



**Date:** Tuesday, 25 June 2024  
**Time:** 3.00pm  
**Location:** Loddon Shire Council Chambers, Wedderburn

# **MINUTES**

## **Council Meeting**

**MINUTES OF LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL  
COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD AT THE LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEDDERBURN  
ON TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2024 AT 3.00PM**

**PRESENT:** Cr Gavan Holt (Mayor), Cr Dan Straub, Cr Neil Beattie, Cr Linda Jungwirth and Cr Wendy Murphy

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Lincoln Fitzgerald (Chief Executive Officer), Wendy Gladman (Director Community Wellbeing), David Southcombe (Acting Director Operations), Michelle Stedman (Director Corporate) and Lisa Clue (Manager Governance)

**1 OPENING AFFIRMATION**

The Mayor read the Opening Affirmation

**2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

The Chief Executive Officer read the Acknowledgement of Country

**3 APOLOGIES**

Nil

**4 DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer declared a Material Conflict of Interest in relation to Agenda Item 14.1.

**5 PREVIOUS MINUTES****5.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES****File Number:** FOL/19/45615**Author:** Lisa Clue, Manager Governance**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council confirm the Minutes of the following meetings as previously circulated to Councillors:

1. Council Briefing of 28 May 2024
2. Council Meeting of 28 May 2024
3. Council Forum of 11 June 2024.

**REPORT**

This report seeks Council confirmation of Minutes from the May 2024 Council Briefing and Council Meeting, and the June 2024 Council Forum as previously circulated to Councillors.

**RESOLUTION 2024/72****Moved:** Cr Dan Straub**Seconded:** Cr Neil Beattie

That Council confirm the Minutes of the following meetings as previously circulated to Councillors:

1. Council Briefing of 28 May 2024
2. Council Meeting of 28 May 2024
3. Council Forum of 11 June 2024.

**CARRIED**

**6 COUNCIL AUSPICED MEETINGS****6.1 RECORD OF COUNCIL AUSPICED MEETINGS****File Number:** 02/01/001**Author:** Lisa Clue, Manager Governance**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council confirm records of the following as detailed within this report:

1. Council Briefing 28 May 2024
2. Council Forum 11 June 2024.

Rule 35 of Council's Governance Rules requires a record of meetings conducted under the auspices of Council to be presented to the next available scheduled Council meeting for confirmation that must include:

- a) a record of which Councillors and officers attended the meeting;
- b) a summary of the matters considered in the meeting; and
- c) a record of any conflicts of interest disclosed by Councillors and officers and any Councillors or officers that left the meeting whilst a matter that their conflict of interest related to was being discussed.

Section 3 of the Governance Rules defines meetings conducted under the auspices of Council to mean a meeting of the kind described in section 131(1) of the Local Government Act 2020 and includes a meeting which:

- a) is schedule or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of Council or briefing Councillors;
- b) is attended by a majority of Councillors;
- c) is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
- d) is not a Council meeting or delegated committee meeting.

This report seeks confirmation of the following Council auspiced meetings as detailed within this report:

1. Council Briefing 28 May 2024
2. Council Forum 11 June 2024.

Meeting details	Briefing
Date	28 May 2024
Councillor Attendees	Cr Holt (Mayor) Cr Beattie Cr Jungwirth Cr Murphy Cr Straub
Staff/ Stakeholder representatives	Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing Glenn Harvey, Acting Director Operations Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate Lisa Clue, Governance Manager David Price, Manager Community Services – Item 2 below Darcy Jackson, Statutory Planning Officer – Item 3 below Carolyn Stephenson, Statutory/Strategic Planner and Louise Johnston, Statutory Planning Coordinator – Item 4 below
Item(s) discussed.	Review of Council Meeting Agenda Community Services Quarterly Progress Reports Planning Application 5957 Loddon Planning Scheme review General Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chamberlains Road Closure</li> <li>• Governance Rules Review</li> <li>• 2024 Elections and Ward Boundary Review</li> <li>• Donaldson Park Community Hub Opening</li> </ul>
Conflict of Interest Disclosures – Councillor/ officer making disclosure	Nil
Councillor/officer left room	n/a

Meeting details	Forum
Date	11 June 2024
Councillor Attendees	Cr Holt (Mayor) Cr Straub Cr Beattie Cr Jungwirth Cr Murphy
Staff/ Stakeholder representatives	Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing Steven Phillips, Director Operations Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate Lisa Clue, Manager Governance Mark Zuker, JWS Research – Item 1 below Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services – Item 2 below David Southcombe, Manager Assets and Infrastructure – Item 3 below Carolyn Stephenson, Statutory/Strategic Planner and Louise Johnston, Statutory Planning Coordinator – Item 6 below
Item(s) discussed.	2024 Community Satisfaction Survey Results Feedback on Draft Budget and Fees and Charges Schedule Annual Infrastructure Program 2024-2025 Business Continuity Management Review Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services Heritage Loan Policy and Procedure General Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update – Murray River Group of Councils</li> <li>• Federal Member for Mallee – Meetings</li> <li>• Other matters</li> </ul>
Conflict of Interest Disclosures – Councillor/ officer making disclosure	Nil
Councillor/officer left room	n/a

**RESOLUTION 2024/73**

Moved: Cr Linda Jungwirth

Seconded: Cr Wendy Murphy

That Council confirm records of the following as detailed within this report:

1. Council Briefing 28 May 2024
2. Council Forum 11 June 2024.

**CARRIED**

**7 REVIEW OF ACTIONS****7.1 REVIEW OF ACTIONS****File Number: 02/01/002****Author: Christine Coombes, Executive Services Officer****Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer****Attachments: 1. Resolutions acted upon since the May 2024 Council Meeting****RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive and note resolutions acted upon since the April and May 2024 Council meetings as attached to this report.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

**REPORT**

A document containing the status of actions from May Council meeting resolutions is attached to this Agenda report.

There was one outstanding action from Council meeting resolutions prior to May 2024, this action is now complete.

Of the six actions generated from the May 2024 Council meeting resolutions, all have been completed.

**RESOLUTION 2024/74****Moved: Cr Wendy Murphy****Seconded: Cr Neil Beattie**

That Council receive and note resolutions acted upon since the April and May 2024 Council meetings as attached to this report.

**CARRIED**

**8 MAYORAL REPORT****8.1 MAYORAL REPORT****File Number:** 02/01/001**Author:** Lisa Clue, Manager Governance**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive and note the Mayoral Report.

