



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 October 2025

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The Mayor opened the meeting at 6.30 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 Helen Davidson, Mayor	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Helen Politis, Deputy Mayor	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Nat Abboud	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Sue Bolton	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Liz Irvin	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Dr Jay Iwasaki	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Chris Miles	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Adam Pulford	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Ella Svensson	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Katherine Theodosios	6.30 pm	10.01 pm
Cr Oscar Yildiz JP	6.30 pm	8.44 pm

OFFICERS

Chief Executive Officer – Cathy Henderson
 Director Business Transformation – Sue Vujcevic
 Acting Director City Infrastructure – Indivar Dhakal
 Director Community – Eamonn Fennessy
 Director Place and Environment – Pene Winslade
 Acting Manager Governance and Strategy – Anthony Smith
 Unit Manager Governance – Sophie Barison
 Executive Officer Civic and CEO Office - Sarah Lionakis

APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Cr Svensson sought a leave of absence for the period 20 October to 9 November 2025 (inclusive).

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded –

That Council grants Cr Svensson a leave of absence from 20 October to 9 November 2025 inclusive.

Carried

DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

MINUTE CONFIRMATION

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Bolton seconded -

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 10 September 2025 be confirmed.

Carried

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS

Mayor, Cr Helen Davidson acknowledged Chief Executive Officer, Cathy Henderson.

I would like to take a moment on behalf of my fellow Councillors to express our sincere gratitude to Cathy. This will be her final council meeting before taking a new exciting role.

Cathy your leadership has been instrumental in guiding us through some challenging and transformative years of Council. From steering the organisation through the uncertainty of Covid to maintaining such a strong financial position that we are in now and ensuring stability in our budget. You have led with integrity, professionalism, and deep care.

As Councillors we have always found your door open. You have always given us your time so generously and it is clear that your decisions have always been grounded for what is in the best interest of staff, the organisation and the community.

Your presence at countless community events and Council briefings has shown your genuine commitment to the people of Merri-bek. You have represented this organisation with warmth, energy and a great sense of humour and we are all impressed by that, and you have also taken on all our quirks and the hefty debates that we've had all in your stride.

I would like to thank you for your dedication, your leadership and your unwavering commitment to Merri-bek. We wish you every success in your role, it is so well deserved and they are incredibly fortunate to be having you. You will be deeply missed, but we know you will continue to make such a meaningful impact in the communities that you serve, so thank you.

Cr Politis acknowledged the food organisation Our Daily Bread, which operates out of Coburg. Our Daily Bread delivers over 200 meals a week to the needy and vulnerable and also has a dinner service every Thursday on the side of the Greek Orthodox church in Coburg, everyone is welcome to attend. Our Daily Bread have been operating since 2011, it is a significant period of time and a great service to the community.

Cr Politis acknowledged Seniors Month in the month of October, and thanked Merri-bek Council for the events they have to celebrate seniors and encouraged everyone to attend.

Cr Politis acknowledged the Greek Festival being held on 19 October at the St Eleftherios Greek Orthodox Church in Brunswick. It is a community church and everyone is welcome.

Cr Iwasaki acknowledged his attendance at the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances Conference in his capacity as the representative councillor for Merri-bek City Council and as deputy chair of the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Actions. The conference took place at the Melbourne Convention Centre in Southbank and was attended by and involved Merri-bek council staff, along with representatives from cities across the Victoria.

The Victorian Greenhouse Alliances Conference is a yearly gathering of local councils, experts, and community partners focused on practical climate action. Hosted in Melbourne, it showcases what's working now in local governments; from making new buildings and road projects lower-carbon, to strengthening flood and heat preparedness, improving public and active transport, growing the circular economy, and measuring what delivers the biggest emissions cuts and community benefits. For residents, the value is straightforward: councils share proven ideas and buying power, learn how to stretch budgets further, and bring home ready-to-apply solutions that reduce bills, improve health and safety, create greener streets and cooler neighbourhoods.

Cr Irvin acknowledged Peter Norman Day, an annual commemoration that honours the legacy of Australian athlete Peter Norman. Peter Norman was an Olympian who ran in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics and who courageously stood in solidarity with some of the American gold and silver medallist athletes as they protested racial injustice. Peter Norman was born in Coburg and was closely associated with the local athletic community.

Cr Bolton acknowledged Rhydian Cowley who is a Fawkner local resident who is a world-class race walker, a climate activist, and an award-winning athlete. He is a founding member of an organisation that raises awareness about the impact of climate change on sport.

Cr Abboud acknowledged the nominees for the Merri-bek Community Awards ceremony that will be held on Wednesday 15 October 2025 and thanked everyone who made a nomination.

PETITIONS

5.1 REQUESTING COUNCIL REVIEW PARKING RESTRICTIONS NEAR THE WEST END OF WOOLACOTT STREET, COBURG

A Petition was received containing 36 signatures requesting Council to remove 'no stopping' signs at the west end of Woolacott Street, Coburg and instead formalise angle parking.

Resolution

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Bolton seconded –

That Council:

- 1. Receives the petition, requesting Council removes 'no stopping' signs at the west end of Woolacott Street, Coburg and instead formalise angle parking.**
- 2. Refers the petition requesting Council removes 'no stopping' signs at the west end of Woolacott Street, Coburg and instead formalise angle parking to the Director Place and Environment for consideration and response.**

Carried unanimously

5.2 REQUEST FOR \$200K FROM MERRI-BEK COUNCIL FOR PLANNING FOR A NEW PURPOSE-BUILT STADIUM

A Petition was received containing 1556 signatures requesting Council.

- 1. Brings forward the feasibility study and concept planning for the new facility, currently proposed within a 10-year timeframe, to commence immediately.**
- 2. Amends the 2025/26 Council Budget to allocate funding for this critical planning and design work.**
- 3. Commits to working in partnership with the Coburg Basketball Association and its members to plan, advocate, and seek external funding for this vital infrastructure.**
- 4. Recognises basketball as the number one growth sport in Merri-bek, with over 1 million visits to the stadium each year and 5,000 weekly participants across all ages, genders, and abilities.**
- 5. Acts on the findings of the 2019 Indoor Sports Facility Needs Analysis, and the Coburg North Sports Hub Masterplan which highlights the urgent need for more courts.**

Resolution

Cr Yildiz moved, Cr Abboud seconded –

That Council:

- 1. Receives the petition, requesting Council amends the 2025/26 Budget and brings forward funding of \$200K for planning for a new purpose-built stadium.**
- 2. Refers the petition requesting Council amends the 2025/26 Budget and brings forward funding of \$200K for planning for a new purpose-built stadium to the Director Community for consideration and response.**

Carried unanimously

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 6.51 pm.

Report 7.2 Adoption of 10-Year Financial Plan 2025-2035

Question 1

Libby Phillips asked Council:

How much Council expenditure has been provided to the Coburg Basketball Stadium over the last ten years, please provide both capital and operational (maintenance) expenditure?

Has Council applied for any State or Federal Government funding in the last ten years to rebuild the Coburg Basketball Stadium?

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

The Coburg Basketball Stadium is currently leased to Sports Stadiums Victoria and as such as per the lease, are required to attend to maintenance requests.

The Club through Council have received a number of grants to do capital improvements, including \$32,000 for stadium seating upgrades in 2019 and \$40,000 for equipment upgrades in 2023. In 2020/2021 during COVID, Council's Working for Victoria group recoated the basketball flooring at a cost of approximately \$100,000.

Question 2

Libby Phillips asked Council:

Has the Council applied for state or federal funding to improve the Coburg Basketball Stadium in the last ten years? If yes, which funding streams did the council apply for, and in which years?

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

In the 2024/2025 Council has received \$2 million in funding from the Federal Government for the Coburg North Masterplan, as part of that package the stadium received an upgrade to its entry to address accessibility.

No state government funding has been applied for or received from the Victorian State Government in the last ten years.

