



Merri-bek
City Council

PROPOSED
Minutes of the Council Meeting

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

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The Mayor opened the meeting at 6.32 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	6.32 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor	6.32 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Sue Bolton	6.32 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Liz Irvin	6.32 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Dr Jay Iwasaki	6.32 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Chris Miles	6.32 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Helen Politis	6.32 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Adam Pulford	6.34 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Ella Svensson	6.32 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Katerine Theodosis	6.32 pm	7.58 pm
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	Leave of absence	

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
 Manager Governance and Strategy – Yvonne Callanan
 Unit Manager Governance and Risk – Sophie Barison
 Governance and FOI Advisor – Saskia Hunter

APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Cr Politis requested a leave of absence for the period 25 June to 6 July 2026 (inclusive).

Motion

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Abboud seconded -

That Cr Politis be granted a leave of absence for the period 25 June to 6 July 2026 (inclusive).

Carried

Cr Yildiz requested a leave of absence for the period 25 June to 19 July 2026 (inclusive).

Motion

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That Cr Yildiz be granted a leave of absence from 25 June to 19 July 2026 inclusive.

Carried

Cr Irvin requested a leave of absence for the period 12 July to 19 July 2026 (inclusive).

Motion

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Davidson seconded -

That Cr Irvin be granted a leave of absence from 12 July to 19 July 2026 inclusive.

Carried

DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

MINUTE CONFIRMATION

Resolution

Cr Miles moved, Cr Davidson seconded -

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 10 June 2026 and the Special Council Meeting held on 22 June 2026 be confirmed.

Carried

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS

Mayor, Cr Abboud

- Acknowledged the passing of Cr Politis's mother, Stamata Politis and offered condolences.
- Extended condolences to the family, teammates and the wider community impacted by the tragic death of Nathan Fitzgerald an Epping Football Netball Club player. In response to this week's tragedy Council has completed an additional review of all sporting grounds in addition to its regular inspection and maintenance activities.
- Acknowledged Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, who visited the municipality in her role as Governor of Victoria. The Governor toured the Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre, Pentridge Museum with the National Trust, Holstep Health, BRUDI in Brunswick and the RMIT.

Cr Politis

- Acknowledged the Brunswick Voice 5 year anniversary.
- Acknowledged Naidoc Week, saluting the work of local indigenous women, Sheena Watt MP and Professor Marcia Langton AO.
- Attended at the Brunswick Community History Group's monthly presentation on the 1914 farewell of 300 World War 1 ANZAC soldiers that was held in Brunswick Town Hall. The servicemen are listed on the Honour Board in the Brunswick Town Hall foyer.

Cr Bolton

- Acknowledged consultation is being sought on the Fawkner Library upgrade via a paper survey that has to be lodged in person, in the library by Sunday 12 July.
- Acknowledged the future of Merri-bek Festivals Program public consultation is currently available on Council's website.
- Attended the Fawkner Neighbourhood House 'Have Your Say' session, that supports community members to better understand how to advocate to Council and State and Federal Governments

- Acknowledged the Glenroy Neighbourhood House did not obtain State Government funding to continue their food relief program, and has therefore had to cease this service to the community.
- Acknowledged the Sydney Road Accessible Tram Stops Campaign is holding its 3rd Anniversary Rally on Saturday 18 July at the Corner of Wilson Ave and Sydney Road, Brunswick – opposite the Barkly Square Shopping Centre
- Acknowledged the annual NAIDOC March will be held Friday 10 July starting at 12pm from the VAHS building in Nicholson Street, Fitzroy.

Cr Irvin

- Attended the Lizards with Bikes community day, where 4000 plants were planted.
- Attended the Migrant Histories Coburg Winter Walk.

PETITIONS

Nil.

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 7.1 Hope Street Streetscape Improvements

Council received 1 question, it was presented to Council.

Kenna Morrison asked Council:

Could another more specific, consultation asking people's opinions on closing Hope Street on the western side of Pearson Street to cars be conducted?

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

Thank you for your involvement in the Hope Street project and for taking the time to participate so constructively in the engagement process.

