost of all goods including food. Cr Bolton acknowledged these pressures and noted the importance of Council considering ways it can support the community during this period.

Cr Pulford declared his pre-selection to be the Greens candidate for the seat of Brunswick for the November State Election, and noted that when he becomes a nominated candidate he will take leave from Council as per Council policy.

Mayor, Cr Abboud:

- Congratulated the North Coburg Rebels Baseball Club, who recently won the Good Sports Australian Club of the Year for its community leadership, noting the club received the award at Parliament House with the Member for Wills, Hon Peter Khalil MP. The Mayor expressed pride in the club's achievement on behalf of Council and the community.
- Addressed the tragic recent death of a 16 year old boy who lost his life while drag racing in North Coburg and expressed sincere condolences to the young person's family and acknowledged the profound impact of their loss. The Mayor urged Councillors and community members who engage with young people involved in trail bike or electric bike riding to encourage discussion with Council about safer alternatives, including dedicated track or facilities.

## PETITIONS

### **5.1 PETITION REQUESTING COUNCIL RELOCATE THE POWER POLE FOR EV CHARGING ON PASCOE STREET, PASCOE VALE AS SHOWN ON CONVERSATIONS MERRI-BEK**

A Petition was received containing 110 signatories requesting Council relocates the proposed power pole for EV charging on Pascoe Street, Pascoe Vale as shown on Conversations Merri-bek to avoid the loss of on-street car parking.

#### **Resolution**

**Cr Theodosis moved, Cr Miles seconded –**

**That Council:**

- 1. Receives the petition requesting Council relocates the proposed power pole for EV charging on Pascoe Street, Pascoe Vale as shown on Conversations Merri-bek to avoid the loss of on-street car parking.**
- 2. Refers the petition requesting Council relocates the proposed power pole for EV charging on Pascoe Street, Pascoe Vale as shown on Conversations Merri-bek to avoid the loss of on-street car parking to the Director Planning 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 6.48 pm.*

### **Report 7.10 Contract Award: RFT 2026-4 - Brunswick Baths 50 metre outdoor pool retile and associated works**

Council received one question, it was presented to Council:

**Catherine Hall** asked Council:

When is Council going to start listening to the community and supporting the sport of Swimming in Coburg, the missing middle of Merri-bek?

**At the request of the Mayor, Acting Director Community, Lisa Dempster responded:**

Thank you for your question and for sharing the outcomes of the early morning lap swimming trial, it's wonderful to hear how successful it has been. The feedback you have gathered provides valuable insights for future planning.

In relation to the upcoming closure of Brunswick Baths, the works are not discretionary upgrades. The re-tiling of the 50 metre pool is necessary due to tile failure that poses safety and operational risks. We appreciate the community's patience while this essential maintenance is completed.

Council recognises how important access to aquatic facilities is for our community. We are aware of the desire for improved aquatic access at both centres in Coburg. We will continue to consider these needs as part of the broader Aquatics Strategy.

### **Notice of Motion 8.1 Supporting our public schools and staff**

Three statements were received and presented to Council.

#### **Statement 1**

**Kate Bullen-Casanova** made the following statement:

I am a current Masters of Primary Teaching student and Merri-bek resident of 9 years, and I am here to speak today in support of all three parts of Motion 8: Supporting our Public Schools and Staff.

The scale of the problem in Victorian public schools cannot be overstated. A few numbers for your consideration:

The School Resource Standards finds that Victorian public schools are currently underfunded to the tune of \$16 billion.

Victorian public school students are the least funded in the country, with schools receiving far less than the national average per child.

Victorian teachers are the lowest paid in the country in every stage of their career, with Victorian graduate teachers receiving \$15,000 less per year than their NSW counterparts.

Lack of infrastructure funding means 27% of Victorian public schools do not have enough classrooms to meet enrolment demands.

43% report inadequate internal and external maintenance of school buildings. Our public schools are literally crumbling around them.

But the number that really gets me? Two thirds of public schools report that they are unable to meet the needs of students with disabilities. You see, not only am I currently studying my Masters of Primary Teaching, I am also a mother to 3 autistic children.

My son, aged 9, receives the maximum amount of funding that a child in a mainstream Victorian public primary school can, and STILL his school regularly has to have one Education Support staff member working across 3 or 4 classes. Their teachers are exhausted, trying their hardest to meet their students' needs, often at great personal cost.

The Australian Human Rights Commission cites "Insufficient provision of funds as the BIGGEST issue in providing equal access to education for students with disabilities."

School underfunding isn't just a number on a piece of paper. It's real families, like mine, fighting tooth and nail for their children's right to access education. Yet every day I hear of more parents forced out of the public education system; moving to Catholic schools, going into debt to pay for private school tuition, or being forced to homeschool when they otherwise wouldn't have wanted to.

The ripple effects on these parent carers' mental health, careers and livelihood are immeasurable.

At the 2021 Census there were roughly 65,000 children living in Merri-bek. Every single of those children deserve the best start in life, with the best public schools.

And so I urge the council to support these motions and the broader campaign for school funding.

## **Statement 2**

**Jonathan Sherlock** made the following statement:

My name is Jonathan Sherlock and I live in Merri-bek now and for the last 30 years. I have been a proud unionist all my life, first in the CPSU and now the AEU. I work at Coburg High School as an English and Humanities teacher.

It is difficult to overstate the feeling of betrayal among school staff throughout Victoria. While declaring that Victoria is "The Education State" on licence plates, the Allan government secretly cut \$2.4 billion over the next several years. At Coburg High School this represents around \$1.5 million dollars - per year. To put this in perspective, this is 15 full-time teachers on top of our 90 full-time equivalent teachers. This would reduce existing workload by many hours for each teacher.

The extra work and time they would put in would result in more help for vulnerable students, better planned lessons and units of work, diversify our offering of subjects, and higher quality feedback on student work. It would provide us with time for the labour intensive work of making education fun and engaging such as camps and excursions.

Teachers are burning out. We all collapse at the end of every term, exhausted. But we also face a mountain of marking over the holidays. This term it was thanks to NAPLAN being changed to March, landing right in the middle of Week 8 of the term, when most schools are carrying out their first assessments of students, costing us valuable classroom time during term time. We are used to being treated inconsiderately by Department of Education bureaucrats both state and federal who have never worked in schools and are ignorant of the reality. But we remember every disrespect.

Teachers are routinely disrespected in the media. When NAPLAN results show problems in the system, the media pivots towards blaming teachers, often starting culture wars by accusing teachers of "woke agendas" such as teachers teaching the truth that our planet is warming due to fossil fuels, the truth of Australia's inglorious history of invasions both of this continent and other countries, the truth that Australians HAVE committed war crimes, and making sense of how the current war in Iran impacts our daily lives, and teaching the truth about the genocide in Palestine. But meanwhile our government deliberately suppresses teaching about Palestine in service to the Allan government's vision of turning Victoria into an arms manufacturing state.