Report 7.5 Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan: Draft for Consultation

Question 1

Andrea Bunting asked Council:

Can Council please update us about their advocacy for the Fawkner and Newlands area bus routes?

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

Council has been advocating for the Fawkner and Newlands area bus routes with the state government for many years.

Council has advocated for the Fawkner and Newlands area bus routes including bus route 531 on a number of occasions since it was raised in 2022. The discussions are ongoing so we can't communicate an outcome at this stage.

We have also been advocating for the State Government to implement the Northern Suburbs Bus Reform project, and this is one of Council's 2026 State Election advocacy priorities that were adopted by Council in September. It was raised in the Infrastructure Victoria submission earlier this year, and we continue to work with the Northern Councils Alliance on calling for better transport in the north. However there has been no commitment so far from the state government to make changes to bus services in the northern areas of Merri-bek.

Our 2024 Moving around Merri-bek Strategy outlines core areas that will guide our advocacy priorities to improve public transport for those who work, visit, or live in Merri-bek.

As part of our upcoming Moving around Merri-bek Action Plan 25-29, we've identified developing a more comprehensive Transport Advocacy Strategy to formalise Council's advocacy to the State and Federal Government for the advancement of key transport priorities, including improving safety on state-managed roads, more frequent and accessible public transport and increased investment in active transport.

Question 2

Andrea Bunting asked Council:

In particular, what were the outcomes of discussions with the Department of Transport and Planning about improvements to bus route 531?

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

The Transport Advocacy Strategy will provide a public framework around Council's advocacy approaches. There are many transport issues the community raises with us and which Council advocates for, and this approach will also help to prioritise and maximise our impact.

Report 7.10 Submission to Activity Centres Program, phase 2 Engagement

Question 1

Elisabeth Jackson on behalf of the Brunswick Community History Group asked Council:

What heritage protection is in force for shops in Sydney Road in Coburg and Brunswick?

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

Council values the important contribution that heritage places make to the character and identity of our activity centres.

Sydney Road features a significant concentration of late 19th and early 20th century architecture and is subject to significant areas of heritage overlays along it.

While new planning controls are being considered through the State-led Activity Centres Program, we understand that these will not override existing heritage protections. This means heritage will remain a consideration in assessing any planning application affecting a property within a Heritage Overlay. For example, new developments will continue to be required to demonstrate respectful design responses—such as retaining heritage fabric, providing appropriate upper-level setbacks, and ensuring new building elements complement the surrounding heritage context.

If you do have concerns, I also encourage you to provide a short submission to the State government's consultation process. They are accepting submissions until 19 October 2025. I understand they are also hosting a community drop-in session at Balam Balam Place in Brunswick between 3:30 pm and 6:30 pm on Wednesday 15 October 2025.

Statement

Asanka Epa made the following statement

I'd like to address the proposed submissions to the state government on its activity centre program.

Firstly, it's great that Council recognizes the need for more housing and that it generally supports the proposed activity centres for Coburg and Brunswick. This will allow more housing, put downwards pressure on housing costs and allow more people to enjoy these well-connected and high-amenity areas. This aligns with the feedback from the Phase 1 consultation, which showed community support for housing growth, and a general shift to the question of how, not if, we enable more housing.

Unfortunately, the proposed council submission does, according to the officers' report, would reduce the amount of housing enabled by 5%. This comes mainly from reducing the amount of housing allowed in Brunswick, while partially offsetting this reduction with allowing more housing in Coburg. Now allowing more housing in Coburg is wonderful. But it should not be traded off against more housing in Brunswick, nor should there be an overall decrease in the amount of housing enabled.

Most of Council's proposed submission relates to the technical details of how to enable more housing and advocating for more infrastructure. I believe that this advocacy would be strengthened if Council was not trying to reduce the overall housing capacity of the activity centres, and so I urge Council to ensure that its submission to the state government does not call for a reduction in housing as it currently does, even if it is only 5%. That 5% matters.

Helen Deans made the following statement:

We'd like to request an alternative motion from Council relating to the Coburg Draft Map for Activity Centres, excluding Glencairn Ave from the catchment zone.

Notice of Motion 8.3 Bus Shelter Program in Merri-bek

Rhydian Cowley made the following statement:

I am a member of Climate Action Merri-bek. We advocate for sustainable transport. Public seating is important for public transport users, and in encouraging people to walk.

For older residents, seating on walking routes is vital. The month's agenda also includes the "Living and Ageing Well in Merri-bek Framework". In the consultation, council received feedback from older residents about the lack of appropriate seating in public areas.

If we had more seating at bus stops, these could be used by people waiting for a bus and by people needing a short rest while they walk. We also need more seats at other locations on walking routes.

We support having far more bus shelters in Merri-bek, particularly at key locations. But bus shelters are expensive. We understand that each bus shelter costs \$50,000 or more each. If Council budgeted for two bus shelters a year, it would take several centuries to cover all stops on the Merri-bek bus network.

But Merri-bek has many bus stops located on wide footpaths, where a seat could be installed cheaply. Indeed, Merri-bek has just installed quite a few seats at bus stops. This was due to a community budget idea from 2024, where \$40,000 was allocated to such seats.

We think that Merri-bek needs a yearly budget to install seats – both at bus stops and on walking routes.

We suggest that the motion be modified by adding the following:

- That the Council should also receive recommendations on how to speed up the number of seats at bus stops and on walking routes.
- That Council refers to next year's budget process consideration of \$100,000 each year to install more seats at bus stops and on walking routes.

NON-AGENDA ITEMS - QUESTIONS

Council received 4 questions that were taken on notice relating to:

- Cat Curfew
- Illegal dumping of hard rubbish
- Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool

Public Question Time concluded at 7.15 pm.

COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1 2024-25 MERRI-BEK CITY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

The Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2024-25 contains Council's audited Financial and Performance Statements and provides information on Council operations and services delivered to and for the community for the 2024-25 financial year.

The report, at Attachment 1, contains the key highlights and achievements of Council for the year.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Formally receives the Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2024-25, provided as Attachment 1.
2. Authorises the Director Community to make minor changes to the report if required.

Resolution

Cr Davidson moved, Cr Theodosis seconded -

That Council:

1. **Formally receives the Merri-bek City Council Annual Report 2024-25, provided as Attachment 1.**
2. **Authorises the Director Community to make minor changes to the report if required.**

Carried unanimously

7.2 ADOPTION OF 10-YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN 2025-2035

Executive Summary

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires each Council to prepare a Financial Plan covering a minimum period of 10-years following each Council election. The 10-year Financial Plan 2025-2035 (the financial plan) was developed through deliberative engagement and covers the periods 2025-26 to 2034-35.

The purpose of this report is to seek Council adoption of the Financial Plan (Attachment 1).

The Financial Plan is one of a number of integrated documents that have been developed to provide a robust and transparent system of financial management aligned to the longer-term aspirations for Merri-bek and as expressed in the newly refreshed Community Vision and Council Plan.

The Financial Plan is an important document as it sets out broadly how Council can fund essential services and projects in coming years. The Financial Plan is a decision-making tool to identify Council's current and projected financial capacity to meet Council's future needs in providing services and facilities to the community based on the goals and aspirations of the Council Plan. The long-term outlook for Council displays prudent financial management.

The draft Financial Plan was presented to Council at its meeting on 13 August 2025 and subsequently went out for public exhibition for 28 days. Following this, one submission was received. The submission (included in the issues section of the report) references specific projects to be funded and/or retain funding annually. Officers are not recommending any changes to the financial plan as a result of the submission, the rationale for this being that the Financial Plan does not go into the level of detail of specific projects, like the submitter mentioned. This detail is included in the annual 4-year budget which goes out for public exhibition annually in April/May.

Since public exhibition of the draft plan, officers have updated the forecast actuals to reflect the actual 2024-25 numbers as endorsed by Council on 10 September 2025.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the proposed 10-year Financial Plan 2025-2035 (provided as Attachment 1) in accordance with the legislative requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*.
2. Advises the submitter that Council has considered their submission relating to the Proposed 10-year financial plan 2025-2035 and that the submitter 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
3. Authorises the Director Business Transformation to finalise the Merri-bek Council 10-year financial plan 2025-2035, including any amendments as a result of the adoption and or/minor administrative changes, including making the final documents available for public inspection.