**REPORT**

Mayor Holt presented a verbal report at the meeting.

<b>Loddon Campaspe Councils</b>	
13/06/2024 – Meeting, Bendigo	
<b>Murray River Group of Councils</b>	
06/06/2023 – Meeting - Mildura	
<b>Other Council activities</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
30/05/2024	Municipal Flood and Storm Events Recovery Committee Meeting (Chair), Wedderburn
01/06/2024	Donaldson Park Complex Official Opening, Wedderburn
11/06/2024	June Council Forum, Wedderburn
12/06/2024	Seasonal Outlook Presentation with Dale Grey, Bridgewater
12/06/2024	Wedderburn Story Walk Launch
13/06/2024	Wedderburn and District Harness Racing Club meeting
14/06/2024	Discussion regarding CEO Key Performance Indicators
19/06/2024	Meeting with Dr Anne Webster, Federal Member for Mallee
23/06/2024	Trots Clubs Victoria 2023/24 Awards Function, Bendigo
24/06/2024	Meeting with Martha Haylett, Member for Rippon, Online



**RESOLUTION 2024/75**

Moved: Cr Gavan Holt (Mayor)

Seconded: Cr Linda Jungwirth

That Council receive and note the Mayoral Report.

**CARRIED**

**9 COUNCILLORS' REPORT****9.1 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS****File Number:** 02/01/001**Author:** Lisa Clue, Manager Governance**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer**Attachments:** Nil**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive and note the Councillors' reports.

**REPORT**

Each Councillor presented a verbal report at the meeting.

**Cr Murphy**

<b>Healthy Minds Network</b>	
20/06/2024 – Chaired meeting, Serpentine Bowls Club	
<b>Section 65 Community Asset Committees:</b>	
03/06/2024 - Inglewood Town Hall Hub meeting, Inglewood Town Hall Hub	
<b>Other Council activities</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
30/05/2024	Inglewood Development & Tourism Committee meeting, Inglewood Town Hall Hub
01/06/2024	Donaldson Park Complex Official Opening, Wedderburn
11/06/2024	June Council Forum, Wedderburn
18/06/2024	Social Infrastructure Strategy – Community Consultation, Inglewood
20/06/2024	Bridgewater on Loddon Development Inc meeting, Bridgewater Memorial Hall
25/06/2024	Councillor only time, June Council Briefing and Council Meeting, Wedderburn
05/06/2024, 12/06/2024 and 19/06/2024 - 'Expand Your Impact' workshop participation	

**Cr Beattie**

<b>Council activities</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
01/06/2024	Donaldson Park Complex Official Opening, Wedderburn
03/06/2024	Boort Tourism Development Committee meeting
11/06/2024	June Council Forum
12/06/2024	Seasonal Outlook Presentation with Dale Grey, Boort
13/06/2024	Meeting with Council Officer, Boort
15/06/2024	North Central Football League, Boort – St Arnaud match
19/06/2024	Meeting with Dr Anne Webster MP
23/06/2024	Trots Clubs Victoria 2023/24 Awards Function, Bendigo
25/06/2024	Councillor only time, June Council Briefing and Council Meeting, Wedderburn

**Cr Straub**

<b>North Central Local Learning and Employment Network</b>	
12/06/2024 – Finance and Risk Committee Meeting, followed by meeting with the NCLLEN CEO	
21/06/2024 – Meeting with NCLLEN CEO regarding Annual General Meeting preparation	
24/06/2024 – Annual General Meeting	
<b>Other Council activities</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
01/06/2024	Donaldson Park Complex Official Opening, Wedderburn
05/06/2024	Loddon Murray Leadership Program – Community Leadership Program Day
11/06/2024	June Council Forum
13/06/2024	Pyramid Hill Neighbourhood House staff
18/06/2024	Calivil Community and Districts Community Plan Committee Meeting, Jarklin
19/06/2024	Seasonal Outlook Presentation with Dale Gray presentation, Pyramid Hill
19/06/2024	Pyramid Hill Progress Association meeting

20/06/2024	Meeting with Dr Anne Webster, MP, Pyramid Hill
20/06/2024	Pyramid Hill Mens Shed Lunch and Catchup
25/06/2024	July Council Briefing and Council meeting

**Cr Jungwirth**

<b>Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance</b>	
06/06/2024 – Advocacy Committee Meeting, Online	
<b>Other Council activities</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
28/05/2024	May Council Briefing and Council Meeting, Wedderburn
28/05/2024	Newbridge Arnold Llanely Community Planning Committee Meeting, Newbridge
30/05/2024	Municipal Flood and Storm Events Recovery Committee Meeting, Wedderburn
01/06/2024	Donaldson Park Complex Official Opening, Wedderburn
03/06/2024	Meeting with Newbridge Arnold Llanely Community Planning Committee and Martha Haylett, Member for Rippoin, Maryborough
05/06/2024	Municipal Association of Victoria – Finance Training, Online
12/06/2024	Seasonal Outlook Presentation with Dale Grey, Bridgewater
	Wedderburn Story Walk Launch
	Victorian Farmers Federation Dinner Meeting, Newbridge
14/06/2024	Boort - familiarisation tour
18/06/2024	Meeting with community member re drainage, Tarnagulla

**RESOLUTION 2024/76**

Moved: Cr Wendy Murphy

Seconded: Cr Linda Jungwirth

That Council receive and note the Councillors' reports.

**CARRIED**

## 10 DECISION REPORTS

### RESOLUTION 2024/77

Moved: Cr Linda Jungwirth

Seconded: Cr Dan Straub

That the Order of Business be altered to consider Agenda Item 10.4 immediately prior to Agenda Item 10.3.

**CARRIED**

### 10.1 INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND SERVICES

**File Number:**

**Author:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer

**Authoriser:** Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer

**Attachments:** Nil

#### RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. authorise the Mayor to finalise a submission to the Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services on behalf of Loddon Shire Council; and,
2. that the submission be generally in accordance with the issues outlined within this report.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

#### PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Council discussed the Victorian Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services at the Council Forum on 11 June 2024.

Council discussed local government sustainability during forums to develop a draft 2024/25 Council budget.

Council considered similar issues at the Scheduled Council Meeting of 23 April 2024 when it resolved to make a submission to the Federal inquiry into local government sustainability.