The last Agreement in government schools left a bitter taste. While there were some real small gains such as lifting the minimum wage to support staff, overall it was a below inflation pay rise and a “Time in Lieu” clause under the slogan “the era of free work is over”. This TIL clause was not funded by the Department, who dishonestly wriggled their way out of it by imposing severe restrictions on TIL through regulation. Only action by the AEU got this addressed at a state level, but individual Principals are still refusing to credit it, thanks to the power handed them decades ago by the Kennett government, whose wrecking ball through schools in the early 1990s still echoes today.

So now we are back for a reckoning. A pay rise that catches up on lost wages and puts us on a parity with teachers interstate. Caps on class sizes and reduced face to face time to help teacher burnout. Paid lunch breaks for education support workers who often work through lunch without pay.

The recent AEU strike had a massive impact in the media. I personally do not believe it will be enough to shift the government, who are still negotiating with the AEU as if their offer on the strike day was not a complete insult.

To have a real impact on students’ lives, we need hard caps on maximum class sizes and reduced face-to-face teaching time at the same time as addressing the real pay needs of school staff in Victoria, who are often locked out of their local school areas by rising mortgages and rents. This will give more time for all staff to pay attention to individual students and plan more creative units of teaching. I will settle for nothing less.

Thank you in advance for Merri-bek Council’s support for this important fight that goes beyond our immediate industrial demands. This is a fight for quality education in Victoria, a fight so that our licence plates are not just empty slogans, but make Victoria The Education State.

### **Statement 3**

**Virginia Mendoza** made the following statement:

I would like to provide an Education Support perspective, I’m an Education Support staff member at Coburg High and I’ve worked in this field for 14 years.

I’ve worked in classrooms, and while the work is tough, it’s also incredibly rewarding. You go home smiling every day but you don’t clock off. You go home thinking about students and how you can engage and support them. It’s a labour of love, it’s not for the money.

Under the current agreement, the allowance introduced in 2021 was starting at \$52,250. Last year it increased to around \$56,580 for a year’s pay. On paper, a full-time salary of around \$56,580 might look reasonable but due to funding cuts, schools are not employing Education Support workers as full time, it’s either 0.8 or 0.76 etc. The actual annual income can fall closer to \$45,264 the living wage is approximately \$49,000. I am at the limit of my classification and I cannot get paid any higher than that. Despite this, my role goes far beyond a single position. I act as a wellbeing officer, communications and marketing support, and I manage Student Support Groups for our most vulnerable students—advocating for years eight to twelve. I go home thinking about how to help them. I’ve organised interpreter services so families can properly engage with the school.

When Education Support workers are asking for more money, they are asking for a base level to be able to live.

### **De Chene Community Garden**

Council received three questions and one statement, they were presented to Council.

**Samatha Bond** asked Council:

#### **Question 1**

Will the Council release the full soil testing results for the Radicle Roots Community Garden in De Chene Reserve and not just the ‘outcomes’?

**At the request of the Mayor, Acting Director Community, Lisa Dempster responded:**

Yes, Council could share the soil testing results with the Radicle Roots Community Garden. Council is seeking a formalised agreement with the group and nomination of a designated contact person to support clear and consistent communication.

This approach would ensure that information is provided responsibly, with the opportunity for Council officers to discuss the results, answer any questions, and work collaboratively on any required next steps. Council remains committed to transparency and to working constructively with the group as these arrangements are finalised.

**Question 2**

Will the community be provided with access to the garden for watering and maintenance?

**At the request of the Mayor, Acting Director Community, Lisa Dempster responded:**

Yes, officers could work with the designated contact person to open up the garden for watering and maintenance during this period.

**Marcus Belmore** asked Council:

**Question 3**

What is being done to address the root causes of contamination in food and everyday life.

**At the request of the Mayor, Acting Director Community, Lisa Dempster responded:**

The question would be taken on notice but would refer to the Food System Strategy that does outline how we support the availability of fresh food in Merri-bek and how we are helping communities connect with food systems.

**Statement**

**Teddy** made the following statement:

I have been involved with the community garden at De Chene Reserve since its conception in 2023, and it has become one of my favourite places in the world. Every time I go there, I feel like I can breathe again. At the moment, it is full of beautiful pink cosmos flowers—many people have noticed them through the fence.

This is a place that is always overflowing with community, I love it. There is always someone in there and always someone willing to stop and have a chat, which feels increasingly rare. It's maintained through regular community involvement in the garden, attending working bees weekly on Saturday. and throughout summer we had people watering every day, which was a huge effort. This highlights how much engagement we have from local residents. The garden is really important to families and locals like me. Seeing it fenced was sad and hard, we are keen to work out what to do there.

I hope the garden can continue to grow and continue its beautiful work for a very long time.

**West Street Shopping Strip, Hadfield**

**Matthew Deller** asked Council:

To inspect the works occurring in front of the shops as they are affecting traffic and people are not shopping there.

**Mayor, Cr Abboud** responded:

A time would be made to follow up on the matter outside of the meeting.

**NON-AGENDA ITEMS - QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE**

Council received a further 2 questions that were taken on notice relating to:

- Enforcement of road rules.

*Public Question Time concluded at 7.20 pm.*

## COUNCIL REPORTS

### 7.1 DOG WALKING IN MERRI-BEK PROJECT

#### Executive Summary

This report outlines the key outcomes, learnings, and recommendations arising from the six-month stage 1 pilot Dog Walking in Merri-bek Project. Since the July 2025 Council Meeting, Council officers have spoken with over 1,100 community members across 80 parks as well as reviewed feedback from 8 engagement pop-ups as well as feedback via the Conversations Merri-bek website. The community were generally very supportive of the changes in 7 of the 8 Pilot parks. Tate Reserve remains a challenge and is subject to further stakeholder engagement. While some concerns remain about the modest reduction of the dog off lead areas in Gilpin Park and Fleming Park, the other improvements to the parklands have been welcomed.

Since 2020, dog ownership has increased steadily across the municipality. This has resulted in many positive community outcomes. And while the majority of dog owners remain responsible, there is growing concern from both dog owners and non-dog owners about increasing poor behaviour and a disregard for the Local Law.

The Pilot changes in Stage 1 have provided additional learnings including: (i) the need for some changes to existing zoning and new dog off lead areas to improve legibility, protect waterways and reduce conflict; (ii) ongoing investment in amenities (bins, water, seating, shade, and fencing etc.); and (iii) improved communication of clearly mapped dog off leash areas and reminders of the responsibilities of dog ownership needs to be provided to dog owners and displayed in our parks.