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Theodosis seconded -

That Council:

1. **Adopts the proposed 10-year Financial Plan 2025-2035 (provided as Attachment 1) in accordance with the legislative requirements of the Local Government Act 2020.**

2. **Advises the submitter that Council has considered their submission relating to the Proposed 10-year financial plan 2025-2035 and that the submitter 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**
3. **Authorises the Director Business Transformation to finalise the Merri-bek Council 10-year financial plan 2025-2035, including any amendments as a result of the adoption and or/minor administrative changes, including making the final documents available for public inspection.**

Carried

7.3 ADOPTION OF 10-YEAR ASSET PLAN 2025-2035

Executive Summary

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) requires Council to develop, adopt and maintain a 10-year Asset Plan for maintenance, acquisition, disposal and management of Council-managed assets. A review of the Asset Plan must be completed by 31 October in the year following a General Council election.

Council's \$1.9 billion portfolio of assets has been built up progressively over many decades. Assets such as roads and drainage provide the building blocks of our way of life, while others add to the quality of life by facilitating recreation, arts, culture, health and educational activities. Our assets are also integral to us achieving our zero carbon, water management and social inclusion goals, and support local business and economic development.

The Act requires the Asset Plan to be developed and reviewed through deliberative engagement process in accordance with Council's engagement policy. The Asset Plan (Attachment 1) has been developed in line with Council's deliberative engagement practices and have drawn from the engagement outputs from the deliberative panel formed as a part of the Council Plan and Community Vision review. Following a Council resolution in August 2025, the draft Asset Plan was published for public feedback through Conversations Merri-bek webpage.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. **Adopts the Asset Plan 2025-2035 at Attachment 1 to this report prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 92 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.**
2. **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to arrange for edits to the document for presentation and clarity, without making any material change ahead of publishing the final Asset Plan on Council's website.**

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That Council:

1. **Adopts the Asset Plan 2025-2035 at Attachment 1 to this report prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 92 of the Local Government Act 2020.**
2. **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to arrange for edits to the document for presentation and clarity, without making any material change ahead of publishing the final Asset Plan on Council's website.**

Carried

7.22 pm Cr Miles left the meeting.

7.4 CIRCULAR ECONOMY STRATEGY AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN 2025 - 2030 - FINAL FOR ADOPTION

Executive Summary

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

The report presents Council's proposed *Circular Economy Strategy: Towards a zero waste Merri-bek* (Attachment 1) for adoption. The draft strategy provides direction for Council's role in accelerating the transition towards a circular economy. It reflects the need to move beyond managing waste towards avoiding waste and pollution and regenerating nature.

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

Following endorsement at the 11 June Council Meeting, the draft documents were subject of public consultation between Monday 23 June and Sunday 20 July 2025.

Overall, community feedback reflected strong support for the strategic directions, goals and actions set out in the consultation drafts. Feedback during the consultation period has resulted in several refinements to the Climate Emergency Action Plan, including:

- A broadening of language and activities around climate and social justice to better reflect Council's obligation to act in solidarity with First Nations, regional and global communities being hardest hit by climate impacts, and elevate their voices.
- A more ambitious goal for local energy storage by 2030, anticipating the positive impact of the federal government's Cheaper Home Batteries Program.
- Adding an action to investigate the potential to establish or partner to establish a library of things, to foster equipment re-use in Merri-bek.
- Some restructuring of content, including introducing a graphic visualisation of the plan on a page, to help communicate the high-level scope to a broader audience.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the Circular Economy Strategy (Attachment 1).
2. Adopts the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030 (Attachment 2).
3. Notes the summary feedback from community and stakeholder engagement on the draft documents, including broad community feedback and targeted contributions from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, members of Council's Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee, and sustainability-focused community groups and businesses.
4. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor amendments to the Circular Economy Strategy and/or Climate Emergency Action Plan prior to publication, where such changes do not alter their intent or strategic direction.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Theodosis seconded -

That Council:

1. **Adopts the Circular Economy Strategy (Attachment 1).**
2. **Adopts the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 - 2030 (Attachment 2).**
3. **Notes the summary feedback from community and stakeholder engagement on the draft documents, including broad community feedback and targeted contributions from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, members of Council's Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee, and sustainability-focused community groups and businesses.**
4. **Adds the following points to the Advocacy Asks under Waste and Circular Economy (Appendix 2 of the Climate Emergency Action Plan),**

That the Victorian Government

- **Ends the practice of thermal Waste to Energy, and instead focuses policy and investment into fast tracking solutions for waste avoidance, circular manufacturing and advanced recycling for a circular economy.**
 - **Strengthen the requirement that body corporates offer better recycling and circular economy options where they use private waste contractors.**
 - **Work with food businesses to introduce stronger measures to reduce single-use takeaway containers and use 100% reuseable crockery and cutlery for in-store dining, including considering planning requirements for new businesses.**
 - **Improves recycling and recovery from construction and demolition waste at small construction sites and by builders across Victoria.**
5. **Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor amendments to the Circular Economy Strategy and/or Climate Emergency Action Plan prior to publication, where such changes do not alter their intent or strategic direction.**

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

Carried unanimously

7.5 MOVING AROUND MERRI-BEK ACTION PLAN: DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Executive summary

This report seeks Council's endorsement to release the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025–2029 at Attachment 1 for public consultation.

The draft Action Plan sets out Council's proposed transport delivery program over the next four years. It includes strategic actions grouped into three key categories - Infrastructure, Plans and Programs, and Policy and Advocacy. The actions within these categories are focused across priority areas of Streets for People, Access to Schools, Road Safety, and Transport Advocacy.

Community and stakeholder feedback on the draft plan will feed into a finalised plan for adoption. This approach ensures the Action Plan reflects community priorities, supports long-term strategic outcomes, and aligns with Council's adopted Transport Strategy and the Council Plan 2025–2029.

There are no new budget impacts arising from this report. Costs associated with consultation are covered within existing operational budgets. Funding for the delivery of individual actions will be subject to future budget processes and external funding opportunities.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025–2029 at Attachment 1 for community consultation, to be undertaken from Friday 24 October to Sunday 23 November 2025.
2. Notes that community engagement will include the publication of the draft Action Plan on Council's Conversations Merri-bek website, as well as in-person engagement via pop-up sessions hosted across Merri-bek.
3. Receives a further report in early 2026 detailing the outcomes of consultation and seeking adoption of the final Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025-2029.

Resolution

Cr Politis moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That Council:

1. **Adopts the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025–2029 at Attachment 1 for community consultation, to be undertaken from Friday 24 October to Sunday 23 November 2025.**
2. **Notes that community engagement will include the publication of the draft Action Plan on Council's Conversations Merri-bek website, as well as in-person engagement via pop-up sessions hosted across Merri-bek.**
3. **Inserts a new section into the Action Plan, at the bottom of page 3 of the Action Plan (page 379 of the Council Agenda), as follows:**

Access for elderly and vulnerable residents

An important consideration of the Action Plan will be ensuring sufficient parking to meet the needs of the vulnerable, the elderly, local business and the broader community.

On page 11 of the Action Plan (page 387 of the Council Agenda), in item 2.4 (relating to kerbside space), insert the words "and parking" to the Action description, as follows:

- **"Review how council manages kerbside space and parking, and develop..."**
4. **Receives a further report in early 2026 detailing the outcomes of consultation and seeking adoption of the final Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan 2025-2029.**

Carried

7.6 568 SYDNEY ROAD PARK CLOSE TO HOME - PRELIMINARY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement to commence preliminary community engagement on site options for the new Park Close to Home at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.