#### BACKGROUND

On 3 May 2023, the Parliament of Victoria Legislative Council agreed to the following motion:

*That this House requires the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to inquire into, consider and report, by 28 November 2024, on local government funding and service delivery in Victoria, including but not limited to —*

*(1) the effects of cost shifting from the state and federal governments to local councils in an examination of vertical and horizontal fiscal imbalances;*

*(2) whether local councils are adequately delivering on their core service delivery objectives;*

(3) the overall revenue structure of local government;

(4) whether the existing revenue structure is sustainable and appropriate or if alternative models of funding would be more sustainable and appropriate; and

(5) any other related matters.

Almost a year later on 1 May 2024 the Legislative Council - Economy and Infrastructure Committee commenced accepting public submissions until **28 June 2024**.

Public hearings will be held and a report to parliament is due by 28 November 2024.

Further information can be found at the inquiry website:

Inquiry website: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/localgovernmentfunding>

## ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Council's from across Victoria are encouraged to make submissions relevant to the terms of reference for this inquiry. In considering the terms of reference it is important to acknowledge the context within which Loddon Shire is operating. Since its formation in January 1995 Council has developed a sound strategic base and engaged in prudent financial management. As a result, Loddon Shire has the lowest average rate per property assessment in Victoria but has delivered significantly for the community.

Source: <https://www.vic.gov.au/know-your-council-comparison-dashboard>

Since its formation there has been a significant uplift in community infrastructure. This includes Council assets such as recreation facilities, streetscapes, community halls and public roads. Additionally, there has been investment in State Government provided facilities and services such as medical facilities, community health centres, police & CFA stations, and public schools.

This investment in our community is reflected with Council seeing population growth, significant private industry investment, job creation, increased tourism and a strong agricultural sector driving >\$1 billion economic output.

As community expectations grow, a cross-government response is necessary to continue providing facilities and services which meet the needs of our current and future communities within a constrained financial environment.

In response to the specific terms of reference for this inquiry the following information is provided as a recommended basis for a submission by Loddon Shire Council.

### ***(1) the effects of cost shifting from the state and federal governments to local councils in an examination of vertical and horizontal fiscal imbalances;***

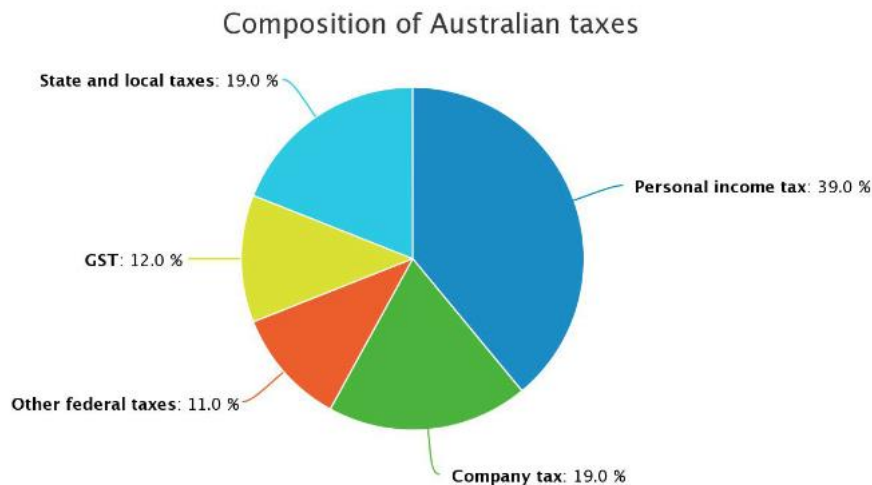
This question asks about cost shifting between levels of government (vertical) and the impact this has between different councils in Victoria (horizontal) who have significantly different capacities to absorb those additional costs.

#### Vertical imbalances

Federal and State governments are established from the Constitution of Australia as the supreme law under which the government of the Commonwealth of Australia operates, including its relationship to the States of Australia. Local governments are created by their respective state's legislation. This means that local councils are not recognised as a tier of government within the constitution and are somewhat different in each state according to their respective legislation. This genesis has a consequence that the Federal Government will often be unwilling to fund local government directly and therefore funding is allocated to the State to administer to local government. The major federal funding to local government is called the Financial Assistance Grants (FAGS).

Financial Assistance Grants to local government were originally the equivalent of 1% of Federal taxation, however this amount has been reduced over time and is now less than 0.5%. If these grants were returned to 1% and the current allocation model retained, Loddon Shire Council would be sustainable.

The Federal Government raises around 81 per cent of total tax revenue in Australia. State and Territory governments receive in the order of 45 per cent of their revenue through transfers from the Federal Government, including all GST revenue.



Note: Percentages may not sum up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Source: ABS, Taxation Revenue, 2012-13.

Source: Australian Government – The Treasury <https://treasury.gov.au/review/tax-white-paper/at-a-glance>

The Victorian Government collects income via a range of taxes (for example payroll, insurance, motor vehicle, land, etc) and levies such as fire services, COVID debt levy, landfill and more. These and other taxes and levies produce Victorian government income which is expected to be in the order of \$36.9 billion in 2023/24.

Source: Victorian State Government – Treasury and Finance <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/state-financial-data-sets/state-taxation-revenue>

In addition to own source revenue, the Victorian Government also receives significant revenue from the Federal Government as noted above. In 2023/24 this will be \$40.3 billion of which only \$4.53 billion will be allocated to local government by way of the Financial Assistance Grants.

Source: Australian Government – Budget Archive [https://archive.budget.gov.au/2023-24/bp3/download/bp3\\_15\\_appendix\\_b\\_online.pdf](https://archive.budget.gov.au/2023-24/bp3/download/bp3_15_appendix_b_online.pdf)

As a result, the Victorian government has budgeted income of \$89.3 billion in 2023/24.

Source: Victorian State Government – Treasury and Finance <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/state-financial-data-sets/aggregate-financial-statements>

Local government raises income from property rates and service charges. This income across the 79 local councils in Victoria has been reported to comprise of less than 3% of total taxation.

This data demonstrates the vertical imbalance in revenue and revenue raising capacity between the three tiers of government and the deterioration of both own source funding as well as federal funding to local government. As a result, cost shifting from State and Federal governments to local government amongst other financial pressures such as rate capping and high inflation has given rise to a situation where local government is no longer sustainable under the current funding model.

#### Horizontal imbalances

There are 79 local government areas in Victoria with combined revenue in the order of \$8.7 billion. These Councils administer approximately 50 different services ranging from libraries and kindergartens to road management, kerbside waste, building compliance and statutory planning, to name a few.