This project continues to represent an important opportunity to ensure our open spaces remain safe, inclusive, and sustainable for all members of the Merri-bek community.

#### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the community engagement outcomes of the Stage 1 pilot Dog Walking in Merri-bek project summarised in Attachment 1 of this report and thanks the community for their significant contributions throughout the six-month pilot period of engagement.
2. Endorses the recommendations arising from the six-month pilot program across seven of eight identified parks (Attachment 2) including interventions for improved amenities and signage.
3. Acknowledges that recommendations arising from the Tate Reserve pilot will be deferred to enable specific site issues to be worked through.
4. Allocates \$220,000 from the Public Resort and Recreation Land Fund in 2026/27 in the draft budget to provide for improved amenities and signage related to the recommendations in Stage 1.
5. Receives a report by mid-2027 outlining a proposed stage 2.

#### Resolution

**Cr Irvin moved, Cr Yildiz seconded -**

**That Council:**

1. **Notes the community engagement outcomes of the Stage 1 pilot Dog Walking in Merri-bek project summarised in Attachment 1 of this report and thanks the community for their significant contributions throughout the six-month pilot period of engagement.**

2. **Endorses the recommendations arising from the six-month pilot program across seven of eight identified parks (Attachment 2) including interventions for improved amenities and signage.**
3. **Acknowledges that recommendations arising from the Tate Reserve pilot will be deferred to enable specific site issues to be worked through.**
4. **Allocates \$220,000 from the Public Resort and Recreation Land Fund in 2026/27 in the draft budget to provide for improved amenities and signage related to the recommendations in Stage 1.**
5. **Receives a report by mid-2027 outlining a proposed stage 2.**

7.21 pm *Cr Bolton left the meeting during the debate.*

7.21 pm *Cr Miles left the meeting during the debate.*

7.23 pm *Cr Bolton returned to the meeting during the debate.*

**Carried unanimously**

## **7.2 SHARED E-BIKE SCHEME FOR MERRI-BEK**

### **Executive summary**

Shared mobility programs across Melbourne have expanded rapidly since their introduction in 2020, with strong uptake alongside ongoing challenges related to parking, safety, and integration across municipal boundaries. Following a Victorian Government trial, councils are now progressing shared mobility services independently, with varying delivery models and timelines.

Merri-bek resolved to proceed with a shared e-bike scheme in collaboration with several other councils. A further Council resolution in August 2025 revised the Merri-bek shared e-bike framework to move to fully on-street parking and operator-funded infrastructure. While this approach responds to community concerns regarding footpath access and safety, it also has implications for commercial feasibility, delivery complexity, and operator interest.

At the same time, neighbouring councils are progressing shared e-bike schemes independently. The absence of a coordinated multi-council approach creates uncertainty around cross-boundary compatibility and reduces the benefits of an integrated network.

In this context, proceeding to procurement at this stage would expose Council to elevated delivery, financial, and reputational risk. A pause is therefore recommended to allow neighbouring Councils' schemes to mature, provide clearer evidence on operational models and market conditions, and enable Merri-bek to determine a more viable and aligned approach to bringing shared e-bike services to the municipality.

### **Officer recommendation**

That Council:

1. Approves a pause on progressing a shared e-bike scheme.
2. Receives a future report when a Merri-bek shared e-bike scheme becomes feasible.

## Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Pulford seconded -

That Council:

1. Approves a pause on progressing a shared e-bike scheme.
2. Receives a future report when a Merri-bek shared e-bike scheme becomes feasible.

7.28 pm Cr Yildiz left the meeting during the debate.

7.28 pm Cr Yildiz returned to the meeting during the debate.

7.28 pm Cr Yildiz left the meeting during the debate.

7.30 pm Cr Yildiz returned to the meeting during the debate.

Carried unanimously

## 7.3 PROPOSED AMENDMENT C239MBEK – BRUNSWICK AND COBURG ACTIVITY CENTRES HERITAGE PROJECT: DECISION GATEWAY 1

### Executive summary

The Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres contain a mix of commercial shopfronts, civic and community buildings, former industrial buildings, and residential development ranging from the nineteenth century to the present day. As key Activity Centres, both centres have seen (and will continue to see), significant change and development.

Following two Council resolutions, Council engaged independent consultants, GML Heritage, in 2024 to provide technical heritage expertise for the project. The work was delivered in two stages:

- **Stage 1:** Preliminary heritage assessment of all properties within the activity centre boundaries. Stage 1 is not addressed in this report.
- **Stage 2:** Detailed heritage investigation and recommendations for places identified in Stage 1.

Council received GML Heritage's final report, *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Study – Stage 2 Final Report* (Stage 2 Report), in June 2025. The Stage 2 Report is provided at Attachment 1. An independent peer review was completed in October 2025 by Lovell Chen Heritage Consultants (see Attachment 2).

Based on this work, officers recommend that Council adopt the Stage 2 Report as the strategic basis for Amendment C239mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme and seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit the Amendment.

The proposed Amendment will ensure the Heritage Overlay is current and accurate, including the identification of places of heritage significance in areas undergoing change. Specifically, the Amendment will:

- Apply the Heritage Overlay to six individually significant places.
- Apply the Heritage Overlay to one new heritage precinct.
- Amend four existing Heritage Overlay precincts.
- Correct mapping errors affecting HO170 and HO600.

*The Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Project: Summary of findings and officer recommendations* report is at Attachment 3.

## Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Study: Stage 2 Final Report* (GML Heritage, 2025) at Attachment 1 as the general basis for Amendment C239mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Amendment).
2. Notes the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres Heritage Study Peer Review* (Lovell Chen, 2025) at Attachment 2 and the *Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centre Heritage Project: Summary of findings and officer recommendations* report at Attachment 3.
3. As the planning authority, applies to the Minister for Planning (Minister) under section 8A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) (Act), for authorisation to prepare the Amendment.
4. If authorisation is received:
  - a) Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make changes to the draft Amendment documentation at Attachment 5 as required prior to exhibition of the Amendment to correct any administrative errors and to meet any conditions the Minister imposes through authorisation.
  - b) Endorses, for the purpose of exhibition, the draft Amendment documentation at Attachment 5, subject to any changes required under (4)(a) above.
  - c) Exhibits the Amendment in accordance with sections 17, 18 and 19 of the Act.

## Resolution

**Cr Bolton moved, Cr Abboud seconded -**

**That Council defers the item to the May 2026 Council Meeting to allow further consideration.**

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

**Carried unanimously**

## 7.4 DRAFT CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES STRATEGY 2026-2029

### Executive Summary

Children and families are at the heart of Merri-bek. Their voices, ideas and lived experiences help shape a vibrant, caring and connected community. By listening deeply and acting with purpose, Council, our partners and the wider community demonstrate that children and families are valued, celebrated and central to our city's future. The draft Children, Young People and Families Strategy 2026–2029 (Attachment 1) sets out an inspiring shared vision for how agencies, governments, families, and the community will work together to create opportunities, strengthen wellbeing, and support every child and family to thrive in Merri-bek.