Council purchased the site at 568 Sydney Road in January 2025 to provide a new park in a high priority open space gap area. The new park will provide valuable green space for nearby residents, workers, and visitors, and a cool respite along the busy Sydney Road corridor. The site also supports an improved active transport link in the east-west Hope Street – Stewart Street route.

Council also owns the carpark immediately to the east of the site, fronting Staley Street. There may be the potential to incorporate some of the adjacent carpark site into the open space area. There may also be the possibility of providing some traffic calming, street narrowing and/or closure on Staley Street to further extend the green space and address rat running.

Several site options have been prepared to seek preliminary community feedback on these options and what they would like to see in the new park. The options offer different levels of open space, car parking impacts, and potential configurations of Staley Street.

A two stage engagement process is proposed for the project, to allow the community to have meaningful input in shaping the new park. Subject to Council's endorsement, the Phase 1 preliminary engagement will occur during October and November 2025. A further Council report in early 2026 will present the findings of the engagement and recommend a preferred site extent and concept plan for Phase 2 engagement.

The project is funded through the Open Space Reserve. The construction cost of the project will depend on the extent of the new park. An initial budget allocation has been set aside in the forward Capital Works Program, but additional funding may be referred to the capital works program if the preferred site option increases the park coverage.

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses community engagement on options for the new park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.
2. Receives a future report on the results of community engagement, with a recommended site extent and draft concept plan for the new park.

Resolution

Cr Politis moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. **Endorses community engagement on options for the new park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.**
2. **Receives a future report on the results of community engagement, with a recommended site extent and draft concept plan for the new park.**

Carried

7.7 LIVING AND AGEING WELL ACTION PLAN 2024-2025

Executive Summary

Council's Living and Ageing Well Framework establishes age-friendly principles and practices to support healthy ageing of residents in Merri-bek. It was endorsed by Council in 2019, in recognition of population ageing and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020 to 2030)¹.

The Aged and Community Support Branch lead the implementation, with cross-Council and community collaboration being key to creating an age friendly city where residents thrive in older age.

The Framework is delivered through an Implementation Plan with yearly achievements and learnings reported yearly to Council. This report outlines key achievements and learnings from 1 July 2024 to 31 June 2025, with an allocated yearly budget of \$50,000 for implementation of the Framework.

Council progressed actions under the Physical, Social and Municipal Environments of the Framework, and developed the next 4-year Implementation Plan (2025 to 2029). There was a focus on incorporating learnings from community engagement into the implementation plan. Council heard from the community about the impacts of rising cost of living on older communities, particularly those already experiencing financial and social vulnerability.

The Living and Ageing Well Framework plays a crucial role in guiding Council's work, responding to Aged Care reforms, increasing vulnerabilities of older communities, and the growing ageing population.

Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Living and Ageing Well Action Plan Report 2024-2025.

Resolution

Cr Politis moved, Cr Theodosis seconded -

That Council notes the Living and Ageing Well Action Plan Report 2024-2025.

Carried

7.8 FREE THIRD SPACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Executive Summary

This report provides an initial response to a March 2025 Council resolution to pilot new third space initiatives and assess long-term needs. Third spaces for children and teenagers - public spaces outside of home and school - are essential in fostering healthy development. These spaces provide critical benefits for young people's mental health and well-being, contribute to building stronger communities, help alleviate pressures from the cost of living, and reduce risk factors associated with antisocial behaviour and crime. As pressures on young people and families increase, including the cost of living crisis, free third spaces are more important than ever. Access to welcoming and accessible spaces can provide a point of access to support and services for families, particularly those with young children.

The report highlights the growing demand for accessible, free or low-cost spaces, particularly for families with young children, and young people in Merri-bek. Existing facilities such as libraries and Maternal and Child Health Centres along with other Council owned facilities are identified as venues that could be further activated to meet community need.

The report also emphasises the role of third spaces in early intervention and mental health, especially for vulnerable groups. It notes that socially connected families experience better wellbeing outcomes, and that targeted outreach and culturally appropriate programming are essential to ensure equitable access. Indoor third spaces are identified as a priority, complementing the opportunities provided in outdoor spaces through the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy.

There are unmet needs for access to free and accessible third spaces and Council is uniquely positioned to respond by creatively expanding what is available for a range of age groups. Through relatively low cost investment Council can increase the utilisation of existing spaces in the short term, while identifying strategic opportunities to add additional third spaces to planned infrastructure developments, or modifications to existing facilities in the longer term, ensuring the availability of community spaces increases in line with population growth.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Increases the programming at the Fawkner Sports Hall for youth from one, to three afternoons per week on a pilot basis, initially for six months with a view to maintaining or increasing the frequency depending on utilisation.
2. Pilot a family engagement program including free access to Council spaces in various locations for three sessions per week, initially for six months, with a focus on play-based learning through a community development approach to foster community connection, increasing parenting skills and confidence.
3. Undertakes a feasibility study and provide a further report to Council by October 2026 regarding needs, opportunities, and resourcing requirements to create and where necessary staff additional free third spaces in priority locations in the longer term.
4. Refers the resourcing requirements of \$319,445 for the points 1 - 3 to the 2026-2030 budget process for consideration.
5. Collaborates with the Fawkner's Future group to identify a suitable space for young people, (noting the particular needs of young women) in Fawkner in the short term, while longer term options are identified and assessed.
6. Strengthens engagement with children (aged 8-12) to increase their voice in Council decision making and ensure community spaces meet their needs.
7. Incorporates and strengthens youth consultation into capital works and library redevelopment projects to ensure spaces are designed to meet young people's needs.

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Bolton seconded -

That Council:

1. **Increases the programming at the Fawkner Sports Hall for youth from one, to three afternoons per week on a pilot basis, initially for six months with a view to maintaining or increasing the frequency depending on utilisation.**

2. **Pilot a family engagement program including free access to Council spaces in various locations for three sessions per week, initially for six months, with a focus on play-based learning through a community development approach to foster community connection, increasing parenting skills and confidence.**
3. **Undertakes a feasibility study and provide a further report to Council by October 2026 regarding needs, opportunities, and resourcing requirements to create and where necessary staff additional free third spaces in priority locations in the longer term.**
4. **Refers the resourcing requirements of \$319,445 for the points 1 - 3 to the 2026-2030 budget process for consideration.**
5. **Collaborates with the Fawkner's Future group to identify a suitable space for young people, (noting the particular needs of young women) in Fawkner in the short term, while longer term options and identified and assessed.**
6. **Strengthens engagement with children (aged 8-12) to increase their voice in Council decision making and ensure community spaces meet their needs.**
7. **Incorporates and strengthens youth consultation into capital works and library redevelopment projects to ensure spaces are designed to meet young people's needs.**

Carried

7.9 ROAD SAFETY FORUM - POST-EVENT FINDINGS

Executive summary

On 13 September 2025, Council hosted a Road Safety Forum at the Coburg Civic Centre to facilitate a community discussion about road safety issues within the municipality. Over 40 local residents, five Councillors, and two local MPs participated in discussions about road safety issues, proposed solutions, and prioritised recommended measures.

Road Safety is one of Council's key values and objectives, detailed in the Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy (2024). Council is responsible for local roads and advocates for outcomes on State roads. A key objective of the September forum was to identify key problems, solutions and priorities that could help the community, council and its stakeholders to build on existing efforts to urgently address road safety in Merri-bek.

During the forum, seven key road safety issue themes were identified and discussed by community members. These themes were:

- Speeding
- School safety
- People's behaviour on roads
- People riding
- People walking
- Busy arterial roads
- Public transport

A range of treatment options were proposed and prioritised. Three key treatment options that were raised consistently are:

- Lower speed limits
- Safe street design for everyone
- Enforcement of road rules

This feedback will be incorporated in the proposed Road Safety Plan and Transport Advocacy Strategy that Council will be preparing in 2026.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Thanks participants who attended the Road Safety Forum event held at the Coburg Civic Centre on 13 September 2025.
2. Acknowledges that feedback from the Road Safety Forum event outlined in this report will help to inform the proposed Road Safety Plan and Transport Advocacy Strategy scheduled to be developed in 2026.
3. Notes that themes shared in the Road Safety Forum event have been incorporated into the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action plan which is presented to Council to endorse for public consultation at the October meeting.