In 2021 Victoria's population split was 72.5% in metropolitan Melbourne and 27.5% in regional areas. In Victoria the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) categorises that there are 31 metropolitan and 48 rural/regional councils. Across these Councils there are significant differences in the population, financial capacity and asset base. For example Loddon Shire Council is responsible for the management of 4,700km of roads valued at \$526.7 million within a rates income of \$9.7 million as compared to a well known metropolitan Council which has Transport Assets (roads) valued at \$5.9 million with a rates income of \$166.9 million. This example demonstrates the financial constraints for rural Councils and the opportunity for metropolitan councils to offer a broader range of services. This horizontal imbalance creates an unrealistic service expectation on small rural councils who are unable to fund renewal of existing assets let alone expansion of services and new assets.

Under the current funding models, most non-recurrent funding programs from the Victorian Government to local councils include criteria which seek to invest in the largest population impact. Rural Councils find it difficult to compete with metropolitan Councils within this formulaic structure and as a result an imbalance of funding is invested in metropolitan areas.

There are also different opportunities for larger Councils to generate revenue from alternative sources. For example car parking fees. Some large Councils in a single year are able to collect parking fees with a value the equivalent of four years rates income for Loddon Shire.

#### Cost shifting

Cost shifting is having an impact on the capacity of local government to remain financially sustainable and to continue to provide the levels of service desired by the community. This is particularly the case with the restrictions of rate capping, providing local government with no capacity to fund the services shifted onto local government. Specific examples of this include:

- Libraries
- School crossing supervision
- Maternal and child health
- Early years infrastructure
- Building services
- Immunisation

A further challenge impacting the sustainability of the local government sector is the impact of state legislation amendments and cost to local government to comply with the legislation. A most recent example of this is the Circular Economy legislation which requires Council's to introduce alternate waste streams by 2030. While reuse and recycle of waste is generally supported as a principle, unfortunately the Victorian Government announced in December 2023 that education programs supporting this transition were not to be funded from the Waste Charge and would need to be funded by Council's rates income.

Local governments are often the service provider of 'last resort' in communities where higher levels of government and the private sector have not provided adequate services, or where there is a failure from other parties to provide essential services within the community. This includes services or other costs transferred to local government from other levels of government without the necessary funding (or powers to raise general revenue) to fund the services or costs incurred. In many cases, the social objective to provide such services is not discretionary and the responsibility to provide services has been forced. This market failure is more prevalent in rural areas where there is not critical mass to support commercial services.



Typical methods of cost shifting Councils experience include:

1. The withdrawal or reduction of financial support once a program is established, therefore leaving local government with the choice of continuing a program or suffering the political odium of cancelling the service;
2. The transfer of assets without appropriate funding support;
3. The requirement to provide concessions and rebates without compensation payments;
4. Increased regulatory and compliance requirements; and
5. Failure to provide for indexation of fees and charges for services prescribed under state legislation or regulation.

***(2) whether local councils are adequately delivering on their core service delivery objectives;***

Loddon Shire Council has a focus on traditional local government core services. The focus on traditional core services has arisen from necessity with Council being responsible for a large and diverse asset base spread over a large geographic area. The maintenance and renewal of this asset base is currently beyond Council's financial resourcing which creates an asset renewal gap. This ongoing financial challenge alongside low income necessitates that Council does not grow its asset or service footprint.

Council has an ongoing service review program which is focussed on reducing costs in an effort to return to a sustainable footing. The consequence of this program is often a reduction in services or service levels. Examples include the exit from providing the Commonwealth Home Support program at a cost saving in the order of \$450,000 p.a. and current reviews of social infrastructure.

As a result of the current financial challenges, Council is currently facing a renewal gap of over \$2.2 million per year and a cash deficit (including depreciation) in the order of \$7 million annually. These deficits are resulting in under investment across a range of assets such as drainage, buildings and gravel minor roads as well as stagnation or reduction in full time equivalent staff delivering core services.

The challenges outlined above create a situation whereby Council is not in a position to substantially expand services into new areas of community expectation such as the environment or social capital.

***(3) the overall revenue structure of local government;***

Loddon Shire Council is funded by a mix of rates, charges, recurrent and non-recurrent grants with the following summary breakdown for 2024/25.

- Rates \$9,503,074
- Charges \$3,611,956
- Statutory fees and fines \$300,412
- User Fees \$610,970
- Reimbursements \$357,532
- Other income \$435,000
- Capital grants \$2,507,112 (Commonwealth Roads to Recovery)
- Operating grants \$12,962,484 consisting of:
  - FAGS – General Purpose \$6.7m
  - FAGS – Local Roads \$4.8m
  - State contribution to services \$1.1m

This breakdown demonstrates the high reliance of Loddon Shire Council upon the Commonwealth's Financial Assistance Grants (FAGS) program and Roads to Recovery Program as major funding sources with rates income making up only 1/3 of Loddon Shire Council's income.

The table below outlines the income received from the State Government for provision of services. These amounts are not sufficient to cover the cost of the service, however Council is legislatively obligated to provide the services under various acts. This is a cost shift to local government.

Service	State Funding Contribution	Total Cost to Council	Legislation
Seniors	\$2,600	\$7,600	
Maternal & Child Health	\$268,035	\$386,546	Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Early Years	\$112,853	\$181,656	
Pre-schools	\$541,502	\$741,618	Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Immunisation	\$6,800	\$25,413	Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
Fire Services levy administration	\$48,272	\$52,053	Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012
Local laws and animal management (school crossings)	\$15,675	\$36,904	Road Management Act 2004
Public health (tobacco)	\$6,414	\$6,414	Tobacco Act 1987
Roadside Weed Control	\$85,000	\$85,000	Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994
Waste management	\$4,080	\$2,150,025	Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021
Waterway management	\$11,750	\$63,562	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,102,981</b>		

Additionally to the cost shared services outlined above, there is a range of statutory services that Councils are legislated to provide but do not receive any payment for. The only costs recovered for these functions are generated from permit fees which are not cost neutral. Examples include Building Services (Building Act 1993) and Statutory Planning (Planning & Environment Act 1987). Council also has other service delivery responsibilities under many other acts including but not limited to:

- Public Health & Wellbeing Act 2008
- Domestic Animals Act 1994
- Food Act 1984
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- Environmental Protection Act 2017

The responsibilities placed upon Council as a result of this legislation are highly important to our community and could be considered 'core' services. However, they predominantly require funding from rates income, which limits the discretionary service funding available to Council on an annual basis.