It identifies three key priority areas: Health and Wellbeing; Connection and Inclusion; Learning and Thriving. A series of strategic objectives are planned under each of these priority areas that will form the basis of a two-year Implementation Plan, incorporating detailed actions, time frames and resourcing requirements. The strategy will inform Council's existing operations, as well as identified collaboration and partnering opportunities with external organisations and the community to deliver on the key strategies.

The strategy was developed through a process of research and data analysis along with a comprehensive stakeholder and community engagement process. Over 4,000 individual comments and pieces of feedback were collected from approximately 1,400 participants through a wide range of methods. A detailed Implementation Plan that outlines specific actions, timelines and responsibilities is being developed to support the delivery of the strategy.

### **Officer Recommendation**

That Council endorses the draft Children Young People and Families Strategy 2026–2029 for public exhibition between 9 April 2026 – 27 April 2026.

### **Resolution**

**Cr Politis moved, Cr Svensson seconded -**

**That Council endorses the draft Children Young People and Families Strategy 2026–2029 for public exhibition between 9 April 2026 – 27 April 2026.**

**Carried unanimously**

## **7.5 PRESERVING MERRI-BEK'S PROUD MIGRANT HISTORY THROUGH ART AND STORY TELLING**

### **Executive Summary**

This report responds to Council's 8 October 2025 resolution (Item 8.8) to investigate options for collecting and recording migrant stories and histories across Merri-bek, to deliver them through accessible arts and libraries programs.

Coburg Stories historic projections is an event that responds to this ambition, collecting migrant stories and sharing them through an accessible projection program, walking tour and library events. These stories will add to the body of knowledge about migrant communities in Merri-bek, and provide a celebration of our shared history and identity in Coburg. The story of migration to Merri-bek will be shared through a social media campaign during the event, and the stories, interviews and images gathered will be made available through the libraries' online local history collection.

### **Officer Recommendation**

That Council:

1. Receives the report on preserving Merri-bek's Proud Migrant History Through Art and Story Telling.
2. Notes that the upcoming Coburg Stories historic projections will be delivered in June-July 2026 and will showcase Greek, Italian, Chinese and Lebanese migration stories alongside First Nations history.

### **Resolution**

**Cr Theodosis moved, Cr Politis seconded -**

**That Council:**

1. **Receives the report on preserving Merri-bek's Proud Migrant History Through Art and Story Telling.**
2. **Notes that the upcoming Coburg Stories historic projections will be delivered in June-July 2026 and will showcase Greek, Italian, Chinese, Lebanese and Turkish migration stories alongside First Nations history.**

3. **Commissions a professional historian to undertake research that tells the full story of migration in Merri-bek, showcasing the significant migrant communities and their contribution to Merri-bek over time; and refers a project cost of \$40,000 to the budget process for consideration, noting this is unlikely to be accommodated in the upcoming 2026-2030 budget (being considered for draft endorsement 15 April 2026), and would be considered for prioritisation in future years.**

**Carried unanimously**

## **7.6 SUBURB BOUNDARY REALIGNMENT BRUNSWICK/BRUNSWICK EAST - 251-265 LYGON STREET AND 1A PITT STREET**

### **Executive Summary**

The need for a minor realignment of a suburb boundary has emerged due to mixed-use development currently under construction across multiple land parcels, attributed to Brunswick and Brunswick East. The current suburb boundary bisects the development; it is not compliant and needs to be realigned. The current and proposed suburb boundary realignment is indicated in the maps in the background and issues sections of this report.

This recommendation is independent of any current or future planning processes or decisions. The current project developer is the only property owner impacted by the proposed change and is in support of the proposal. There is no budget impact of this report.

As the naming and numbering authority Council is responsible for the maintenance of suburb boundaries. The proposed re-alignment is the most effective resolution, by encompassing the entire development into the Brunswick East suburb.

### **Officer Recommendation**

That Council endorses the suburb boundary realignment of Brunswick and Brunswick East to encompass the entire mixed-use development at 251-265 Lygon Street, Brunswick East and 1A Pitt Street, Brunswick into Brunswick East, as outlined in this report.

### **Resolution**

**Cr Irvin moved, Cr Pulford seconded -**

**That Council endorses the suburb boundary realignment of Brunswick and Brunswick East to encompass the entire mixed-use development at 251-265 Lygon Street, Brunswick East and 1A Pitt Street, Brunswick into Brunswick East, as outlined in this report.**

**Carried unanimously**

## 7.7 DRAFT RATES HARDSHIP POLICY

### Executive Summary

Council adopted its Hardship Policy in September 2022 (Attachment 2), with a scheduled review prior to July 2026. The current policy was developed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and includes long-term assistance provisions designed to support individuals and businesses experiencing ongoing financial impacts from that period.

While the existing policy addresses the key findings of the Victorian Ombudsman's *Hardship – Local Councils* report (May 2021), the regulatory environment has since changed. In late 2025, the Minister for Local Government issued updated *Ministerial Guidelines Relating to the Payment of Rates and Charges*, which introduces strengthened expectations for councils in the management of financial hardship and recovery practices.

The updated draft Rates Hardship Policy has been comprehensively revised to ensure full alignment with the 2025 Ministerial Guidelines and to reflect contemporary best practice. The review has resulted in several substantial changes, including:

- The removal of all non-rates hardship provisions from this policy, with those matters to be addressed through a separate standalone policy.
- Structural and procedural changes to ensure consistency with the Ministerial Guidelines and the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- Minor administrative and operational updates to improve clarity, consistency and application.

The revised policy provides a clearer, more compliant framework for the management of rates and charges hardship, while maintaining Council's commitment to fairness, transparency and community support.

### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the Draft Rates Hardship Policy (provided as Attachment 1 to this report), for the purposes of community consultation.
2. Invites feedback on the Draft Rates Hardship Policy for the 10-day consultation period from Tuesday 5 May until Tuesday 19 May 2026 at 5pm.
3. Makes the Draft Rates Hardship Policy available on Conversations Merri-bek website and hard copies available on request.
4. Receives a further report back at its meeting on 10 June 2026 outlining any feedback received and presenting the final policy for consideration and adoption.

### Resolution

**Cr Pulford moved, Cr Miles seconded -**

**That Council:**

1. **Endorses the Draft Rates Hardship Policy (provided as Attachment 1 to this report), for the purposes of community consultation.**
2. **Invites feedback on the Draft Rates Hardship Policy for the 10-day consultation period from Tuesday 5 May until Tuesday 19 May 2026 at 5pm.**
3. **Makes the Draft Rates Hardship Policy available on Conversations Merri-bek website and hard copies available on request.**
4. **Receives a further report back at its meeting on 10 June 2026 outlining any feedback received and presenting the final policy for consideration and adoption.**

**Carried unanimously**

Having declared a conflict of interest in Report 7.8, Cr Irvin left the meeting at 7.58 pm.