7.53 pm *Cr Svensson left the meeting.*

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. **Thanks participants who attended the Road Safety Forum event held at the Coburg Civic Centre on 13 September 2025.**
2. **Acknowledges that feedback from the Road Safety Forum event outlined in this report will help to inform the proposed Road Safety Plan and Transport Advocacy Strategy scheduled to be developed in 2026.**
3. **Notes that themes shared in the Road Safety Forum event have been incorporated into the draft Moving Around Merri-bek Action plan which is presented to Council to endorse for public consultation at the October meeting.**

7.55 pm *Cr Svensson returned to the meeting during the debate.*

7.57 pm *Cr Theodosis left the meeting during the debate.*

7.58 pm *Cr Theodosis returned to the meeting during the debate.*

Carried

7.10 SUBMISSION TO ACTIVITY CENTRES PROGRAM, PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT

Executive summary

This report is one of two reports tabled at the October Council meeting, relating to State government planning reforms. This report relates to strategic planning reforms to Activity Centres; the second report relates to a statutory planning reform that will apply to mid-rise developments of up to six storeys.

To meet the needs of Merri-bek's growing population, additional housing will be required in well-serviced areas across the municipality. The State Government's Activity Centres Program (Program) seeks to support this by facilitating housing growth in the Brunswick and Coburg Train and Tram Activity Centres (Activity Centres). As a key stakeholder, Council has an important advocacy role to ensure the Program delivers not only housing, but also affordable, sustainable, and well-planned outcomes for the Merri-bek community.

The Program involves two phases of community engagement. In June 2025, Council endorsed a Phase 1 submission following the first phase of engagement. It sets out Merri-bek's strategic priorities to ensure housing growth is carefully planned and designed to deliver affordable, sustainable, and diverse high-quality housing, supported by essential infrastructure, transport, jobs and open space. These priorities remain relevant.

Phase 2 engagement is now underway. The State Government is seeking feedback on draft maps showing proposed building heights and activity centre boundaries across the approximately five-kilometre corridor from Brunswick to Coburg. These maps define the commercial "core" along Sydney Road and the surrounding residential "inner" and "outer" catchment areas. No other important supporting technical information or draft planning provisions have been released at the time of writing this report, although further technical information may be made available in the coming days. Community feedback is due by Sunday 19 October 2025, with Council feedback due by Friday 24 October 2025.

Once finalised, these maps will inform the preparation of Activity Centre Plan(s), the application of a Built Form Overlay (BFO) to the core, and the rezoning of surrounding residential land to the Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ), across the inner and outer catchments (HCTZ1 and HCTZ2, respectively). This stage of the Program is expected to conclude in early 2026, with a planning scheme amendment scheduled for approval by March/April 2026.

This Council report:

- Outlines feedback from Phase 1 community engagement.
- Summarises what is proposed in the publicly released Phase 2 engagement materials (Attachment 3).
- Recommends a Council advocacy position and submission on the Program and Phase 2 engagement materials (Attachments 1 and 2).
- Advocates for the public release of supporting technical information, and draft planning provisions, and recommends authorising officers to prepare a supplementary submission on any additional material provided to Council by the State Government.

This report seeks Council's endorsement of the draft Part A submission and authorisation for the Director Place and Environment to prepare a supplementary Part B submission should further technical material is released.

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the draft Activity Centres Program – Phase 2 Merri-bek Submission Part A at Attachment 1 (Part A1: Position Paper) and Attachment 2 (Part A2: Technical Paper), as Council's formal submission to the State Government in relation to publicly released material.
2. Authorises the Director Place and Environment to prepare Activity Centres Program – Phase 2 Submission Part B, in relation to any additional material supplied by the State Government to Council officers. This submission will align with Council's adopted positions on building heights and core and catchment boundaries, incorporate community feedback from the Phase 1 engagement, and address key issues that arise in Council's planning permit decisions, to advocate for the best outcomes for our community.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Abboud seconded -

That Council:

1. **Endorses the draft Activity Centres Program – Phase 2 Merri-bek Submission Part A at Attachment 1 (Part A1: Position Paper) and Attachment 2 (Part A2: Technical Paper), as Council’s formal submission to the State Government in relation to publicly released material.**
2. **Inserts an additional sentence into the Part A submission (page 429 of the Council Agenda) above the heading “What we’re asking for” as follows:**
Council notes that residents of Glencairn Avenue Coburg have raised with Council the existence of covenants and heritage overlays restricting height and development in that area. Council requests that DTP consider these and any other covenants which might have a bearing on heights in the surrounding area.
3. **Authorises the Director Place and Environment to prepare Activity Centres Program – Phase 2 Submission Part B, in relation to any additional material supplied by the State Government to Council officers. This submission will align with Council’s adopted positions on building heights and core and catchment boundaries, incorporate community feedback from the Phase 1 engagement, and address key issues that arise in Council’s planning permit decisions, to advocate for the best outcomes for our community.**

8.01 pm *Cr Pulford left the meeting during the debate.*

8.03 pm *Cr Pulford returned to the meeting during the debate.*

Carried

7.11 **SUBMISSION - STATE GOVERNMENT RESIDENTIAL MID-RISE CODE REFORM**

Executive summary

This report is one of two reports tabled at the October Council meeting, relating to State Government planning reforms. This report relates to statutory planning reforms to planning controls for mid-rise developments. The other report relates to Activity Centre planning reforms which will introduce new zones with three to six storey height limits in Brunswick and Coburg Activity Centres.

The Victorian State Government is currently consulting on new draft planning controls for mid-rise residential developments (up to six storeys). The mid-rise residential standards are part of the ongoing planning reforms which seek to boost housing supply. The draft mid-rise residential standards proposed by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), set out new planning requirements for residential apartment buildings between four and six storeys, aiming to streamline approvals and clarify residential amenity, design, and development expectations for Councils, the development industry and local communities, on residentially zoned land. In Merri-bek it is expected that apartments up to six storeys will be allowed near activity centres, in land currently within the Residential Growth Zone, Mixed Use Zone or in the proposed new Housing Choice and Transport Zone.

The Victorian State Government is currently undertaking targeted consultation with developers, planning consultants, building designers, industry peak bodies and Councils on the Mid-rise Code. This includes the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) and others. DTP is encouraging submissions on the proposed design standards via an online survey. It is expected that the new mid-rise residential standards will be implemented in Victorian Planning Schemes by December 2025.

Some of the key features of the new draft standard for mid-rise residential development are:

- No third-party right of review to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) will apply for objectors if all “deemed to comply” standards are met. Objectors can therefore only seek a review before VCAT, if a standard is not met.
- They limit what can be considered in the planning assessment. This means broader issues including flooding or potentially contaminated land will no longer be considered.

Whilst Merri-bek supports increasing the supply of well-designed new housing, there are some concerns with the draft standards for mid-rise residential developments. These concerns broadly relate to:

- The lessening of the community’s ability to participate in the planning process, through limiting the ability of an objector to seek a review at the VCAT.
- The lack of broader consultation on these changes with community, particularly in a setting where new standards allow for greater impacts on residential amenity (e.g. shadowing) through allowing developments up to six storeys in residential areas.
- Removing the need to assess mid-rise apartment buildings against Council’s policy which seeks to deliver best practice Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses Council’s submission to the Department of Transport and Planning on the technical aspects of the draft standards for mid-rise residential developments (up to 6 storeys), at Attachment 1 of this report, which includes recommendations that:
 - a) Third party review rights to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal must remain as part of Clause 57 of the Planning Scheme.
 - b) Development at this scale should deliver best practice Environmentally Sustainable Design.
 - c) Operational provisions must be amended to enable Council to consider environmental risks such as flooding and potentially contaminated land.
 - d) It is essential that design quality is supported.
 - e) The canopy tree requirement must be adjusted to ensure development at this scale is within a landscaped setting, which contributes to greener, cooler, and healthier neighbourhoods.
 - f) The concept of relying on setbacks, to minimise both overlooking and overshadowing, be revisited as this may increase the impacts on neighbours, when compared to the current metrics in Clause 55 of the *Planning and Environment Act*.
 - g) The Department of Transport and Planning should undertake wider consultation with the community on such significant changes to planning controls.