**(4) whether the existing revenue structure is sustainable and appropriate or if alternative models of funding would be more sustainable and appropriate; and**

The current funding model for local government is unsustainable. Inflation across Council's key cost drivers, particularly wages and construction, are significantly outpacing growth in Council's income.

Loddon Shire Council's income outlined in response to part 3 demonstrates that Federal Funding accounts for in the order of 1/3 of Council's budget with rates making up another third. The balance of funding is generated from a various non-recurrent sources and service contribution charges.

Council is unable to generate own source funding to meet the community's desired service level as a result of the Fair Go Rates System which consistently increases rates by less than cost inflation. The process to obtain an exemption is divisive and onerous and beyond the resource capacity of many small rural Councils.

Rate increases if supported are not the whole solution to local government sustainability. Council's rates income is \$9.5 million in 2024/25. If increased by an additional 1%, this would only equate to \$95,000, which alone is not sufficient to meet the current asset renewal gap of \$2.2 million per year. Addressing this gap with rates alone would require a 24% increase, which is not acceptable to the Loddon Shire Community and Council does not propose to seek.

While the inquiry terms of reference lead this report toward cost shifting and rate capping below CPI as problems, these are only compounding factors to Council's ongoing sustainability. The underlying issue is that the revenue structure of local government is not fit-for-purpose and a more comprehensive consideration of the current financial model is required.

Loddon Shire Council is supportive of the Australian Local Government Association's advocacy that Federal Financial Assistance Grants be returned to 1% of Federal taxation. This would significantly assist small rural Councils such as Loddon.

Loddon Shire Council in its submission to the Federal sustainability inquiry also resolved to support the establishment of a local government cost index which would better inform the Essential Services Commission and Minister for Local Government in recommending a rate cap which is reflective of local government cost drivers and consistent across Australia.

**(5) any other related matters.**

Nil.

## **COST/BENEFITS**

There was no additional financial cost to Council in preparing this report. Given only 1/3 of Council's revenue is self generated, providing input into an inquiry regarding the sustainability of Council is considered to be of high importance.

## **RISK ANALYSIS**

Loddon Shire Council's submission to this inquiry is consistent with the *Establishing Formal Positions of Council Policy 2024*.

Council's risk appetite statement (adopted January 2024) considers financial sustainability. Within the statement is the following sentence regarding financial sustainability:

*...We will manage our financial position for long-term sustainability, and promote our reputation through transparent and open transactions with our communities, government, staff and other stakeholders...*

Council has adopted a moderate appetite for risks associated with ongoing financial sustainability. This means, given equal considerations, Council is willing to accept a potential negative impact to pursue a strategic objective. Council takes a balanced approach to risk taking to pursue potential reward.

An inquiry into local government sustainability provides both an opportunity and risk. It is an opportunity to highlight the services provided, the value of funding and its importance to local government. However, it also poses a risk if any changes to funding models are not in the best interests of Loddon Shire Council, a small rural council with limited revenue opportunities.

### **CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

No external consultation has been undertaken in preparing this report, however Council's 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey data indicates that the community is seeking additional investment in services and infrastructure.

Council's submission will be published and publicly available on the inquiry website.

### **RESOLUTION 2024/78**

Moved: Cr Dan Straub

Seconded: Cr Neil Beattie

That Council:

1. authorise the Mayor to finalise a submission to the Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services on behalf of Loddon Shire Council; and,
2. that the submission be generally in accordance with the issues outlined within this report.

**CARRIED**

## 10.2 BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT REVIEW

**File Number:**

**Author:** Lisa Clue, Manager Governance

**Authoriser:** Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate

**Attachments:**

1. **Business Continuity Management Review - Summary of changes**
2. **Business Continuity Management Policy v4**
3. **Business Continuity Management Framework v4**

### RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. Adopt the Business Continuity Management Policy V4
2. Rescind the Business Continuity Management Framework V4
3. Acknowledge the Business Continuity Plan will be reviewed and approved by Council's Management Executive Group.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

### PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The Business Continuity Management Policy was last considered by Council at the July 2021 Council meeting.

The Business Continuity Management Framework and Business Continuity Management Plan were last considered by Council at the December 2021 Council meeting.

Councillors were briefed on the most recent review of the Business Continuity Management Policy and Framework, and the Business Continuity Plan, including feedback from the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), at the June 2024 Council Forum.

### BACKGROUND

A comprehensive review of Council's Business Continuity Management Policy and Framework and the Business Continuity Plan has recently concluded.

At its May 2024 meeting, the ARC endorsed reviewed Business Continuity Management Policy V4 and Business Continuity Plan V7 for consideration and adoption of Council and supported rescission by Council of the Business Continuity Management Framework v4.

### ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Over recent months, the Business Continuity Management Policy and Framework, and the Business Continuity Plan have been under review. This review has considered recommendations from an external review of the Plan, and alignment of each document to the current organisation structure and Council's recently reviewed Risk Management Framework.

The review process has included Business Impact Analysis (BIA) workshops with staff, and considered consistency across the Policy, Framework and Plan in terms of responsibilities, reporting and language.

In reviewing the Business Continuity Management documents simultaneously, and considering ARC feedback during Business Continuity discussions at its February meeting, it was determined that the documents were somewhat complicated and often repetitive. Therefore rescission of the Business Continuity Management Framework is proposed, along with incorporation of relevant elements of that document into the Business Continuity Management Policy, or Business Continuity Plan where appropriate, including consolidating duplication, and removing information that did not add value/was not required across both documents.

The following documents are attached to this Agenda report:

1. Business Continuity Management Review – Summary of changes
2. Business Continuity Management Policy v4
3. Business Continuity Management Framework v4 (proposed to be rescinded)

### **COST/BENEFITS**

There is no cost associated with the recent review of Business Continuity Management as this work has been undertaken using existing Council resources.

Benefits of this comprehensive review include streamlined documents to support greater staff understanding of Business Continuity Management, and ensuring critical business functions can resume normal operations within an appropriate timeframe with minimal impact on staff, contractors and customers.

### **RISK ANALYSIS**

The recent review included aligning Business Continuity Management with Council's Risk Management Framework.

The Policy supports the Business Continuity Plan in:

- identifying potential threats to the continuation of crucial Council functions and plan to mitigate risks and minimise potential loss from threat events;
- enabling staff to understand their roles and prepare them for potential disruptions;
- aiming to minimise the duration of a serious disruption to business operations; and
- aiming to reduce the complexity of the recovery effort.

### **CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

The recent review has included consultation with a range of staff, particularly when reviewing BIAs. The Audit and Risk Committee considered the reviewed documents at its meeting in May 2024.