Having declared a conflict of interest in Report 7.8, Cr Theodosis left the meeting at 7.59 pm.

## **7.8 2025-26 THIRD QUARTER FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Third Quarter Financial Report outlines Council's progress in delivering the adopted/approved budget. It compares actual revenue and expenditure against year-to-date (YTD) budget figures and evaluates second-quarter financial performance to project the expected result for 30 June 2026.

At the end of February 2026, a comprehensive financial review was completed across the organisation to produce the 2025–26 Third Quarter Financial Review (Q3 Forecast). This process allows Council to assess its YTD performance and redirect available financial resources to better support its strategic priorities. The outcomes of this review are presented in this report as the Q3 Forecast.

For the eight months ended 28 February 2026 an operating surplus of \$88.2 million was achieved, which is \$1.9 million lower than the YTD budget of \$90.1 million. It is important to note that the operating surplus does not convert to immediately available cash to Council. Surplus funds are used to fund important community infrastructure projects as well as being restricted by legislation for future infrastructure investment.

Council's forecast adjusted underlying surplus of \$18.1 million is \$1.5 million more than the Q2 forecast of \$16.6 million. This result is important as it measures Council's ability to generate a surplus in the ordinary course of business – excluding non-recurrent capital grants, non-monetary asset contributions, and other contributions to fund capital expenditure from net results.

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 \$30.8 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking below the year-to-date (YTD) budget of \$46.1 million, with \$63.1 million budget remaining.

After a detailed review of the capital works program, there is a forecast decrease of \$11.2 million from the Q2 forecast of \$80.1 million to \$68.9 million. This is due to \$11.7 million of additional carry forwards into 2026-27 and \$2.0 million of savings, offset by 46 projects requiring additional funding of \$2.4 million and \$0.1 million of carry forwards required to be brought forward.

### **Officer Recommendation**

That Council:

1. Notes the 2025-26 Third Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 28 February 2026, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.
2. Notes the status of the capital works program for 2025-26.
3. Notes the full-year forecast for operating income of \$285.0 million, operating expenditure of \$250.5 million and an accounting surplus of \$34.5 million arising from the Third Quarter Financial Review.
4. Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$68.9 million, arising from the 2025-26 Third Quarter Financial Review.
5. Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2026-27 Capital Works Program (\$11.7 million):
  - a) Fully or partially grant (or external) funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:
    - Oak Park Sports and Aquatic – Electrification - \$1,293,194

- Glenroy Activity Centre Upgrade – Wheatsheaf Rd - \$917,861
  - Mitchell Parade Retaining Wall - \$828,947
  - Kendall/Harding Footbridge over Merri Creek - \$780,000
- b) Reserve funded projects:
- Balam Balam Place North West Building – Phoenix Street - \$289,118
  - Park Renewal, Volga Street/Middle Street (Design) - \$100,000
  - Park Renewal, Calder Reserve (Design and Construct) - \$52,700
  - Park Renewal, Gordon St – Minor Works - \$50,000
  - Coburg Library and Piazza Redevelopment - \$40,000
- c) Rates funded projects:
- Dunstan Reserve Childcare - \$1,600,000
  - Heavy Vehicles Replacement Program - \$1,270,000
  - Wheeler Street - Retaining Wall - \$915,000
  - Road Reconstruction, OHea Street from Lonsdale St to Clifton Grove - \$700,000
  - Light Vehicles Replacement Program - \$666,603
  - Road Reconstruction, Northumberland Rd from Crowley To Rhodes - \$600,000
  - Drainage, Moama Crescent and Jhonson Street - Hot Spot No 21 - \$266,650
  - Electricity Capacity Upgrades at Hadfield Depot - \$200,000
  - McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) - Social Room Amenities & Kitchen - \$200,000
  - Footpath & Bikepath Renewals - \$200,000
  - Wombat Crossing - West Street - \$200,000
  - Merri Trail - Flood Mitigation - Bridge to Darebin - \$150,000
  - Holbrook Reserve Pavilion and Gender Inclusive Change Rooms - \$139,538
  - Glenroy Movement and Place Plan - \$80,000
  - McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) - Pavillion Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$50,000
  - Corporate Carbon Reduction - \$50,000
  - Sylvester St Oak Park Land Slide - \$47,291
  - Balfe Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$30,000
  - DeChene Reserve – Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$28,460
6. Approves funding for the following new projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$0.8 million):
- Merri Creek Trail Realignment – Bowden Reserve - \$300,000
  - Oak Park Pool – Blanket Replacement - \$180,000
  - Stormwater Rectification - \$110,000
  - Coburg Leisure Centre – Locker Replacement - \$70,000
  - Council Chambers Artwork Restoration - \$50,000
  - ATC Cook Reserve – Off-street Carpark - \$25,000
  - Body Worn Cameras & Radios - \$23,039
7. Approves additional funding for the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$1.4 million):
- Allard Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$329,459
  - Forward Road Design - \$224,645
  - Road Reconstruction, Devon Street from View to Oak - \$221,493
  - Road Reconstruction, Jersey St from Ohea to Gaffney – Both Carriageways - \$89,000

- Road Reconstruction, Fowler Street from Walsh to Dead End - \$70,274
  - Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program - \$64,000
  - Minor Park – Tate Reserve (Removal) - \$50,903
  - Brunswick Early Years Hub - \$50,691
  - York Street Park Close to Home - \$43,387
  - Business Transformation – mobile phone purchases - \$41,625
  - Edgars Creek Corridor Connection Project - \$32,034
  - Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades - \$31,500
  - Shore Reserve – Football & Cricket - \$30,000
  - Victoria Street Brunswick West MCHC - \$27,979
  - City Infrastructure – mobile phone purchases - \$20,317
  - Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - \$18,681
  - Municipal Art Collection - \$18,000
  - Glenroy College – Open Space - \$10,000
  - Gowanbrae Dog Park - \$9,624
  - Road Reconstruction, Herbert Street from Pascoe Vale to Dead End - \$5,599
  - Community – mobile phone purchases - \$4,679
  - Place & Environment – mobile phone purchases - \$2,772
  - Public Art Program Across Merri-bek - \$1,369
  - Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal - \$783
  - Fawkner Transport Study Projects - \$5,763
8. Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$ 1.7 million):
- Road Reconstruction, Northumberland Rd from Arndt to Crowley - \$757,571
  - Road Reconstruction, Grandview Ave from Brearley to Princes - \$231,657
  - Road Reconstruction, Baxter Street from Sydney Kerb Line to Railway Kerb Line - \$197,576
  - Alva Gr from Urquhart to Bell, Road Reconstruction - \$189,683
  - Merri Trail - Flood Mitigation - Bridge to Darebin 1 - \$100,000
  - Kent Road - Separated Bike Lane Trial - \$87,585
  - Hosken Reserve Stage 3 Football Pitches - \$66,181
  - De Carle Street from Donald to Davies Road Reconstruction - \$53,108
  - Balfe Parks Sports Field Lights - \$44,550
  - Batman Avenue Shared Path - Upfield Shared Path - \$305
9. Notes, as at the end of the third quarter, as per Section 97(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Chief Executive Officer is of the opinion that a revised budget is not required, however impacts to the full year forecast will continue to be closely monitored.