Resolution

Cr Iwasaki moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

That Council:

- 1. Endorses Council's submission to the Department of Transport and Planning on the technical aspects of the draft standards for mid-rise residential developments (up to 6 storeys), at Attachment 1 of this report, which includes recommendations that:**
 - a) Third party review rights to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal must remain as part of Clause 57 of the Planning Scheme.**
 - b) Development at this scale should deliver best practice Environmentally Sustainable Design.**
 - c) Operational provisions must be amended to enable Council to consider environmental risks such as flooding and potentially contaminated land.**
 - d) It is essential that design quality is supported.**
 - e) The canopy tree requirement must be adjusted to ensure development at this scale is within a landscaped setting, which contributes to greener, cooler, and healthier neighbourhoods.**
 - f) The concept of relying on setbacks, to minimise both overlooking and overshadowing, be revisited as this may increase the impacts on neighbours, when compared to the current metrics in Clause 55 of the Planning and Environment Act.**
 - g) The Department of Transport and Planning should undertake wider consultation with the community on such significant changes to planning controls.**

Carried

7.12 CONNOLLY AVENUE SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Executive summary

Connolly Avenue is a residential local street in Coburg North, bordered by Goff Street, Elizabeth Street, Murray Road and the Merri Creek. The area includes Newlands Senior Citizens Centre and the Barry Beckett Children's Centre. Numerous road safety concerns have been raised over the years relating to pedestrian safety at the intersection with Murray Road, vehicle speeds travelling through the neighbourhood, and the volume of traffic using the neighbourhood as a rat run.

As part of the area wide 40km/h roll out on all local streets in Merri-bek, the speed limit was reduced from 50km/h to 40km/h in early 2024. Traffic counts were undertaken 12 months after the speed limit was reduced, and it was found that speeds on Connolly Avenue were still well above the new posted speed limit, often 10km/h above.

In February 2025, Council resolved to receive a report detailing potential solutions to these road safety concerns that have been discussed with the community. Officers investigated the issues and developed a draft concept plan with proposed treatments. The draft concept plan was exhibited for community engagement between 25 August 2025 and 14 September 2025, and 85 people provided input on the plans.

Following consultation, the concept plans were updated to include more speed humps and some other minor changes. The updated concept plan includes:

- Two raised crossings

- Six speed humps
- Three new kerb ramps
- Kerb buildouts
- Signage and line marking improvements
- Advocacy for a new signalised pedestrian crossing

Some of the proposed works, including three speed humps on Connolly Street (west) between Meadow Street and Murray Road, and signage and line marking improvements to the Goff Street and Connolly Avenue intersection, can be delivered in the current financial year with existing allocated budgets.

The remaining recommended treatments proposed for future financial years will need to be considered as part of the Capital Works Program from 2026/27 or subject to external funding.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the findings of the community engagement and thanks the community for their participation.
2. Endorses the updated concept plan and notes the implementation plan for those works.
3. Refers the proposed design and project to be considered in the budget process for delivery in the 2026-27 financial year.
4. Notes the advocacy that has been undertaken on a signalised pedestrian crossing on Elizabeth Street.

Resolution

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Bolton seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the findings of the community engagement and thanks the community for their participation.**
2. **Endorses the updated concept plan and notes the implementation plan for those works.**
3. **Refers the proposed design and project to be considered in the budget process for delivery in the 2026-27 financial year.**
4. **Notes the advocacy that has been undertaken on a signalised pedestrian crossing on Elizabeth Street.**
5. **Advocates to the State Government to align the intersection of Outlook and Connolly Ave where they meet Murray Road.**

Carried

8.27 pm *Cr Abboud left the meeting.*

8.27 pm *Cr Abboud returned to the meeting.*

7.13 ADVISORY COMMITTEES - APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 13 August 2025, Council endorsed the establishment of the following Advisory Committees and Reference Groups to support the delivery of its strategic directions and objectives:

- a) Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience Advisory Committee
- b) Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee; supported by the following Reference Groups:
 - i) Gender Equality Reference Group
 - ii) LGBTIQA+ Reference Group (established as part of the LGBTIQA+ Action Plan)
 - iii) Disability Reference Group
 - iv) Older Persons Reference Group
- c) Liveability Advisory Committee; supported by a Strategic Transport Reference Group
- d) Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee
- e) First Peoples Advisory Committee.

The Community Engagement Policy was adopted by Council on the 9 December 2020, superseding Council's Community Engagement and Public Participation Policy 2018. It supports Council's integrated strategic planning and reporting framework required under the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and meets Council's legislative requirements for community engagement which is a key focus for local government.

Council's Advisory Committees and Reference Groups are an important network of stakeholders who are regularly engaged to provide detailed feedback on Council's operations and decisions that may affect specific communities. Council's Advisory Committees and Reference Groups play a key role in providing early advice to Council about significant strategies and policies that impact the community.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Appoints the community members listed in confidential attachment 1 to this report titled Advisory Committees and Reference Groups.
2. Notes the appointments to the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will sunset on 30 June following the next General Election.
3. Endorses postponing the appointment of the vacant positions on the First Peoples Advisory Committee and Disability Reference Group to the November Council meeting.
4. Notes that all applicants will be contacted to thank them for their application and receive notification of the outcome of their application and the final Terms of Reference made available via the Merri-bek City Council website.

Amended Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Amends the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups Terms of Reference to include Heritage and Local History as part of the Role and Responsibilities of the Liveability Advisory Committee and include 13 Community Members as part of the Committee membership.

2. Appoints community members to its Advisory Committee and Reference Groups as listed in the revised confidential attachment 1
3. Notes the appointments to the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will sunset on 30 June following the next General Election.
4. Endorses postponing the appointment of the vacant positions on the First Peoples Advisory Committee and Disability Reference Group to the November Council meeting.
5. Informs the successful applicants of their appointments and to disseminate other relevant information, as deemed appropriate.
6. Notes the final Terms of Reference will be made available via the Merri-bek City Council website.

Resolution

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Irvin seconded -

That Council:

1. **Amends the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups Terms of Reference to include Heritage and Local History as part of the Role and Responsibilities of the Liveability Advisory Committee and include 13 Community Members as part of the Committee membership.**
2. **Appoints community members to its Advisory Committee and Reference Groups as listed in the revised confidential attachment 1**
3. **Notes the appointments to the Advisory Committees and Reference Groups will sunset on 30 June following the next General Election.**
4. **Endorses postponing the appointment of the vacant positions on the First Peoples Advisory Committee and Disability Reference Group to the November Council meeting.**
5. **Informs the successful applicants of their appointments and to disseminate other relevant information, as deemed appropriate.**
6. **Notes the final Terms of Reference will be made available via the Merri-bek City Council website.**

Carried

7.14 ROAD MANAGEMENT PLAN

Executive Summary

The *Road Management Act 2004* (the Act) requires each municipal Council to review its Road Management Plan by 31 October in the year following general election of Council.

Council's Road Management Plan was reviewed after internal and external consultation pursuant to Section 54(5) of the Act and Section 8(3) of the *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016* (the Regulation).

In accordance with the Regulation, a summary report of the findings as well as the proposed amendments to the Road Management Plan was presented at the August 2025 Council meeting to seek endorsement for broader public consultation.

Public notice was published in *Victoria Government Gazette*, *The Age* newspaper and feedback was also sought through Conversations Merri-bek webpage in accordance with Section 10 of the Regulation.