### **RESOLUTION 2024/79**

Moved: Cr Wendy Murphy  
Seconded: Cr Linda Jungwirth

That Council

1. Adopt the Business Continuity Management Policy V4
2. Rescind the Business Continuity Management Framework V4
3. Acknowledge the Business Continuity Plan will be reviewed and approved by Council's Management Executive Group.

**CARRIED**

**10.4 ADOPTION OF THE 2024/25 BUDGET AND FEES AND CHARGES SCHEDULE**

**File Number:** FOL/23/3758

**Author:** Deanne Caserta, Manager Financial Services

**Authoriser:** Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate

**Attachments:** 1. Loddon Shire Council 2024/25 Budget  
2. 2024/25 Fees and Charges Schedule

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

- (a) adopt the Loddon Shire Council 2024/25 Budget
- (b) adopt the 2024/25 Fees and Charges Schedule
- (c) Authorise the Director Corporate and Chief Executive Officer to change Council's 2024/25 Fees and Charges Schedule where statutory fees and charges are altered by the State Government.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this paper, or involved in the subject matter of the paper.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Council was presented with the 2024/25 Draft Fees and Charges Schedule at the Council Forum on 11 February 2024.

Council was presented with the 2024/25 Draft Budget at a Council Forum on Tuesday 9 April 2024.

Council resolved to advertise the Draft Budget and Draft Fees and Charges Schedule at the Council Meeting on Wednesday 23 April 2024.

Council was presented with any updates or community feedback at the Council Forum on Tuesday 11 June 2024.

**BACKGROUND**

The draft documents were placed on public display, seeking feedback from Monday 29 April 2024 until Monday 27 May 2024, using the Community Engagement Policy as guidance.

During this period, copies of the documents were made available on Council's website and a printed copy posted to ratepayers where requested.

Advertisements were placed in the Bendigo Advertiser and the Loddon Herald. Facebook, emailing to all Council Section 65 Committees, the Community Reference Group and other media options were also utilised.

**ISSUES/DISCUSSION**

The Draft Budget maintains Council's approach of being financially responsible, while ensuring its commitment of providing a large range of services to the community.

The Draft Budget includes a rate increase of 2.75 per cent – in line with the Victorian Government's Fair Go Rates System. Council remains debt-free, with no loan repayments, and a continued strong cash position.

The Draft Budget allocates a capital expenditure program of \$6.96 million, which includes \$3.51 million towards roads, \$0.1 million for parks and streetscapes and \$0.5 million for recreation and community facilities.

Additionally, the budget includes a \$300,000 allocation for works associated with the Building Asset Management Plan and full funding of Council's ongoing commitment to community planning of \$750,000.

There is also flood restoration works budgeted of \$20.0 million, which is in addition to the \$20.0 million budgeted in 2023/24.

With the Draft Fees and Charges schedule, the approach to the 2024/25 Schedule was to index fees and charges in line with the 2.75% rate cap advised by the Minister for Local Government for 2024/25. This decision was guided by the principles located within the Revenue and Rating Plan. This indexation rate last year was 3.5%.

### **COST/BENEFITS**

The benefits to Council and the community are that a consultative budget process complies with the *Local Government Act 1989*, and *Local Government Act 2020*, and allows the community to provide feedback to Council on the budget's content.

The budget provides a measure for accurate planning, and ensures that Council can deliver services and projects included in the document.

### **RISK ANALYSIS**

The risk to Council of not discussing and advertising the annual budget is that it will not comply with requirements under the *Local Government Act 1989* and *Local Government Act 2020*.

### **CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

The *Local Government Act 1989* requires that the Draft Budget be available for public feedback from a period of 28 days after Council advertisement. After the lapsing of 28 days all submissions received must be provided to Council when deliberating on adoption of the documents.

Although the new *Local Government Act 2020* does not require this process to be undertaken, it was used as a guide in the process followed when seeking community feedback. A period of 28 days was provided for public feedback for both the Draft Budget and Draft Fees and Charges Schedule.

No submissions were received on the draft documents during the public display period.

An update on the process undertaken and community feedback process was presented at the Council Forum on 11 June 2024 and as a result only minor administrative changes to the document were made.

Loddon Shire Council's Community Reference Group received a presentation of the Draft Budget during May and provided valuable input and questions regarding council operations, income and expenditure.

### **RESOLUTION 2024/80**

Moved: Cr Linda Jungwirth

Seconded: Cr Wendy Murphy

That Council:

- (a) adopt the Loddon Shire Council 2024/25 Budget
- (b) adopt the 2024/25 Fees and Charges Schedule
- (c) Authorise the Director Corporate and Chief Executive Officer to change Council's 2024/25 Fees and Charges Schedule where statutory fees and charges are altered by the State Government.

**CARRIED**



### 10.3 ANNUAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM 2024-2025

**File Number:** FOL/19/432630

**Author:** David Southcombe, Manager Assets and Infrastructure

**Authoriser:** Steven Phillips, Director Operations

**Attachments:**

1. Annual Infrastructure Program Summary
2. Detailed Program - Confidential

This attachment is designated as confidential in accordance with Section 3(1)(g(ii)) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. It contains 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.

Don't want to reveal project estimates which could affect submitted prices by tenderers.  
**(under separate cover)**

3. Detailed Program without estimates

### RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Adopt the proposed expenditure amounts as listed in Attachment 1 for the following works categories:
  - Local Road Gravel Resheet
  - Local Road Shoulder Resheet
  - Local Road Construction – Asset Preservation
  - Local Road Construction – Amenity
  - Local Road Construction – Safety
  - Township Street Improvements
  - Urban & Township Drainage
  - Local Bridges & Culverts
  - Road Reseals
  - Parks and Gardens
  - Buildings
  - Flood Betterment.
2. Note the projects included in the various works categories as detailed in Attachment 2 - Detailed Program and Attachment 3 - Detailed Program without estimates.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

### PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The Annual Infrastructure Program 2024-2025 was discussed at the June 2024 Council Forum.

## BACKGROUND

Council allocates significant funding for capital infrastructure projects on an annual basis. Council staff continually scope new infrastructure projects and maintain a rolling program of these projects. The rolling program is a database that forms the basis of the Annual Infrastructure Program. Each project is assessed using a scoring matrix relevant to the type of infrastructure as part of the scoping process. This score assists in the development of the Annual Infrastructure Program by providing a level of prioritisation for each of the projects.

