



Merri-bek
City Council

Minutes of the Special Council Meeting

Held in Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre,
90 Bell Street, Coburg
on Monday 22 June 2026

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The Mayor opened the meeting at 6.03 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	6.03 pm	6.50 pm
Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor	6.03 pm	6.50 pm
Cr Sue Bolton	6.09 pm	6.50 pm
Cr Liz Irvin	6.03 pm	6.50 pm
Cr Dr Jay Iwasaki	6.03 pm	6.50 pm
Cr Chris Miles	6.03 pm	6.50 pm
Cr Helen Politis	Apology	
Cr Adam Pulford	6.03 pm	6.50 pm
Cr Ella Svensson	6.03 pm	6.50 pm
Cr Katerine Theodosios	6.03 pm	6.50 pm
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	6.03 pm	6.50 pm

OFFICERS

Chief Executive Officer – Kate McCaughey
 Director Business Transformation – Sue Vujcevic
 Acting Director City Infrastructure – Greg Rodwell
 Director Place and Environment – Pene Winslade
 Director Community – Eamonn Fennessy
 Chief Financial Officer – Jemma Wightman
 Manager Governance and Strategy – Yvonne Callanan
 Unit Manager Governance and Risk – Sophie Barison

APOLOGIES

Cr Politis was an apology to the meeting.

DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Cr Liz Irvin disclosed a general conflict of interest in report *4.1 Proposed Merri-bek Council 4-Year Budget 2026-2030 – For Adoption* regarding budget allocations for the Kendall/Harding Street footbridge – BR070 over Merri Creek, due to her employer being involved in the project.

COUNCIL REPORTS

4.1 PROPOSED MERRI-BEK CITY COUNCIL 4-YEAR BUDGET 2026-2030 - FOR ADOPTION

Executive Summary

Council must prepare and adopt a rolling 4-year Budget that contains financial statements and other matters. Under the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020* (s 94(1)), this must be approved by Council no later than 30 June each year.

The purpose of this report is to present for adoption the 4-Year Budget 2026-2030 (Attachment 1).

The 4-Year Budget 2026-2030 continues to deliver services to Merri-bek's 195,000 plus residents within the 2.75 per cent rate cap set by the State Government, while prioritising the need for Council to remain financially sustainable over the next four years and over the long term. The 4-year budget balances investment in key initiatives and critical major projects with prudent financial management, ensuring Council can meet current community needs without compromising its capacity to respond to future pressures, maintain essential assets, and remain financially viable. Under the Victorian Local Government Act 2020, Council is required to manage its finances prudently and ensure ongoing financial viability, including the responsible management of financial risks and long-term liabilities.

Key features of the proposed budget include:

- An operating projects program of \$3.1 million in 2026-27 featuring:
 - Continued funding of (\$0.5 million annually for the next 3 years) for the Urban Forest Strategy which includes both regular tree planting and planting trees in tricky places (capital);
 - Continued funding of the outdoor help for seniors program - \$0.5 million annually for the next 3 years);
 - Additional community grant funding of \$250,000;
 - A Ramadan Nights community event at Bonwick Street, Fawkner - \$50,000;
 - Continuing the solar and/or thermal grants for low-income earners (\$0.3 million annually for the next 3 years);
 - Increased grant opportunities to support local artists (\$175,000 additional); and
 - Continuing the homelessness assertive outreach program for the next 3 years (\$200,000 per year).
- A capital works program of \$89.1 million featuring:
 - Complete detailed design for the \$60 million Coburg library and piazza, working towards construction commencing in mid-2028;
 - Commencing construction of the \$12.5 million Brunswick Early Years Hub;
 - Continuing to spend over the 4-year budget well above the \$12 (and indexed) per head per capita rate on transport infrastructure spend (at an average spend of \$15.34 per capita), despite a lower spend due to project delays in 2026-27 of \$8.94;
 - Roads and car parks renewal and maintenance (\$11.2 million);
 - Improvements to parks, open spaces, and streetscapes (\$10.6 million); and
 - Footpaths, bicycle paths, and transport infrastructure (\$5.8 million).