Some 33 submissions were received through Conversations Merri-bek webpage, which closed on 18 September 2025, and it is therefore, proposed to adopt the revised Road Management Plan (Attachment 1) based on the outcome of the review process.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the amended Road Management Plan at Attachment 1 to this report prepared in accordance with the requirements of Division 5 of the *Road Management Act 2004*.
2. Publishes a notice of the adoption of the Road Management Plan in the *Victoria Government Gazette* and a local daily newspaper as required by Section 55 of the *Road Management Act 2004* stating:
 - a) The Road Management Plan has been adopted on 8 October 2025; and
 - b) That a copy of the Road Management Plan may be inspected or obtained from Council's website or customer service centers.
3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to arrange for edits to the document for presentation and clarity, without making any material change ahead of publishing the final Road Management Plan.

Resolution

Cr Miles moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council:

1. **Adopts the amended Road Management Plan at Attachment 1 to this report prepared in accordance with the requirements of Division 5 of the Road Management Act 2004.**
2. **Publishes a notice of the adoption of the Road Management Plan in the Victoria Government Gazette and a local daily newspaper as required by Section 55 of the Road Management Act 2004 stating:**
 - a) **The Road Management Plan has been adopted on 8 October 2025; and**
 - b) **That a copy of the Road Management Plan may be inspected or obtained from Council's website or customer service centers.**
3. **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to arrange for edits to the document for presentation and clarity, without making any material change ahead of publishing the final Road Management Plan.**

8.31 pm Cr Theodosia left the meeting during the debate.

Carried

7.15 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025

Executive Summary

This report presents the Financial Management Report for the financial year to date period ending 31 August 2025.

The 31 August 2025 Income Statement shows that Council has recorded a surplus of \$174.4 million, \$0.4 million lower than the year-to-date budget of \$174.8 million, as a result of lower overall revenue. This difference is considered largely timing in nature. As set out in the issues section of this report, operating surplus funds do not convert to immediately available cash to Council. 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 \$4.5 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking above the year-to-date (YTD) budget of \$3.4 million, with \$89.4 million budget remaining.

Officer Recommendation

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 August 2025, at Attachment 1 to this report.

Resolution

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Pulford seconded -

That Council notes the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 August 2025, at Attachment 1 to this report.

Carried

7.16 GOVERNANCE REPORT - OCTOBER 2025 - 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 13 August and 10 September 2025 Council meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the responses.
- The summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 2 September 2025.
- The Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024/25.
- The Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report.
- The updated Audit and Risk Committee Charter.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 1 to this report.
2. Notes responses to questions taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 13 August and 10 September 2025 Council meetings, provided as Attachment 2.
3. Notes the summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 2 September 2025 at Attachment 3 to this report.
4. Endorses the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024/25 at Attachment 4 to this report.
5. Notes the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report at Attachment 5 to this report.
6. Endorses the updated Audit and Risk Committee Charter as provided in Attachment 6 to this report (as recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee).

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 1 to this report.**
2. **Notes responses to questions taken on notice during Public Question Time at the 13 August and 10 September 2025 Council meetings, provided as Attachment 2.**
3. **Notes the summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee held 2 September 2025 at Attachment 3 to this report.**
4. **Endorses the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Performance Report 2024/25 at Attachment 4 to this report.**
5. **Notes the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report at Attachment 5 to this report.**
6. **Endorses the updated Audit and Risk Committee Charter as provided in Attachment 6 to this report (as recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee).**

8.33 pm *Cr Theodosius returned to the meeting during the debate.*

Carried

7.17 **CONTRACT AWARD: RFT 2025-36 ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT OAK PARK SPORTS AND AQUATIC PRECINCT**

Executive Summary

Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre (OPSAC) closed at the conclusion of the 2017 summer season for redevelopment following an extensive planning period. The precinct including the Aquatic and Leisure Centre and Sports Pavilion reopened in November 2018.

This project will be the next stage, transitioning the site to near net zero by removing sole reliance on gas boilers for pool water heating. Electric heat pumps were initially installed for the domestic hot water for the aquatic and leisure center, new plant will be installed and commissioned to provide the primary source of pool heating while the existing gas boilers for the pool will remain only as a back-up measure in case of equipment failure and extreme climate events. The sports pavilion's existing gas cooktop will also be replaced with an electric equivalent.

With electricity backed by certificates from the Crowlands Windfarm, the project will significantly reduce Council's carbon emissions.

By retrofitting an aquatic centre to all-electric and sharing lessons learnt, we will encourage other councils to do the same.

The infrastructure works need to be delivered in the winter season commencing May 2026 to limit service impact on the Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Precinct and to be acquitted by October 2026.

Council was successful in obtaining \$740,000 through the Community Energy Upgrade Fund and has budgeted an additional \$1,110,150 for the delivery of the project and services associated with the project deliverables.

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 **Entire Service & Maintenance Pty Ltd (Contractor)** to award contract **RFT-2025-36** for the **Electrification of Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Precinct (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:
 - i. For the maximum lump sum of \$1,947,820.00 (excluding GST) plus provisional sums totaling \$50,000 (excluding GST), totaling \$1,997,820.00 (excluding GST)
 - b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:
 - i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and
 - ii. other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer;
2. Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution:
 - a) Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; RFT-2025-36
 - b) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.

3. Refers the remaining budget shortfall of \$386,392 to the relevant quarterly budget review.

Resolution

Cr Theodosis moved, Cr Pulford seconded -

That Council:

1. **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:**
 - a) **Make a formal offer to Entire Service & Maintenance Pty Ltd (Contractor) to award contract RFT-2025-36 for the Electrification of Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Precinct (Contract) on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution:**
 - i. **For the maximum lump sum of \$1,947,820.00 (excluding GST) plus provisional sums totaling \$50,000 (excluding GST), totaling \$1,997,820.00 (excluding GST)**
 - b) **Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and the Contractor provided that:**
 - i. **the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and**
 - ii. **other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer;**
2. **Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution:**
 - a) **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract; RFT-2025-36**
 - b) **Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.**
3. **Refers the remaining budget shortfall of \$386,392 to the relevant quarterly budget review.**

Carried

7.18 CONTRACT VARIATION: EXE-2023-546 PATHWAY AND EPATHWAY SOFTWARE MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT

Executive Summary

Council awarded an extension on 14 May 2025 for three years for the existing contract EXE-2023-546 which expired on 30 June 2025 for Software maintenance and support for Infor Global Solutions, the provider of the Pathway and ePathway platforms. These platforms support core functions, including property management, regulatory management (i.e. planning and building), and revenue management.

The extension specified a maximum additional spend of \$960,021 (excluding GST). By granting approval for up to 3-years of exemptions allowed for an orderly transition to the new Enterprise Resourcing Planning (ERP) system.

Following this decision, Council has been in negotiations with the vendor for the extension. The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval for a contract variation for an additional maximum allowable spend of \$1,050,000 (excluding GST) which is an increase of \$89,979.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Approves an increase to the maximum additional spend for EXE-2023-546 Infor Software Maintenance and Support from \$960,021 to \$1,050,000 (excluding GST) under the 3-year extension options;
2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to approve the contract exemption and related documentation as identified in point one above.

Resolution

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That Council:

1. **Approves an increase to the maximum additional spend for EXE-2023-546 Infor Software Maintenance and Support from \$960,021 to \$1,050,000 (excluding GST) under the 3-year extension options;**
2. **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to do all things necessary to approve the contract exemption and related documentation as identified in point one above.**

Carried

NOTICES OF MOTION

8.1 HAROLD STEVENS ATHLETICS TRACK

Motion

That Council receives a report reviewing the management model, inclusive of the lease arrangements, of the Harold Stevens Athletics Track.

Resolution

Cr Politis moved, Cr Miles seconded -

That Council receives a report reviewing the management model, inclusive of the lease arrangements, of the Harold Stevens Athletics Track.