In preparing the program, several factors need to be given consideration, including the prioritisation score, availability of funds and capacity for delivery. Council has adopted several strategic documents that must also be taken into consideration when preparing the Annual Infrastructure Program. Primarily these are the:

- Council Plan
- Financial Plan
- Asset Plan
- Register of Public Roads.

The 2024-2025 Annual Infrastructure Program has been developed in accordance with the following expenditure requirements of:

- Council funds totalling \$2.47 million.
- Federal Government Roads to Recovery (R2R) funding of \$3.02 million
- Unallocated Federal Government Local Roads and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) Program, Phase 4 funding of \$0.44 million
- Reallocation of \$1.34 million of LRCI Program Phase 4 funding currently allocated for flood betterment projects

## ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Attachment 1 summarises the proposed program of works planned for delivery in 2024-2025. A detailed program can be found in Attachment 2. Attachment 3 has a list of all projects without estimates and future projects for consideration are also listed.

### LRCI Program Phase 4

Council has been allocated \$3,765,020 of funding under Phase 4 of the LRCI Program under two parts:

- Part A - \$2,387,726 – which can be allocated to road and community infrastructure projects
- Part B – \$1,377,294 - which can only be allocated to road projects

Part A funding can be used on community infrastructure or road projects while Part B is limited to road projects. Projects under Phase 4 of this program must be completed by June 30, 2025.

In the 2023-2024 Annual Infrastructure Program Council Report, \$1.34 million of LRCI Program Phase 4 funding was allocated to Flood Betterment. This funding is at risk given the delayed progress of the flood restoration program. It is proposed to reallocate this funding to other projects that will be completed prior to June 30, 2025. The funding from these other projects will then be directed to the flood betterment program in lieu of LRCI Phase 4 funding.

Currently \$3.33 million of the LRCI Program Phase 4 funding has been allocated. This report outlines the proposed allocation of the remaining \$0.44 million of funding.

### Council Funds

The draft budget includes Council expenditure of \$2,469,453 allocated to infrastructure projects.

### Roads to Recovery

Council's Draft Budget had a proposed Roads to Recovery expenditure amount of \$2,507,112. Since the development of this budget, Council has been advised that the Roads to Recovery funding amount will be \$21,012,056 for the next five year funding period between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2029. The yearly breakdown of this funding is as follows:

- 2024-25 - \$3,104,056
- 2025-26 - \$3,820,374
- 2026-27 - \$4,536,694
- 2027-28 - \$4,775,467
- 2028-29 - \$4,775,467

This is an increase of \$596,944 of the expenditure allocated in the Draft Budget for the 2024-25 financial year.

Whilst Council could use the increased funding to offset Council funding on roads, it is preferred to maintain Council funding at current levels and to allocate additional projects to the annual infrastructure program to be funded by the Roads to Recovery Program. The reasoning for this is:

- This will reduce Council's renewal gap
- This will ensure Council keeps spending funding on roads to maintain own source expenditure amounts required by the Roads to Recovery Program
- The federal government will release new guidelines which may include increases to own source expenditure requirements in line with increased R2R funding. Therefore, continuing investment in roads will reduce the risk to future year budgets.

The 2024-2025 Annual Infrastructure Program also has a balance of \$75,000 unallocated for the Roads to Recovery Program. This funding is intended to support development of projects for other funding programs which will leverage greater uplift to Council's road assets. Council will be advised of the allocation of this remaining funding as part of annual infrastructure program reporting.

Adoption of the annual infrastructure program will allow the Council to undertake the following:

- Local Road Gravel Resheet  
Funding of \$837,546 has been proposed to resheet and/or treat approximately 13.6 km of the gravel road network.
- Local Road Shoulder Resheet  
Funding of \$562,402 has been proposed to resheet approximately 27.6 km (length is inclusive of both sides) of the gravel shoulders.
- Local Road Reconstruction (LRC) – Asset Preservation  
Funding of \$1,427,012 has been allocated for the renewal of a section of Newbridge Rd and renewal of the road and kerb and channel in Ottrey St, Pyramid Hill.
- Township Street Improvement (TSI)  
Funding of \$229,152 has been proposed for five projects. This includes the renewal of footpaths in Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn, as well as the renewal of an existing pedestrian crossover in Godfrey St, Boort.
- Urban & Township Drainage  
Funding of \$352,000 has been proposed to fund the installation of a new drainage system in North St and Southey St, Inglewood.
- Local Bridges and Culverts  
Funding of \$1,328,649 has been proposed for four projects including the replacement of Ottreys Road Bridge, Sidney Watsons Road Bridge, and the Chamberlains Road Culvert. An allocation has also been made to undertake a number of small culvert replacements.

- Reseals  
Funding of \$802,044 has been proposed for the 2024/25 reseal program. The final list of road segments is currently in development based on road condition data and inspection reports. The final program was not available at the time of writing this report but Council will be advised as part of future Annual Infrastructure Program Quarterly Council Reports.
- Parks & Gardens  
Funding of \$83,204 has been allowed for three Parks and Gardens projects.
- Buildings  
Funding of \$313,500 is allocated for three building projects. This includes a project to paint external walls, repair damaged windows, and repair damaged skirting at the Inglewood Town Hall. This new project will complement existing stage 1 works to repair the roof.

## **COST/BENEFITS**

The Annual Infrastructure Program is a significant part of Council's annual expenditure. The current proposed program totals \$7,277,729. The benefit of the proposed expenditure is that it will allow Council to maintain safe public infrastructure and decrease annual liability over all asset classes. Better roads, better public facilities and improved bridges are the key outcomes of the proposed Program, which aligns with the strategic objective of "A sustainable built and natural environment" as stipulated in Council Plan 2021–2025.

While this expenditure is significant, Council should note that Council's Asset Plan 2022 indicates a \$22 million asset renewal gap over 10 years. The increased Roads to Recovery funding will reduce this gap and the impact will be assessed as part of renewing the Asset Plan.

## **RISK ANALYSIS**

One of the risks identified with the proposed program is cost overrun. The estimated cost of each project has been evaluated based on current unit rates with an adjustment for anticipated price inflation, industry practice, and contingencies. The likelihood of the risk is possible and this consequence is minor as per Council's risk matrix. The risk is thus deemed to be medium. This risk is offset by the large amount of grant funding that Council has received through a number of funding streams.