One of the key objectives for Hope Street is to reduce through traffic or "rat running" on local streets. Our staff considered the location of any potential traffic filter carefully.

The eastern side of the Hope Street / Pearson Street intersection was identified in the draft concept to address through-traffic using the Hope Street / Pearson Street connection as an alternative to the main roads. A closure on the western side of Pearson Street would leave the key Hope Street / Pearson Street movement available for east-west traffic. This would likely have been less effective in addressing through-traffic volumes on Hope Street.

During the consultation we heard community concerns about the proposed eastern-side closure and the access impacts it would have created for residents around the Gillon Oval end of Hope Street. That feedback is reflected in the report before Council tonight, and the closure is no longer proposed.

Given the extensive consultation already undertaken, we are not proposing to undertake an additional consultation stage on another option at this time. The current recommended design strikes a balance between improving safety and streetscape outcomes on Hope Street while responding to community feedback about access and local traffic circulation.

The report does also recommend that Council undertake a review in 2032, after the improvements have been implemented, and the Brunswick level crossing removal is completed.

Report 7.2 Financial Management Report for the period ended 31 May 2026

Council received 3 questions, they were presented to Council.

Question 1

Matthew Deller asked Council:

Regarding West Street, Hadfield shopping strip streetscape works, I would like to know how many Councillors who voted to press ahead with this project run or have run in the past their own business?

Mayor, Cr Abboud responded:

I am involved in running a business here in the city that is 20 years old, parking has always been an issue and construction has impacted that. As per the Governance Rules, this is a personal question and Councillors are not obliged to answer.

Question 2

Matthew Deller asked Council:

Why are construction vehicles left at the West Street site?

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

Thank you for your questions and feedback on the delivery of streetscape improvements to the West Street shopping strip. We understand construction is disruptive, our staff work really closely with local businesses and with the contractor to maintain access requirements for those affected. Council officers are doing their absolute best to keep local businesses up to date with construction progress and have been regularly responding to community concerns.

7.02 pm *Cr Bolton left the meeting.*

7.06 pm *Cr Bolton returned to the meeting.*

Question 3

Dave, on behalf of North Coburg Rebels Baseball Club asked Council:

Can Council advise what plans are in place to address drainage and surface issues at Parker Reserve/Alf Hicks Field, and what the timeline looks like for improvement works?

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

Thank you for your question, and thank you to yourself and the volunteers at Coburg Rebels Baseball Club and well done on the strong growth in participation across the club.

Council is aware of the ongoing issues affecting the playing surface at Parker Reserve. The primary challenge is the significant undulation and site stabilisation issues across the reserve, which impact surface drainage and result in areas remaining saturated following rainfall. Unfortunately, there is no simple or short-term solution that will adequately address these conditions. To identify the best long-term solution, officers are undertaking the Parker Reserve Facility Design Plan that investigates options to address the existing ground levels, drainage issues and associated site stabilisation issues to get informed costs of the work required. The design plan is expected to be completed over the coming months .

At this stage, Parker Reserve has lighting renewal proposed in 2030/31, however the ground redevelopment is not currently included in Council's five-year Capital Works Program. Once the facility design plan and feasibility work are complete, and costs associated are known the project will be considered as part of the development of Council's next 10-year Capital Works Program, where it will be assessed and prioritised alongside other open space and sportsground renewal projects across the municipality and subject to Council's capital planning and budget prioritisation processes.

In the meantime, Council's Sportsfield Maintenance team will continue to undertake seasonal maintenance works during the spring and summer periods. These activities are

aimed at improving the resilience of the playing surface ahead of future winter seasons. While these maintenance works can provide some benefit, they will not resolve the underlying drainage issues caused by the reserve's existing topography.

We understand the impact these conditions have on clubs, particularly as participation continues to grow. Council remains committed to working towards the a long-term solution that better supports the Coburg Rebels Baseball Club and the broader community.

NON-AGENDA ITEMS - QUESTIONS

Council received 3 questions, 1 was taken on notice and 2 were presented to Council.

Festivals Refresh

Question 1

Mitch Jones asked Council:

How will Council respond to the Council officer's proposal to implement the commitments made in the Merri-bek Arts and Culture Strategy to expand cultural opportunities north of Bell Street?