- As part of Council's participatory budgeting process earlier this year, funding six community budget ideas totaling \$400,000:
 - Adding dedicated risky play elements (risky playground) at Harmony Park, Coburg \$145,000;
 - Cool playgrounds, Safe Kids: Sun-Smart Shade for our Parks \$80,000;
 - Additional tree planting \$60,000 (split between tree planting and tricky tree planting);
 - Rehearsal, art production, and group space subsidies \$60,000;
 - Picnic tables in neighbourhood parks \$50,000; and
 - Free band programs for youth \$5,000.
- The proposed budget continues Council's strong commitment to delivering on its major projects pipeline with funds set aside for the Significant Projects Reserve to fund future projects. This reserve is being used as a part of the funding strategy for the Coburg library and piazza project.
- The proposed budget is aligned with the proposed Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2026-2027 provided as Attachment 4. The Council Action Plan is developed annually to support implementation of the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029 and identifies the strategic objectives and actions to deliver against the major initiatives and priorities (as contained in the Council Plan).

Since public exhibition of the Proposed 4-Year Budget 2026-2030 which occurred from 21 April to 21 May 2026, amendments have been made to develop the proposed budget based on new information (e.g., changes to fees as set by the State Government), final rates figures and minor capital works changes (phasing and funding assumptions). Details of the changes are summarised in section 3 of this report.

38 submissions were received on the proposed budget in the second round of community engagement; these submissions are in addition to the 40 eligible community budget ideas received in the first stage of engagement. A copy of public submissions received, and Council officer commentary is provided as Attachment 2.

The proposed budget has an unrestricted surplus of \$326,517. Officers are recommending this remains unallocated and is therefore kept aside as a contingency to allow for any unknown costs arising out of current fuel price, the Road Transport Contractual Chain Order (RTCCO) and supply chain uncertainty.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Having considered all submissions received and in accordance with Section 94 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, adopts the Annual Budget 2026-2030 (Attachment 1 to this report).
2. Formally declares the Rates Levies and Annual Service Charges for the 2026-27 rating year as follows:
 - a) Declaration of Rates and Charges:

In accordance with section 158 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the following rates and charges are declared for the rating year commencing 1 July 2026 and ending 30 June 2027.

b) Amount intended to be raised:

An amount of \$211,015,264 (or such other amount as is lawfully raised as a consequence of this resolution) be declared as the amount which Council intends to raise by general rates and the annual service charge, which is calculated as follows:

Category	Amount
Residential properties	\$163,915,543
Commercial properties	\$10,223,505
Industrial properties	\$7,355,521
Municipal charge	\$0
Service charges	\$29,508,296
Charge in lieu of rates on cultural and recreational lands	\$12,399
Total	\$211,015,264

Rates Information:

i. General rates:

A general rate to be declared for the 2026-27 financial year. The rateable amount per property will be determined by multiplying the Capital Improved Value of each rateable property by the rate in the dollar indicated in the following table:

Category	Rate
Residential properties	0.0023395 (0. 23395 cents in the dollar of Capital Improved Value)
Commercial properties	0.0023395 (0. 23395 cents in the dollar of Capital Improved Value)
Industrial properties	0.0023395 (0. 23395 cents in the dollar of Capital Improved Value)

ii. No amount is fixed as the minimum amount payable by way of general rate in respect of each rateable property within the municipal district.

c) Municipal charge:

No municipal charge is declared in respect of the 2026-27 financial year.

d) Annual service charge:

i. An annual service charge, for the collection and disposal of refuse, be declared in respect of the 2026-27 financial year.

ii. The annual service charge be in the sum of, and be based on the criteria, set out below:

Category	Rate
Household Rubbish - Shared	\$124.57
Household Rubbish - 80 litre	\$191.64
Household Rubbish - 120 litre	\$431.19
Household Rubbish - 160 litre	\$527.01
Household Rubbish - 200 litre	\$574.92

Household Rubbish - 240 litre	\$670.74
Household Rubbish - 160 litre (concession)	\$263.51
Household Rubbish - 200 litre (concession)	\$287.46
Household Rubbish - 240 litre (concession)	\$335.37
Household Rubbish – Fortnightly – Shared	\$103.43
Household Rubbish – Fortnightly – 80 litre	\$119.34
Household Rubbish – Fortnightly – 120 litre	\$159.13
Household Rubbish – Fortnightly – 240 litre	\$358.03
Household Rubbish – Fortnightly – 360 litre	\$556.94
Household Rubbish – Fortnightly – 240 litre (concession)	\$159.13
Household Rubbish – Fortnightly – 360 litre (concession)	\$358.03
Mixed Recycling - Shared	\$46.61
Mixed Recycling - 120 litre	\$53.78
Mixed Recycling - 240 litre	\$71.71
Mixed Recycling - 360 litre	\$161.35
Food & Garden Organics - Shared	\$56.67
Food & Garden Organics - 120 litre	\$87.18
Food & Garden Organics - 240 litre new services	\$196.16
Glass Recycling - Shared	\$10.98
Glass Recycling - 120 litre	\$16.90
Glass Recycling - 240 litre	\$38.02

e) Cultural and recreational land:

In accordance with section 4(4) of the *Cultural and Recreational Lands Act 1963*, the following amounts be declared as a charge in lieu of the general rate (which would otherwise be payable):

Glenroy Road, Glenroy	Northern Golf Club	12,399
Total:		12,399

f) Incentives:

No incentives are declared for the payment of general rates (and annual service charge described earlier in this resolution) before dates fixed or specified for their payment under section 167 of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

g) Interest on rates and charges:

- i. Interest is to be charged in accordance with section 172 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, on any amounts of rates and charges which have not yet been paid by the instalment dates fixed by the Minister in accordance with section 167 of the *Local Government Act 1989*;
- ii. That the interest to be charged is at the rate fixed under section 2 of the *Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983*, that applied on the first day of July immediately before the due date for payment; and
- iii. Interest on rates and charges is to be calculated from the date on which the instalment was due.

- h) Interest on unpaid monies:
 - i. Interest is to be charged on any amounts of money (other than rates and charges) which a person owes to the Council, and which has not been paid by the due date;
 - ii. The interest rate shall be determined by Council from time to time and shall not exceed the rate fixed from time to time by the Order-in-Council; and
 - iii. That such interest is to be applied in accordance with the provisions of section 120 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- 3. Notes that the fees and charges in the Annual Budget 2026-2030 have been updated from the Proposed Annual Budget 2026-2030 with the following changes. Statutory Fees and Charges have been increased by 2.75 per cent due to the fees and fines being set as part of the Victorian State Budget and gazette 05 May 2026.
- 4. Notes the Annual Budget 2026-2030 includes proposed borrowings for strategic land assembly in 2026-27 as well as borrowings in future years for the Coburg Library and Piazza project.
- 5. Notes the budget includes an allocation of \$500,000 to the Ballerri Mooroop project, subject to a future Council resolution in the event that the project does not receive external grants.
- 6. Notes that a minor unrestricted result of \$326,517 is proposed to be kept aside as a contingency to allow for any unknown costs arising out of current fuel price, the Road Transport Contractual Chain Order (RTCCO) and supply chain uncertainty.
- 7. Advises submitters that Council has considered their submissions relating to the Proposed Annual Budget 2026-2030 and that the submitters be advised of the outcome of the consideration as it relates to their specific submission through this Council report, and they be thanked for their contributions.
- 8. Adopts the Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2026-2027 (provided as Attachment 4) as the second year of actions to deliver against the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029.
- 9. Authorises the Director Business Transformation to finalise the Merri-bek Council Annual Budget 2026-2030 and Council Action Plan, including any amendments as a result of the adoption of the Budget 2026-2030 and or/minor administrative changes, including making the final documents available for public inspection.

Separating the Motion

With the agreement of Council, Council separated the part of the Proposed Budget relating to Kendall/Harding Street Footbridge – BR070 over Merri Creek to enable a Councillor with a disclosed conflict of interest to participate in the remainder of the Proposed Budget.

6.07 pm Having declared a conflict of interest in the Proposed Budget item relating to Kendall/Harding Street Footbridge – BR070 over Merri Creek, Cr Irvin left the meeting.

Resolution

Cr Theodosius moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council adopts as part of the Annual Budget 2026-2030 the proposed capital works funding allocation for all items relating to the Kendall/Harding Street Footbridge – BR070 over Merri Creek.

6.09 pm Cr Bolton entered the meeting during the debate.

Carried

6.09 pm Cr Irvin returned to the meeting.

Motion

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Davidson seconded –

That Council:

1. Having considered all submissions received and in accordance with Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020, adopts the Annual Budget 2026-2030 (Attachment 1 to this report).
2. Formally declares the Rates Levies and Annual Service Charges for the 2026-27 rating year as follows:

a) Declaration of Rates and Charges:

In accordance with section 158 of the Local Government Act 1989, the following rates and charges are declared for the rating year commencing 1 July 2026 and ending 30 June 2027.

b) Amount intended to be raised:

An amount of \$211,015,264 (or such other amount as is lawfully raised as a consequence of this resolution) be declared as the amount which Council intends to raise by general rates and the annual service charge, which is calculated as follows:

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Industrial properties	0.0023395 (0. 23395 cents in the dollar of Capital Improved Value)

- ii. No amount is fixed as the minimum amount payable by way of general rate in respect of each rateable property within the municipal district.

c) Municipal charge:

No municipal charge is declared in respect of the 2026-27 financial year.

d) Annual service charge:

- i. An annual service charge, for the collection and disposal of refuse, be declared in respect of the 2026-27 financial year.
- ii. The annual service charge be in the sum of, and be based on the criteria, set out below:

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Food & Garden Organics - 120 litre	\$87.18
Food & Garden Organics - 240 litre new services	\$196.16
Glass Recycling - Shared	\$10.98
Glass Recycling - 120 litre	\$16.90
Glass Recycling - 240 litre	\$38.02

e) Cultural and recreational land:

In accordance with section 4(4) of the Cultural and Recreational Lands Act 1963, the following amounts be declared as a charge in lieu of the general rate (which would otherwise be payable):

Glenroy Road, Glenroy	Northern Golf Club	12,399
Total:		12,399

- f) Incentives:
No incentives are declared for the payment of general rates (and annual service charge described earlier in this resolution) before dates fixed or specified for their payment under section 167 of the Local Government Act 1989.
- g) Interest on rates and charges:
 - i. Interest is to be charged in accordance with section 172 of the Local Government Act 1989, on any amounts of rates and charges which have not yet been paid by the instalment dates fixed by the Minister in accordance with section 167 of the Local Government Act 1989;
 - ii. That the interest to be charged is at the rate fixed under section 2 of the Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983, that applied on the first day of July immediately before the due date for payment; and
 - iii. Interest on rates and charges is to be calculated from the date on which the instalment was due.
- h) Interest on unpaid monies:
 - i. Interest is to be charged on any amounts of money (other than rates and charges) which a person owes to the Council, and which has not been paid by the due date;
 - ii. The interest rate shall be determined by Council from time to time and shall not exceed the rate fixed from time to time by the Order-in-Council; and
 - iii. That such interest is to be applied in accordance with the provisions of section 120 of the Local Government Act 2020.
- 3. Notes that the fees and charges in the Annual Budget 2026-2030 have been updated from the Proposed Annual Budget 2026-2030 with the following changes. Statutory Fees and Charges have been increased by 2.75 per cent due to the fees and fines being set as part of the Victorian State Budget and gazette 05 May 2026.
- 4. Notes the Annual Budget 2026-20230 includes proposed borrowings for strategic land assembly in 2026-27 as well as borrowings in future years for the Coburg Library and Piazza project.
- 5. Notes the budget includes an allocation of \$500,000 to the Ballerri Mooroop project, subject to a future Council resolution in the event that the project does not receive external grants.
- 6. Notes that a minor unrestricted result of \$326,517 is proposed to be kept aside as a contingency to allow for any unknown costs arising out of current fuel price, the Road Transport Contractual Chain Order (RTCCO) and supply chain uncertainty.
- 7. Advises submitters that Council has considered their submissions relating to the Proposed Annual Budget 2026-2030 and that the submitters be advised of the outcome of the consideration as it relates to their specific submission through this Council report, and they be thanked for their contributions.
- 8. Adopts the Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2026-2027 (provided as Attachment 4) as the second year of actions to deliver against the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029.
- 9. Authorises the Director Business Transformation to finalise the Merri-bek Council Annual Budget 2026-2030 and Council Action Plan, including any amendments as a result of the adoption of the Budget 2026-2030 and or/minor administrative changes, including making the final documents available for public inspection.

Amendment

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Pulford seconded –

That Point 5 of the Motion of be amended to read as follows:

- 5. Notes the budget includes an allocation of \$500,000 to the Ballerri Mooroop project, subject to a future Council resolution.**

Carried

Amendment

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That the following additions be added to Point 1 of the Motion as follows:

- 1. Having considered all submissions received and in accordance with Section 94 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, adopts the Annual Budget 2026-2030 (Attachment 1 to this report), subject to:**
 - a) Allocating an additional \$60,000 in the 2026-27 capital works program for Public art program across Merri-bek’;**
 - b) Allocating a total of \$200,000 in the capital works program for ‘Sydney Road planning & corridor study (\$140,000 in 2026-27 and \$60,000 in 2027-28); and**
 - c) Offsetting points a) – b) by:**
 - i) Reducing the strategic priority supporting local artists (additional grants) by \$60,000 (from \$175,000 to \$115,000); and**
 - ii) Reducing the strategic priority ‘additional community grants’ by \$140,000 in 2026-27 and \$60,000 in 2027-28.**

Carried

Amendment

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Bolton seconded –

That the following additions be added to Point 1 of the Motion and Point 6 be amended as follows:

- 1. Having considered all submissions received and in accordance with Section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020, adopts the Annual Budget 2026-2030 (Attachment 1 to this report), subject to:**
 - a) Allocating an additional \$60,000 (\$120,000 in total) in the strategic priorities to ‘Youth Holistic Outreach Program’ in 2026-27; and**
 - b) Offsetting point a) by: Reducing the surplus by \$60,000**
- 6. Notes that a minor unrestricted result of \$266,517 is proposed to be kept aside as a contingency to allow for any unknown costs arising out of current fuel price, the Road Transport Contractual Chain Order (RTCCO) and supply chain uncertainty.**

Carried

Amendment

Cr Yildiz moved, Cr Bolton seconded –

That the following additions be added to Point 1 of the Motion and Point 6 be amended as follows:

1. Having considered all submissions received and in accordance with Section 94 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, adopts the Annual Budget 2026-2030 (Attachment 1 to this report), subject to:
 - a) Allocating \$35,000 in the 2026-27 capital works program to construct bi-fold windows at CB Smith Reserve; and
 - b) Offsetting a) by reducing the surplus by \$35,000.
6. Notes that a minor unrestricted result of \$231,517 is proposed to be kept aside as a contingency to allow for any unknown costs arising out of current fuel price, the Road Transport Contractual Chain Order (RTCCO) and supply chain uncertainty.

Lost

6.35 pm Cr Yildiz left the meeting during the debate.

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

Resolution

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Davidson seconded –

That Council:

1. Having considered all submissions received and in accordance with Section 94 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, adopts the Annual Budget 2026-2030 (Attachment 1 to this report) subject to:
 - a) Allocating an additional \$60,000 in the 2026-27 capital works program for ‘Public art program across Merri-bek’;
 - b) Allocating a total of \$200,000 in the capital works program for ‘Sydney Road planning & corridor study (\$140,000 in 2026-27 and \$60,000 in 2027-28); and
 - c) Offsetting points a) – b) by:
 - i. Reducing the strategic priority supporting local artists (additional grants) by \$60,000 (from \$175,000 to \$115,000); and
 - ii. Reducing the strategic priority ‘additional community grants’ by \$140,000 in 2026-27 and \$60,000 in 2027-28.
 - d) Allocating an additional \$60,000 (\$120,000 in total) in the strategic priorities to ‘Youth Holistic Outreach Program’ in 2026-27; and
 - e) Offsetting points d) by: Reducing the surplus by \$60,000.
2. Formally declares the Rates Levies and Annual Service Charges for the 2026-27 rating year as follows:
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In accordance with section 158 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the following rates and charges are declared for the rating year commencing 1 July 2026 and ending 30 June 2027.
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- i. An annual service charge, for the collection and disposal of refuse, be declared in respect of the 2026-27 financial year.**
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Total:		12,399

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h) Interest on unpaid monies:

- i. Interest is to be charged on any amounts of money (other than rates and charges) which a person owes to the Council, and which has not been paid by the due date;
- ii. The interest rate shall be determined by Council from time to time and shall not exceed the rate fixed from time to time by the Order-in-Council; and

iii. That such interest is to be applied in accordance with the provisions of section 120 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

3. Notes that the fees and charges in the Annual Budget 2026-2030 have been updated from the Proposed Annual Budget 2026-2030 with the following changes. Statutory Fees and Charges have been increased by 2.75 per cent due to the fees and fines being set as part of the Victorian State Budget and gazette 05 May 2026.
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6. Notes that a minor unrestricted result of \$266,517 is proposed to be kept aside as a contingency to allow for any unknown costs arising out of current fuel price, the Road Transport Contractual Chain Order (RTCCO) and supply chain uncertainty.
7. Advises submitters that Council has considered their submissions relating to the Proposed Annual Budget 2026-2030 and that the submitters be advised of the outcome of the consideration as it relates to their specific submission through this Council report, and they be thanked for their contributions.
8. Adopts the Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2026-2027 (provided as Attachment 4) as the second year of actions to deliver against the Merri-bek Council Plan 2025-2029.
9. Authorises the Director Business Transformation to finalise the Merri-bek Council Annual Budget 2026-2030 and Council Action Plan, including any amendments as a result of the adoption of the Budget 2026-2030 and or/minor administrative changes, including making the final documents available for public inspection.

6.42 pm Cr Yildiz left the meeting during the debate.

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

Carried

Cr Davidson called for a division.

For

Cr Davidson

Cr Yildiz

Cr Pulford

Cr Miles

Cr Svensson

Cr Iwasaki

Cr Abboud

Cr Irvin

Cr Theodosis

Total For (9)

Against

Cr Bolton

Total Against (1)

The Council meeting closed at 6.50 pm.

Confirmed

Cr Nat Abboud
MAYOR