## Resolution

**Cr Pulford moved, Cr Svensson seconded -**

**That Council:**

- 1. Notes the 2025-26 Third Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 28 February 2026, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.**
- 2. Notes the status of the capital works program for 2025-26.**
- 3. Notes the full-year forecast for operating income of \$285.0 million, operating expenditure of \$250.5 million and an accounting surplus of \$34.5 million arising from the Third Quarter Financial Review.**
- 4. Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$68.9 million, arising from the 2025-26 Third Quarter Financial Review.**

5. Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2026-27 Capital Works Program (\$11.7 million):
- a) Fully or partially grant (or external) funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:
    - Oak Park Sports and Aquatic – Electrification - \$1,293,194
    - Glenroy Activity Centre Upgrade – W heatsheaf Rd - \$917,861
    - Mitchell Parade Retaining Wall - \$828,947
    - Kendall/Harding Footbridge over Merri Creek - \$780,000
  - b) Reserve funded projects:
    - Balam Balam Place North West Building – Phoenix Street - \$289,118
    - Park Renewal, Volga Street/Middle Street (Design) - \$100,000
    - Park Renewal, Calder Reserve (Design and Construct) - \$52,700
    - Park Renewal, Gordon St – Minor Works - \$50,000
    - Coburg Library and Piazza Redevelopment - \$40,000
  - c) Rates funded projects:
    - Dunstan Reserve Childcare - \$1,600,000
    - Heavy Vehicles Replacement Program - \$1,270,000
    - Wheeler Street - Retaining Wall - \$915,000
    - Road Reconstruction, OHea Street from Lonsdale St to Clifton Grove - \$700,000
    - Light Vehicles Replacement Program - \$666,603
    - Road Reconstruction, Northumberland Rd from Crowley To Rhodes - \$600,000
    - Drainage, Moama Crescent and Jhonson Street - Hot Spot No 21 - \$266,650
    - Electricity Capacity Upgrades at Hadfield Depot - \$200,000
    - McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) - Social Room Amenities & Kitchen - \$200,000
    - Footpath & Bikepath Renewals - \$200,000
    - Wombat Crossing - West Street - \$200,000
    - Merri Trail - Flood Mitigation - Bridge to Darebin - \$150,000
    - Holbrook Reserve Pavilion and Gender Inclusive Change Rooms - \$139,538
    - Glenroy Movement and Place Plan - \$80,000
    - McBryde St Reserve (Moomba Park) - Pavillion Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$50,000
    - Corporate Carbon Reduction - \$50,000
    - Sylvester St Oak Park Land Slide - \$47,291
    - Balfe Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$30,000
    - DeChene Reserve – Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$28,460
6. Approves funding for the following new projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$0.8 million):
- Merri Creek Trail Realignment – Bowden Reserve - \$300,000
  - Oak Park Pool – Blanket Replacement - \$180,000
  - Stormwater Rectification - \$110,000
  - Coburg Leisure Centre – Locker Replacement - \$70,000
  - Council Chambers Artwork Restoration - \$50,000
  - ATC Cook Reserve – Off-street Carpark - \$25,000
  - Body Worn Cameras & Radios - \$23,039
7. Approves additional funding for the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$1.4 million):
- Allard Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$329,459
  - Forward Road Design - \$224,645

- Road Reconstruction, Devon Street from View to Oak - \$221,493
- Road Reconstruction, Jersey St from Ohea to Gaffney – Both Carriageways - \$89,000
- Road Reconstruction, Fowler Street from Walsh to Dead End - \$70,274
- Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program - \$64,000
- Minor Park – Tate Reserve (Removal) - \$50,903
- Brunswick Early Years Hub - \$50,691
- York Street Park Close to Home - \$43,387
- Business Transformation – mobile phone purchases - \$41,625
- Edgars Creek Corridor Connection Project - \$32,034
- Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades - \$31,500
- Shore Reserve – Football & Cricket - \$30,000
- Victoria Street Brunswick West MCHC - \$27,979
- City Infrastructure – mobile phone purchases - \$20,317
- Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - \$18,681
- Municipal Art Collection - \$18,000
- Glenroy College – Open Space - \$10,000
- Gowanbrae Dog Park - \$9,624
- Road Reconstruction, Herbert Street from Pascoe Vale to Dead End - \$5,599
- Community – mobile phone purchases - \$4,679
- Place & Environment – mobile phone purchases - \$2,772
- Public Art Program Across Merri-bek - \$1,369
- Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal - \$783
- Fawkner Transport Study Projects - \$5,763

**8. Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$ 1.7 million):**

- Road Reconstruction, Northumberland Rd from Arndt to Crowley - \$757,571
- Road Reconstruction, Grandview Ave from Brearley to Princes - \$231,657
- Road Reconstruction, Baxter Street from Sydney Kerb Line to Railway Kerb Line - \$197,576
- Alva Gr from Urquhart to Bell, Road Reconstruction - \$189,683
- Merri Trail - Flood Mitigation - Bridge to Darebin 1 - \$100,000
- Kent Road - Separated Bike Lane Trial - \$87,585
- Hosken Reserve Stage 3 Football Pitches - \$66,181
- De Carle Street from Donald to Davies Road Reconstruction - \$53,108
- Balfe Parks Sports Field Lights - \$44,550
- Batman Avenue Shared Path - Upfield Shared Path - \$305

**9. Notes, as at the end of the third quarter, as per Section 97(3) of the Local Government Act 2020, the Chief Executive Officer is of the opinion that a revised budget is not required, however impacts to the full year forecast will continue to be closely monitored.**

**Carried unanimously**

8.01 pm *Cr Irvin returned to the meeting.*

8.01 pm *Cr Theodosius returned to the meeting.*

## 7.9 GOVERNANCE REPORT - APRIL 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.
- Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.
- Responses to Public Question Time items taken on notice at the 12 November 2025, 10 December 2025 and 11 March 2026 Council meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the responses.
- The summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 3 March 2026.
- The annual Strategic Risk Review.
- A report from Mayor, Cr Abboud on attendance at an approved activity, Fast Track 2026 Incivility: a threat to local democracy.
- A recommendation to adopt the Public Interest Disclosures Policy, as reviewed.
- A recommendation that Council approve the additional appointment of Councillor Politis to the Older Persons Reference Group.
- Recommendations relating to the Instrument of Delegation from Council to the Chief Executive Officer, increasing the current contract variation threshold from 5% to 15% as a contingency measure in response to the current economic environment. This adjustment will provide flexibility to manage cost fluctuations and support the continued delivery of services and capital works projects during this period of economic uncertainty. It is proposed that this change be in place for six months, with Council receiving a further report at its October 2026 meeting to review.

### Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee held 24 February 2026, at Attachment 1 to this report.
2. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.
3. Notes responses to questions taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 12 November 2025, 10 December 2025 and 11 March 2026 Council meetings, provided at Attachment 3 to this report.
4. Notes the summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 3 March 2026 at Attachment 4 to this report.
5. Notes the Strategic Risk Review.
6. Notes Mayor, Cr Abboud's report on attendance at an approved activity, Fast Track 2026 Incivility: a threat to local democracy.
7. Adopts the Public Interest Disclosure Policy at Attachment 5 to this report.
8. Appoints Cr Politis to the Older Persons Reference Group as an additional Councillor appointee for the remainder of 2025/26 Mayoral year.

9. Approves a temporary update for a period of six months to the Instrument of Delegation from Council to the Chief Executive Officer to temporarily increase the contract variation threshold from 5% to 15% as a contingency measure in response to the current economic environment.
10. In the exercise of the powers conferred by section 11 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the other legislation referred to in the attached Instrument of Delegation, delegates to the person holding the position, or acting in or performing the duties, of Chief Executive Officer the powers, duties and functions set out in the Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer, provided as Attachment 6 to this report, subject to the conditions and limitations specified in that Instrument and determines:
  - a) The instrument comes into force immediately when signed by the Chief Executive Officer and Mayor.
  - b) On the coming into force of the instrument the previous delegation to the Chief Executive Officer adopted 9 July 2025 is revoked.
  - c) The duties and functions set out in the instrument must be performed, and the powers set out in the instruments must be executed, in accordance with any guidelines or policies of Council that it may from time to time adopt.
11. Receives a report at its October 2026 Council meeting to review the Instrument of Delegation from Council to the Chief Executive Officer.

## Resolution

**Cr Pulford moved, Cr Svensson seconded -**

**That Council:**

1. **Notes the summary of minutes from the Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee held 24 February 2026, at Attachment 1 to this report.**
2. **Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.**
3. **Notes responses to questions taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 12 November 2025, 10 December 2025 and 11 March 2026 Council meetings, provided at Attachment 3 to this report.**
4. **Notes the summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 3 March 2026 at Attachment 4 to this report.**
5. **Notes the Strategic Risk Review.**
6. **Notes Mayor, Cr Abboud's report on attendance at an approved activity, Fast Track 2026 Incivility: a threat to local democracy.**
7. **Adopts the Public Interest Disclosure Policy at Attachment 5 to this report.**
8. **Appoints Cr Politis to the Older Persons Reference Group as an additional Councillor appointee for the remainder of 2025/26 Mayoral year.**
9. **Approves a temporary update for a period of six months to the Instrument of Delegation from Council to the Chief Executive Officer to temporarily increase the contract variation threshold from 5% to 15% as a contingency measure in response to the current economic environment.**
10. **In the exercise of the powers conferred by section 11 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the other legislation referred to in the attached Instrument of Delegation, delegates to the person holding the position, or acting in or performing the duties, of Chief Executive Officer the powers, duties and functions set out in the Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer, provided as Attachment 6 to this report, subject to the conditions and limitations specified in that Instrument and determines:**

- a) **The instrument comes into force immediately when signed by the Chief Executive Officer and Mayor.**
  - b) **On the coming into force of the instrument the previous delegation to the Chief Executive Officer adopted 9 July 2025 is revoked.**
  - c) **The duties and functions set out in the instrument must be performed, and the powers set out in the instruments must be executed, in accordance with any guidelines or policies of Council that it may from time to time adopt.**
11. **Receives a report at its October 2026 Council meeting to review the Instrument of Delegation from Council to the Chief Executive Officer.**

**Carried unanimously**

## **7.10 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT 2026-4 - BRUNSWICK BATHS 50 METRE OUTDOOR POOL RETILE AND ASSOCIATED WORKS**

### **Executive Summary**

Brunswick Baths is one of six Council-owned Aquatic and Leisure facilities and has been a significant community asset since opening in 1914 as an outdoor pool. The facility has undergone several upgrades over time, including the addition of indoor aquatic and health and wellbeing spaces in 1929. In 2011, the site closed for a major redevelopment and reopened in 2014, delivering a modernized facility including a new 50 metre outdoor pool.

Instances of pool tiling adhesive failure has occurred across the aquatics industry. This has now occurred within the 50 metre outdoor pool at Brunswick Baths resulting in tiles debonding from the pool shell. This presents a risk to patron safety, compromises the integrity of the asset, and creates an unacceptable operational hazard. As a result, the pool will be temporarily closed to allow retiling works to be undertaken, ensuring safe and compliant operation.

The scope of works includes closure and isolation of the 50 metre outdoor pool, draining of the pool, removal and disposal of existing tiles and associated materials, preparation and inspection of the pool shell substrate, and the supply and installation of a compliant, fit-for-purpose tiling system.

The works were released to public tender on 19 February 2026, with submissions closing on 10 March 2026. One (1) conforming tender was received. Following a comprehensive evaluation process, including assessment of cost, capability, and risk, On Time Developments (OTD) has been identified as the preferred contractor.

The 50 metre pool is scheduled to be closed from 4 May 2026 to 30 September 2026 to facilitate the works. Council officers are working with YMCA and Belgravia Leisure to identify alternative service options for users during this period which will result in a variation to the Aquatics and Leisure Management Service Contract.

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) Make a formal offer to On Time Developments ACN 121 982 992 (Contractor) to award to the Contractor contract RFT-2026-4 for the Brunswick Baths 50 metre pool retile (Contract) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:

- i. for a maximum fixed lump sum of \$883,000 (excluding GST) plus provisional sum(s) of \$32,000 (excluding GST), totaling \$918,000 (excluding GST)
  - b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:
    - i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and
    - ii. other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer.
2. Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; RFT-2026-4 for the Brunswick Baths 50 metre pool retile (Contract).