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

We are very engaged in the questions of how best to expand cultural opportunities north of Bell Street, including of course festivals. Officers are currently undertaken a community consultation requesting feedback on the proposed festival model which includes establishing a new festival in the north, and we encourage you to share your feedback and encourage other artists to have their say as well. Council will be considering community feedback on the festivals refresh in September including the proposal to expanding the scope of the festivals program more broadly.

Question 2

Mitch Jones asked Council:

Does Council consider that a majority of the Street Party budget going to event contractors is an equitable means of distributing arts and culture funding to artists and art workers?

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

We are aware of the proportion of income allocated to the large-scale production costs of our festivals, which have been increasing significantly since Covid. The Arts and Culture strategy advocates for artists as workers and we recognise the important role that Council plays in offering paid work to a range of artists working across the municipality. Again, there is a community consultation requesting feedback on a proposed festival model which seeks to increase paid opportunities for artists. We encourage you to share your feedback on this idea in the consultation and encourage other artists to get involved as well.

At the invitation of the Mayor, Cr Bolton responded:

There are two different elements to this discussion, which I was very focused on at the Council meeting where we had this discussion, particularly from the perspective of a Councillor from Fawkner and Coburg North. There is there is an importance to having some community events that bring a lot of different sections of the community together who don't normally have contact with each other, especially in this day and age of a lot of social division.

I think you are raising another side of it about culture and arts which is also important and culture arts activity, but I think those are two different purposes which overlap as well. I will think about what you've said tonight but I certainly do think there is a need to bring the community together.

7.12 pm *Cr Miles left the meeting.*

7.13 pm *Cr Miles returned to the meeting.*

NON-AGENDA ITEMS - QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Council received a question that was taken on notice relating to:

- Coburg High School site at 81a Bell Street, Coburg

Public Question Time concluded at 7.19 pm.

COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1 HOPE STREET STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

Executive Summary

Hope Street has been identified as a Streets for People corridor in Council's Streets for People Plan. The project aims to make Hope Street safer, greener and more comfortable for residents, businesses, pedestrians, bike riders and people travelling through the area.

The Hope Street corridor provides an important east-west connection between Moonee Ponds Creek, Melville Road, the Upfield Rail Corridor and Sydney Road. It also connects to local parks, schools, public transport, businesses and residential areas.

Community feedback over several years has identified concerns about vehicle speeds, traffic volumes, cycling safety, pedestrian crossing opportunities, lack of shade and the overall quality of the streetscape on Hope Street.

Council undertook a first round of engagement in February and March 2025 to understand community experiences, issues and aspirations for Hope Street. The findings from that engagement informed the draft concept design that was presented to the community in a second round of engagement in November-December 2025.

The second round of engagement on Hope Street demonstrated support for the project objectives and many of the proposed design elements, particularly safer pedestrian crossings, traffic calming, street greening, improved cycling conditions and better east-west active transport connections. It also identified concerns about the proposed road closures/modal filters at Pearson Street and the Upfield Rail Corridor, particularly in relation to local access, traffic redistribution and impacts on surrounding streets.

In response to this feedback and following further consideration of delivery requirements and external project interfaces, officers have revised the concept design. The revised design removes the proposed road closures and retains existing vehicle movements along Hope Street. It instead focuses on pedestrian safety, traffic calming, greening, road surface improvements and advocacy for better signalised crossings at Melville Road and Sydney Road.

Subject to Council endorsement, the project will progress to detailed design and staged delivery. Council-led works will be prioritised in locations where improvements can be delivered independently of major external projects, while longer-term elements will need to be coordinated with State agencies including the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.

The revised design reflects the community's feedback and will help to achieve the long-term vision for Hope Street as a safe, attractive east-west walking and cycling corridor. The impact of the project will be monitored closely, to understand improvements to safety and shared uses of the corridor. Traffic flows will also be closely monitored through the delivery of the upcoming Brunswick level crossing removal.