Carried

8.2 COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE AT ALGA CONFERENCES

Motion

That Council:

1. Notes in accordance with the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy an annual budget allocation for attendance at seminars, conferences and training and community events, including for attendance at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly, which is an important forum for local government advocacy.
2. Notes the costs associated with Councillors attending ALGA multiple times in a single Council term can be significant, and that Council must balance professional development opportunities with responsible use of public funds.

3. Requests a report that reviews Council's Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy regarding Councillor attendance at the ALGA National General Assembly.
4. Explores options for limiting paid councillor attendance such that each Councillor may only attend one National General Assembly at Council expense per Council term.
5. Considers necessary exceptions, such as where a Councillor is elected to a national local government body or holds a representative role that requires ongoing attendance.

Resolution

Cr Svensson moved, Cr Abboud seconded -

That Council:

1. **Notes in accordance with the Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy an annual budget allocation for attendance at seminars, conferences and training and community events, including for attendance at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly, which is an important forum for local government advocacy.**
2. **Notes the costs associated with Councillors attending ALGA multiple times in a single Council term can be significant, and that Council must balance professional development opportunities with responsible use of public funds.**
3. **Requests a report that reviews Council's Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy regarding Councillor attendance at the ALGA National General Assembly and review the process of Councillor reporting of their attendance at approved activities.**
4. **Explores options for limiting paid councillor attendance such that each Councillor may only attend one National General Assembly at Council expense per Council term.**
5. **Considers necessary exceptions, such as where a Councillor is elected to a national local government body or holds a representative role that requires ongoing attendance.**

Cr Pulford called for a division.

For

Cr Bolton
Cr Pulford
Cr Miles
Cr Svensson
Cr Iwasaki
Cr Abboud
Cr Irvin
Cr Theodosis

Total For (8)

Against

Cr Davidson
Cr Yildiz

Total Against (2)

Abstain

Cr Politis

Total Abstain (1)

Carried

8.3 BUS SHELTER PROGRAM IN MERRI-BEK

Motion

That Council:

1. Recognises the vital importance of increasing the number of bus shelters in Merri-bek, particularly in key locations.
2. Receives a report by February 2026 which includes information on:
 - the estimated proportion of bus stops which have bus shelters or bus seats
 - the progress towards increasing the number of bus shelters and/or bus seats
 - recommendations on how to speed up the number bus shelters installed each year.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Pulford seconded -

That Council:

1. **Recognises the vital importance of increasing the number of bus shelters in Merri-bek, particularly in key locations, and of increasing the number of seats at both bus stops and walking routes**
2. **Receives a report by February 2026 which includes information on:**
 - **the estimated proportion of bus stops which have bus shelters or bus seats**
 - **the progress towards increasing the number of bus shelters and/or bus seats**
 - **recommendations on how to speed up the number of bus shelters and seats installed each year.**
 - **Consideration of referral to next year's budget process \$100,000 to install more seats at bus stops and shelters on walking routes.**
 - **Considers giving priority to bus stops that are further away from other public transport options.**

8.44 pm *Cr Yildiz left the meeting during the debate and did not return.*

Carried

8.4 PROCUREMENT POLICY AND SUBMINIMUM WAGES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN SEGREGATED WORKPLACES

Motion

That Council investigates the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System such as Australian Disability Enterprises for future contracts and provides a report back to Council by December 2025.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Svensson seconded -

That Council investigates the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System such as Australian Disability Enterprises for future contracts and provides a report back to Council by December 2025.

8.53 pm Cr Abboud left the meeting during the debate.

8.54 pm Cr Abboud returned to the meeting during the debate.

Cr Iwasaki called for a division.

For

Cr Bolton
Cr Pulford
Cr Miles
Cr Svensson
Cr Iwasaki
Cr Abboud
Cr Irvin
Cr Theodosis

Total For (8)

Against

Cr Politis

Total Against (1)

Abstain

Cr Davidson

Total Abstain (1)

Carried

8.5 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT FORUMS

Motion

That Council proposes to the Metropolitan Transport Forum that the forum that is organised in Merri-bek in the lead up to the 2026 State election occur in the north of Merri-bek near the Upfield Line, with subsequent forums rotating around different parts of Merri-bek.

Resolution

Cr Bolton moved, Cr Abboud seconded -

That Council proposes to the Metropolitan Transport Forum that the forum that is organised in Merri-bek in the lead up to the 2026 State election occur in the north of Merri-bek near the Upfield Line, with subsequent forums rotating around different parts of Merri-bek.

Carried

9.04 pm Cr Miles left the meeting.

8.6 AIR CONDITIONING IN THE BARKLY ST TOWERS

Motion

That Council writes to Homes Victoria requesting that given the age and vulnerability of the residents, that the installation of air conditioning units is prioritised with the aim of completion by the end of 2025.

Motion

Cr Politis moved, Cr Abboud seconded –

That Council writes to Homes Victoria requesting that given the age and vulnerability of the residents, that the installation of air conditioning units is prioritised with the aim of completion by the end of 2025.

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

Amendment

Cr Iwasaki moved, Cr Bolton seconded –

That Council writes to Homes Victoria requesting that given the age and vulnerability of the residents, that the installation of air conditioning units is prioritised with the aim of completion by the end of 2025 and that further refurbishments be considered as an alternative to the planned demolition.

Cr Iwasaki called for a division.

For

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

Total For (6)

Against

Cr Politis
Cr Theodosius
Cr Davidson
Cr Miles

Total Against (4)

Carried

Resolution

Cr Politis moved, Cr Abboud seconded -

That Council write to Homes Victoria requesting that given the age and vulnerability of the residents, that the installation of air conditioning units is prioritised with the aim of completion by the end of 2025 and that further refurbishments be considered as an alternative to the planned demolition.

Carried

8.7 SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM PERMIT REQUIREMENTS IN A HERITAGE OVERLAY

Motion

That Council receives a report on commencing the process of reviewing the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to “switch off” permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within a heritage overlay, as permitted by VC226. This review can either be done as a standalone priority review, or as part of a broader review of the entire Planning Scheme.

Resolution

Cr Irvin moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council receives a report on commencing the process of reviewing the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to “switch off” permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within a heritage overlay, as permitted by VC226. This review can either be done as a standalone priority review, or as part of a broader review of the entire Planning Scheme. This review would include consultation with Council’s Liveability Advisory Committee to seek their feedback. The report should also consider any other mechanisms, including for example a moratorium on enforcement in certain circumstances, as interim approaches while a planning scheme review is undertaken.

9.20 pm Cr Miles left the meeting and returned during the debate.

Carried

8.8 PRESERVING MERRI-BEK’S PROUD MIGRANT HISTORY THROUGH ART AND STORYTELLING

Motion

That Council investigates options for building upon previous materials and resources to collect and record migrant stories and history across Merri-bek, including those relating to residents, people, community clubs, buildings and other places and things with a migrant connection. That Council explores how it can curate those stories through an arts program and share them through our libraries.

Resolution

Cr Theodosis moved, Cr Iwasaki seconded -

That Council investigates options for building upon previous materials and resources to collect and record migrant stories and history across Merri-bek, including those relating to residents, people, community clubs, buildings and other places and things with a migrant connection. That Council explores how it can curate those stories through an arts program and share them through our libraries.

Carried unanimously

NOTICE OF RESCISSION

Nil.

FORESHADOWED ITEMS

Nil.

URGENT BUSINESS REPORTS

Nil.

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

Resolution

Cr Abboud moved, Cr Bolton seconded –

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

- 12.1 Central Coburg Program because it relates to Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.
- 12.2 Contract Matters because it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that relates to trade secrets; 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.
- 12.3 Program Review because it relates to confidential meeting information, being the records of meetings closed to the public under section 66(2)(a).
- 12.4 Chief Executive Officer Employment Matters because it relates to personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.

Carried

The Council meeting closed to the public at 9.30 pm.

OPENING THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

Resolution

Cr Pulford moved –

The Council meeting be open to the public.

Carried

The Council meeting opened to the public at 10.00 pm.

The Council meeting closed at 10.01 pm.

Confirmed

Cr Helen Davidson
MAYOR