## **Resolution**

**Cr Pulford moved, Cr Miles seconded -**

**That Council:**

1. **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:**
  - a) **Make a formal offer to On Time Developments ACN 121 982 992 (Contractor) to award to the Contractor contract RFT-2026-4 for the Brunswick Baths 50 metre pool retile (Contract) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:**
    - i. **for a maximum fixed lump sum of \$883,000 (excluding GST) plus provisional sum(s) of \$32,000 (excluding GST), totaling \$918,000 (excluding GST)**
  - b) **Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:**
    - i. **the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and**
    - ii. **other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer.**
2. **Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; RFT-2026-4 for the Brunswick Baths 50 metre pool retile (Contract).**

**Carried unanimously**

## 7.11 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2026-1 - ROAD RECONSTRUCTION NORTH STREET, HADFIELD (SOUTH BOX COURT TO EAST STREET)

### Executive Summary

The Road Reconstruction of North Street, Hadfield (South Box Court to East Street) has been included in the 2026–2027 Capital Works Program under the Roads and Carparks Program. The project forms part of Road 2 Recovery (R2R).

The scope of works includes the installation of major underground drainage pipes and associated pits, reconstruction of the road pavement, existing concrete kerb and channel, vehicle crossings, footpaths, and drainage upgrade. The work must be undertaken in coordination with Yarra Valley Water (YVW) as Council are doing drainage along YVW major water main.

Following the tender evaluation process, MJ Construction Group Pty Ltd has been identified as the preferred tenderer based on the strength of their submission. Subject to contract award, the contractor has confirmed readiness to commence offsite preparatory works from 7 May 2026.

MJ Construction Group has successfully delivered projects of similar scale and complexity for Merri-bek and other councils, with strong performance outcomes. Onsite construction is scheduled to begin in early May 2026 and is expected to be completed over a 19-week period by early-September 2026 (weather permitting). The works will be delivered in two to three distinct sections to minimise disruption to residents and local traffic.

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) Make a formal offer to **MJ Construction Group Pty Ltd ACN 092 432 730 (Contractor)** to award the Contractor contract **RFT-2026-1 for Road Reconstruction North Street, Hadfield (South Box Court to East Street) (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:
    - i. For total contract value of \$1,249,564.00 (excluding GST), with the fixed lump sum amount of \$959,648.00 (excluding GST) and provisional sum of \$178,480 (excluding GST) for Road Reconstruction between Richmond Street to South Box Court and additional provisional sum of \$111,436.00 (excluding GST) for Road Reconstruction between Richmond Street and East Street Roundabout.
  - b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:
    - i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and
    - ii. other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer;
2. Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution:
  - a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; and
  - b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.

## **Resolution**

**Cr Miles moved, Cr Irvin seconded -**

**That Council:**

- 1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:**
  - a) Make a formal offer to MJ Construction Group Pty Ltd ACN 092 432 730 (Contractor) to award the Contractor contract RFT-2026-1 for Road Reconstruction North Street, Hadfield (South Box Court to East Street) (Contract) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:**
    - i. For total contract value of \$1,249,564.00 (excluding GST), with the fixed lump sum amount of \$959,648.00 (excluding GST) and provisional sum of \$178,480 (excluding GST) for Road Reconstruction between Richmond Street to South Box Court and additional provisional sum of \$111,436.00 (excluding GST) for Road Reconstruction between Richmond Street and East Street Roundabout.**
  - b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:**
    - i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and**
    - ii. other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer;**
- 2. Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution:**
  - a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; and**
  - b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.**

**Carried unanimously**

## **NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **8.1 SUPPORTING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND STAFF**

#### **Motion**

**That Council:**

- 1. Acknowledges the huge contribution our local public schools, teachers, staff and school communities make to Merri-bek.**
- 2. Notes reports that Victoria's public schools are the lowest funded in the country and that Victorian public teachers are the lowest paid in the country.**
- 3. Writes to Victorian Minister for Education, the Honorable Ben Carroll to express Council's support for public school teachers, staff, parents and students who are calling on the Victorian Government to fully fund our public schools, and provide fair pay and conditions to teachers and staff.**

## **Resolution**

**Cr Pulford moved, Cr Bolton seconded -**

**That Council:**

- 1. Acknowledges the huge contribution our local public schools, teachers, staff and school communities make to Merri-bek.**
- 2. Notes reports that Victoria's public schools are the lowest funded in the country and that Victorian public teachers are the lowest paid in the country.**
- 3. Writes to Victorian Minister for Education, the Honorable Ben Carroll to express Council's support for public school teachers, staff, parents and students who are calling on the Victorian Government to fully fund our public schools, and provide fair pay and conditions to teachers and staff, and reinstate full funding for the school tutor program.**
- 4. Welcomes the development of community groups such as Friends of John Fawkner College to support their local public schools.**

**Carried unanimously**

## **8.2 ADVOCATING TO THE STATE GOVERNMENT ON THE REMOVAL OF DEVON ROAD AND GAFFNEY STREET, PASCOE VALE RAILWAY CROSSINGS**

### **Motion**

**That Council:**

- 1. Writes to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Minister for Public, and Active Transport in Victoria, the Honorable Ben Carroll, advocating for:**
  - a) Removal of the Devon Road and Gaffney Street level crossings.**
  - b) Rebuilding Pascoe Vale railway station.**
  - c) Extension of Craigieburn shared path from Devon Road south to Gaffney Street.**
- 2. Adds the removal of the Devon Road and Gaffney Street Level crossings to its existing state advocacy priorities.**

## **Resolution**

**Cr Theodosis moved, Cr Miles seconded -**

**That Council:**

- 1. Writes to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Minister for Public, and Active Transport in Victoria, the Honorable Gabrielle Williams, advocating for:**
  - a) Removal of the Devon Road and Gaffney Street level crossings.**
  - b) Rebuilding Pascoe Vale railway station.**
  - c) Extension of Craigieburn shared path from Devon Road south to Gaffney Street.**
- 2. Adds the removal of the Devon Road and Gaffney Street level crossings to its existing state advocacy priorities.**

**Carried unanimously**

## **8.3 ENFORCEMENT OF CONTAMINATION AT DEMOLITION SITES IN MERRI-BEK**

### **Motion**

That Council writes to the Hon. Ben Carroll, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, requesting measures to improve on-site transparency for the community and provide assurance that asbestos has been safely removed before demolition works begin.

### **Resolution**

**Cr Abboud moved, Cr Miles seconded -**

**That Council writes to the Hon. Ben Carroll, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, requesting measures to improve on-site transparency for the community and provide assurance that asbestos has been safely removed before demolition works begin.**

**Carried unanimously**

## **NOTICE OF RESCISSION**

Nil.

## **FORESHADOWED ITEMS**

Cr Bolton foreshadowed a possible motion on further advocacy to the State Government on measures to improve building permit and inspection enforcement.

## **URGENT BUSINESS**

Nil.

The Council meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Confirmed

Cr Nat Abboud  
**MAYOR**