Within two years of the completion of the level crossing project, a review will be undertaken to understand whether the objectives of the Hope Street corridor are being met. The review would be undertaken once major project interfaces are completed. Informed by detailed data and further community consultation, it will enable a robust consideration of whether any further Streets for People treatments on Hope Street should be considered to continue help create a more integrated walking and riding network that includes Hope Street.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1) detailing the methodology and findings of the second round of community engagement on the Hope Street Streetscape Improvements project.
2. Endorses a revised Hope Street Streetscape Improvements concept design, which has been updated to reflect a range of community and stakeholder feedback, to progress to detailed design and staged delivery.
3. Notes that the project will be delivered in stages, with Council-led works to be progressed based on budget allocation, detailed design, procurement, State approvals, and any external funding opportunities.
4. Endorses officers continuing to advocate to the Department of Transport and Planning for State Government-led aspects of the design, including improved pedestrian crossing and signal outcomes at the Melville Road and Sydney Road intersections, and improved east-west walking and cycling connections along Hope Street.
5. Notes that officers will investigate a future application to the Department of Transport and Planning to introduce a 30km/h speed limit on Hope Street, following the delivery of traffic calming infrastructure, and review of post-construction speed and traffic data.
6. Undertakes ongoing movement analysis of all modes of transport along Hope Street and surrounds before, during and after delivery, to monitor the impacts of the delivered changes, as well as changes during and after the delivery of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.
7. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor changes to the proposed design subject to detailed design, Road Safety Audit, Department of Transport and Planning requirements, service authority requirements, urban design refinements, and coordination with the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project, where those changes do not substantially alter the intent or function of the endorsed design.

Motion

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded –

That Council:

1. Notes the Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1) detailing the methodology and findings of the second round of community engagement on the Hope Street Streetscape Improvements project.
2. Endorses a revised Hope Street Streetscape Improvements concept design, which has been updated to reflect a range of community and stakeholder feedback, to progress to detailed design and staged delivery.
3. Notes that the project will be delivered in stages, with Council-led works to be progressed based on budget allocation, detailed design, procurement, State approvals, and any external funding opportunities.

4. Endorses officers continuing to advocate to the Department of Transport and Planning for State Government-led aspects of the design, including improved pedestrian crossing and signal outcomes at the Melville Road and Sydney Road intersections, and improved east-west walking and cycling connections along Hope Street.
5. Notes that officers will investigate a future application to the Department of Transport and Planning to introduce a 30km/h speed limit on Hope Street, alongside the delivery of traffic calming infrastructure, and review of speed and traffic data.

Undertakes ongoing monitoring and evaluation of conditions on Hope Street to ensure alignment with the project objectives of a safer, greener and more attractive street that improves sustainable transport options. This monitoring will include ongoing movement analysis of all modes of transport along Hope Street and surrounds before, during and after delivery, as well as changes during and after the delivery of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project. If project objectives are not being met, Council can investigate further treatment options, including a road closure providing it doesn't prevent the continued operation of the Hope St #509 bus.

This would involve further engagement with the community and consider impacts on the 509 bus route.

6. Notes that council is no longer proposing to discontinue the #509 Hope St bus.
7. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor changes to the proposed design subject to detailed design, Road Safety Audit, Department of Transport and Planning requirements, service authority requirements, urban design refinements, and coordination with the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project, where those changes do not substantially alter the intent or function of the endorsed design.

Lost

Resolution

Cr Miles moved, Cr Politis seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1) detailing the methodology and findings of the second round of community engagement on the Hope Street Streetscape Improvements project.**
2. **Endorses a revised Hope Street Streetscape Improvements concept design, which has been updated to reflect a range of community and stakeholder feedback, to progress to detailed design and staged delivery.**
3. **Notes that the project will be delivered in stages, with Council-led works to be progressed based on budget allocation, detailed design, procurement, State approvals, and any external funding opportunities.**
4. **Endorses officers continuing to advocate to the Department of Transport and Planning for State Government-led aspects of the design, including improved pedestrian crossing and signal outcomes at the Melville Road and Sydney Road intersections, and improved east-west walking and cycling connections along Hope Street.**
5. **Notes that officers will investigate a future application to the Department of Transport and Planning to introduce a 30km/h speed limit on Hope Street, following the delivery of traffic calming infrastructure, and review of post-construction speed and traffic data.**

6. Undertakes ongoing movement analysis of all modes of transport along Hope Street and surrounds before, during and after delivery, to monitor the impacts of the delivered changes, as well as changes during and after the delivery of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.
7. Notes that Council is no longer proposing to discontinue the #509 Hope St bus.
8. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor changes to the proposed design subject to detailed design, Road Safety Audit, Department of Transport and Planning requirements, service authority requirements, urban design refinements, and coordination with the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project, where those changes do not substantially alter the intent or function of the endorsed design.

Carried unanimously

7.2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MAY 2026

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

For the eleven months ended 31 May 2026 an operating surplus of \$42.0 million was achieved, which is \$3.1 million (7%) lower than the year-to-date (YTD) budget of \$45.2 million. 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 \$49.2 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking \$22.3 million (31%) below the YTD budget of \$71.5 million. After the detailed review of the program undertaken at the end of February, a total program of \$68.9 million is forecast, with \$19.7 million remaining.

Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 May 2026 included as Attachment 1 to this report.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 May 2026 included as Attachment 1 to this report.

Carried unanimously

7.44 pm *Cr Miles left the meeting.*

7.3 GOVERNANCE REPORT - JULY 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 the First Peoples Advisory Committee.
- Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.
- Response to a Public Question Time item taken on notice at the May 2026 Council meeting, with a recommendation that Council notes the response.
- The summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 2 June 2026.
- A report from Mayor, Cr Abboud on attendance at an approved activity, Australian Local Governance Association National General Assembly 2026.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from the First Peoples Advisory Committee held 28 May 2026, at Attachment 1 to this report.
2. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.
3. Notes the response to a question taken on notice during Public Question Time at the May 2026 Council meeting, at Attachment 3 to this report.
4. Notes the summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 2 June 2026 at Attachment 4 to this report.
5. Notes Mayor, Cr Abboud's report on attendance at an approved activity, Australian Local Governance Association National General Assembly 2026.

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the summary of minutes from the First Peoples Advisory Committee held 28 May 2026, at Attachment 1 to this report.**
2. **Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.**
3. **Notes the response to a question taken on notice during Public Question Time at the May 2026 Council meeting, at Attachment 3 to this report.**
4. **Notes the summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 2 June 2026 at Attachment 4 to this report.**
5. **Notes Mayor, Cr Abboud's report on attendance at an approved activity, Australian Local Governance Association National General Assembly 2026.**

7.45 pm *Cr Miles returned to the meeting during the debate.*

Carried unanimously

7.4 CONTRACT VARIATION: RFT-2024-2 WHEATSHEAF ROAD STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT

Executive summary

Council entered into Contract RFT-2024-2 with Evergreen Civil Pty Ltd in 2024 to undertake works associated with streetscape improvement works on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy.

Works commenced in July 2024 and were paused in August 2024 due to the need for additional approvals and design changes from the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) who own and manage the road.

The project was less than one month into a ten-month construction program, with 13% of the works completed. Contract delay costs accrue on a monthly basis.

Council officers have worked with DTP to update the detailed design to its satisfaction and progress a Section 15 Agreement to clarify management responsibilities over the road (Attachment 1). This agreement requires the common seal of Merri-bek City Council to be finalised.

This report is seeking Council approval to increase the total contract sum to \$3,218,085.05 (excluding GST), to address the increased cost of materials, scope and delay costs to-date. The cumulative variation is a total of 23 per cent of the original contract value (inclusive of variations totalling \$119,315.32 that have been approved previously under delegation). The proposed variation does not exceed the total project budget within the adopted capital works program.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Approves an increase to the total contract sum for Contract RFT-2024-2 Wheatsheaf Road Streetscape Improvement from \$2,616,165.00 up to \$3,218,085.05 (excluding GST) for unforeseen and anticipated variations arising during construction works and causing a halt to works and project delay, noting that:
 - a) The increase of \$601,920.05 will bring the variation to a cumulative total of 23% of the contract value (inclusive of variations totalling \$119,315.32 that have been approved previously under delegation).
 - b) The new total contract amount of \$3,218,085.05 is within the approved project budget in the adopted capital works program.
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to approve the contract variation and related documentation identified in point 1.
3. Notes the draft *Arrangement for the transfer of Road Management Functions under section 15 of the Road Management Act 2004 (Vic)* between the Department of Transport and Planning and Merri-bek City Council for Wheatsheaf Road.
4. Authorises the affixing of the Common Seal to the *Arrangement for the transfer of Road Management Functions under section 15 of the Road Management Act 2004 (Vic)* – Arrangement number: RMA000061.

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That Council:

1. Approves an increase to the total contract sum for Contract RFT-2024-2 Wheatsheaf Road Streetscape Improvement from \$2,616,165.00 up to \$3,218,085.05 (excluding GST) for unforeseen and anticipated variations arising during construction works and causing a halt to works and project delay, noting that:
 - a) The increase of \$601,920.05 will bring the variation to a cumulative total of 23% of the contract value (inclusive of variations totalling \$119,315.32 that have been approved previously under delegation).
 - b) The new total contract amount of \$3,218,085.05 is within the approved project budget in the adopted capital works program.
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to approve the contract variation and related documentation identified in point 1.
3. Notes the draft Arrangement for the transfer of Road Management Functions under section 15 of the Road Management Act 2004 (Vic) between the Department of Transport and Planning and Merri-bek City Council for Wheatsheaf Road.
4. Authorises the affixing of the Common Seal to the Arrangement for the transfer of Road Management Functions under section 15 of the *Road Management Act 2004 (Vic)* – Arrangement number: RMA000061.

Carried unanimously

7.5 CONTRACT EXTENSION AND VARIATION: RFT-2023-489 AND RFT-2024-36 OUTDOOR GARDENING PANEL

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval to extend and increase the contract expenditure to the existing Outdoor Garden Help Program contract RFT-2023-489 and RFT-2024-36 to align the expiry of contracts until 30 June 2029.

Initially funded for 3 years, the program has been extended for a further 3 years and funding increased to align with delivery. Due to their strong understanding of the program's specific operational requirements and high-quality outcomes, continuing with these contractors will preserve valuable expertise and established relationships, minimise the risk of service disruption, and ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively.

Council's Outdoor Garden Help Program provides one-off gardening services to older residents to assist them in maintaining safe, accessible and liveable outdoor spaces. The program was established in response to community need and strong feedback from older residents around support with garden maintenance to promote independence and continued access to outdoor spaces. The proposed extension will ensure continuity of service delivery, support ongoing program delivery, and avoid disruption to residents.

Both contracts were established through Request for Tender (RFT) process. Contract RFT-2023-489 commenced on 4 December 2023 for a period of three (3) years ending 3 December 2026. Due to the strong demand for the services, Contract RFT-2024-36 was established on 18 August 2025 for a period of two (2) years ending 18 August 2027 to increase panel capacity.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Approves an extension to the panel contractors listed in the table as per point 2 according to the service categories, for the Contract RFT-2023-489 and RFT-2024-36 Outdoor Gardening Panel (Contract) with both contracts to expire on 30 June 2029.
2. Approves a variation to the Contract RFT-2023-489 and RFT-2024-36 Outdoor Gardening Panel to increase the maximum spend to \$2,046,622.42 (excluding GST) across all suppliers for the term of the contract.

Tenderers Name	ABN	Service Categories
Tree Response Pty Ltd	24 141 958 054	Planting and pruning
Erdem Aksu T/as Green Aura	68 867 812 957	Planting, pruning, raised garden beds, general clean up, rubbish removal, landscaping
UDL M Group Pty Ltd	30 610 979 309	Planting, pruning, raised garden beds, paving, general clean up, rubbish removal, landscaping
Melbourne Landscape Group Pty Ltd	76 629 019 889	Raised garden beds, trimming, planting, hedge trimming
Moonering Garden Pty Ltd	31 678 274 514	Raised garden beds, tree stump removal, trimming, planting, hedge trimming
Auxiliary Service Group Pty Ltd	84 652 760 588	Raised garden beds, trimming, planting, hedge trimming
Flask Gardening & Maintenance Pty Ltd	94 085 189 199	Raised garden beds, tree stump removal, trimming, planting, hedge trimming
A1 Tree Solutions Pty Ltd	41 202 469 925	Tree stump removal
Centrogen Pty Ltd	47 063 665 172	Tree stump removal

3. Notes that:
 - i. The contract under RFT-2023-489 is due to expire on 3 December 2026 and RFT-2024-36 is due to expire on 18 August 2027.
 - ii. The total expenditure to date across both contracts is \$724,338.42 (excluding GST)
4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer:
 - a) To do all things necessary to execute the required documentation for the Contract; and
 - b) Accept new panel contractor(s) during the contract term subject to the same public tender/evaluation process as adopted for the original panel contractors, to ensure we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council's needs, providing the total contract amount to remain as paragraph 2; and
 - c) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That Council:

1. Approves an extension to the panel contractors listed in the table as per point 2 according to the service categories, for the Contract RFT-2023-489 and RFT-2024-36 Outdoor Gardening Panel (Contract) with both contracts to expire on 30 June 2029.
2. Approves a variation to the Contract RFT-2023-489 and RFT-2024-36 Outdoor Gardening Panel to increase the maximum spend to \$2,046,622.42 (excluding GST) across all suppliers for the term of the contract.

Tenderers Name	ABN	Service Categories
Tree Response Pty Ltd	24 141 958 054	Planting and pruning
Erdem Aksu T/as Green Aura	68 867 812 957	Planting, pruning, raised garden beds, general clean up, rubbish removal, landscaping
UDL M Group Pty Ltd	30 610 979 309	Planting, pruning, raised garden beds, paving, general clean up, rubbish removal, landscaping
Melbourne Landscape Group Pty Ltd	76 629 019 889	Raised garden beds, trimming, planting, hedge trimming
Moonering Garden Pty Ltd	31 678 274 514	Raised garden beds, tree stump removal, trimming, planting, hedge trimming
Auxiliary Service Group Pty Ltd	84 652 760 588	Raised garden beds, trimming, planting, hedge trimming
Flask Gardening & Maintenance Pty Ltd	94 085 189 199	Raised garden beds, tree stump removal, trimming, planting, hedge trimming
A1 Tree Solutions Pty Ltd	41 202 469 925	Tree stump removal
Centrogen Pty Ltd	47 063 665 172	Tree stump removal

3. Notes that:
 - i. The contract under RFT-2023-489 is due to expire on 3 December 2026 and RFT-2024-36 is due to expire on 18 August 2027.
 - ii. The total expenditure to date across both contracts is \$724,338.42 (excluding GST)
4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer:
 - a) To do all things necessary to execute the required documentation for the Contract; and
 - b) Accept new panel contractor(s) during the contract term subject to the same public tender/evaluation process as adopted for the original panel contractors, to ensure we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council's needs, providing the total contract amount to remain as paragraph 2; and

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

Carried unanimously

NOTICES OF MOTION

Nil.

NOTICE OF RESCISSION

Nil.

FORESHADOWED ITEMS

Nil.

URGENT BUSINESS

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That Council:

1. Admits an item of Urgent Business that relates to a proposed open space acquisition, noting that this matter has arisen since the distribution of the agenda and cannot be deferred to the next Council meeting.
2. Considers this matter in the confidential section of this meeting pursuant to section 3(1)(g)(ii) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, as it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

Carried

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded –

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

- 12.1 Merri-bek Affordable Housing because it relates to land use planning information, being information that if prematurely released is likely to encourage speculation in land values; AND private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage; AND confidential meeting information, being the records of meetings closed to the public under section 66(2)(a).
- 12.2 Proposed Open Space Acquisition because it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

Carried

The Council meeting closed to the public at 7.52 pm.

OPENING THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

The Council meeting be open to the public.

Carried

The Council meeting opened to the public at 7.58 pm.

The Council meeting closed at 7.58 pm.

Confirmed

Cr Nat Abboud
MAYOR