The other risk identified is the delay in delivering projects. This has become a greater risk recently due to the large amount of stimulus funding directed at infrastructure projects and the delays associate with contractor availability and the lead-time of material deliveries. Council has made good progress in the past 12 months delivering significant legacy projects to reduce the number of carry forward projects and reduce this risk. The likelihood of this risk is possible and the consequence is minor as per Council's risk matrix. The risk is thus deemed to be medium. This risk is mitigated by allocating additional projects to Council's Works Department for delivery where possible and selecting projects that are high value with a low risk of delay.

## **CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

The program has been developed in consultation with Council staff, in particular the Assets & Infrastructure Department, the Works Department, the Community Support Department, and the Finance Department. Other stakeholders and community members make contributions to the rolling program throughout the year via works requests and onsite meetings and visits conducted by staff.

**RESOLUTION 2024/81**

Moved: Cr Dan Straub

Seconded: Cr Neil Beattie

That Council:

1. Adopt the proposed expenditure amounts as listed in Attachment 1 for the following works categories:
  - Local Road Gravel Resheet
  - Local Road Shoulder Resheet
  - Local Road Construction – Asset Preservation
  - Local Road Construction – Amenity
  - Local Road Construction – Safety
  - Township Street Improvements
  - Urban & Township Drainage
  - Local Bridges & Culverts
  - Road Reseals
  - Parks and Gardens
  - Buildings
  - Flood Betterment.
  
2. Note the projects included in the various works categories as detailed in Attachment 2 - Detailed Program and Attachment 3 - Detailed Program without estimates.

**CARRIED**

## 10.5 FAIR ACCESS POLICY

**File Number:**

**Author:** Orrin Hogan, Manager Community Partnerships

**Authoriser:** Wendy Gladman, Director Community Wellbeing

**Attachments:** 1. Fair Access Policy and Action Plan

### RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the Fair Access Policy and Action Plan.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

### PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The draft Fair Access Policy was presented to the May 2024 Council Forum.

The draft Fair Access Policy (the Policy) was approved by Council for public display at the May 2024 Council Meeting.

### BACKGROUND

The Victorian Government developed a reform agenda to address gender inequality in sport to occur over a period of time. An inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Recreation completed in 2015, included recommendations to ensure fair access and inclusion at all times for women and girls in sport.

The Fair Access Policy Roadmap (the Roadmap) developed by the State Government has been designed to establish a state wide commitment to improve the access to, and use of, community sports infrastructure for women and girls.

The Roadmap is being delivered through the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation in partnership with Sport and Recreation Victoria and Vic Health and aligns with Victoria's Gender Equality Act 2020.

From 1 July 2024, all Victorian Councils will need to have gender equitable access and use policies in place to be considered eligible to receive infrastructure funding.

Council, volunteers and key sports club stakeholders (for example State Sporting Associations and Regional Sporting Associations) have responsibilities associated with the implementation of the Policy and the action plan.

### ISSUES/DISCUSSION

Council resolved to release the Fair Access Policy (the Policy) for public feedback at the scheduled May Council meeting. No feedback was received to the draft policy and the Policy is now provided to Council seeking adoption.

The Policy establishes the expectation that gender equality is considered and prioritised in all current and future Council planning, policy, service delivery and practice as they relate to community sports infrastructure.

The policy is about implementing actions which address the barriers that women and girls experience in accessing and using community sports infrastructure. The policy will ensure access to all areas of active recreation either as a participant in sport or an official or spectator.

The Policy and the associated action plan are based on six (6) principles of inclusivity, full participation, equal representation, encouraging and supporting user groups, and prioritising user groups committed to equality.

An action plan has been developed to activate the Policy, with at least one action for each of the six guiding principles. There is a review process, where Council will be required to demonstrate progress against the actions – this occurs at the Council determined review period.

It is considered that these Principles provide clear direction, provides the flexibility to be locally relevant to the Loddon Shire, whilst achieving the aims of the Fair Access Policy Roadmap.

The Policy applies to all community sports infrastructure that is owned or directly managed by Council.

### **COST/BENEFITS**

While acknowledging the complexities around gender equality, adopting this Policy demonstrates that Council are committing to identifying and, where practical, eliminating gender inequality, and improving access and inclusion in all forms of sport and active recreation within the Loddon Shire.

Council will work closely with sports clubs and facility committees of management when implementing the outcomes of the Policy and the action plan. It is considered that this work will be completed within existing budgets.

From 1 July 2024, Council is required to have a gender equitable access and use policy (Fair Access Policy) in place to be considered eligible to receive infrastructure funding. Council is highly reliant on state government funding to undertake sport and recreation capital works.

Modifications that are identified as being required to improve women and girl's access to sporting infrastructure may require external funding to proceed.

### **RISK ANALYSIS**

Council is required to have this Policy in place to meet eligibility criteria for Victorian Government funding programs relating to community sports infrastructure and risks removing access to a significant funding stream should this policy not be adopted.

### **CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

The Policy was developed by an internal cross department working group, provided to the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation for feedback, and presented to the Management Executive Group for review prior to presentation to Council.

The Policy was approved by Council for public display at the May 2024 Council meeting with the plan being made available for public comment from May 28 to June 11, 2024. The availability of the plan for public comment was promoted through print media, social media and was emailed directly to key stakeholder groups, including sporting clubs and facility committees of management for consultation and feedback.

### **RESOLUTION 2024/82**

Moved: Cr Linda Jungwirth

Seconded: Cr Wendy Murphy

That Council adopt the Fair Access Policy and Action Plan.

**CARRIED**

**11 INFORMATION REPORTS****11.1 2024 COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS**

File Number:

Author: Michelle Stedman, Director Corporate

Authoriser: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Chief Executive Officer

Attachments: 1. 2024 Loddon Shire Council Community Satisfaction Survey Results Report

2. 2024 Loddon Shire Council Community Satisfaction Survey - Tailored Question Results Report

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council note Loddon Shire Council's results from the 2024 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There is no conflict of interest for any Council staff member involved in the preparation of this report, or involved in the subject matter of the report.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Councillors were briefed by JWS Research on the results of the 2024 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey at the June 2024 Council Forum.

**BACKGROUND**

The Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey (CSS) is conducted each year to gather data on how satisfied residents are with Council's resources, facilities and services. The results provide data for the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF), an annual process that requires councils to report on a number of mandatory performance indicators within various legislated reports and statements.

The CSS also presents an opportunity for Council to consider improvements that would be valued by residents and ratepayers.

Survey fieldwork for the CSS was conducted quarterly from 1 June 2023 to 18 March 2024 and represents the opinions of 400 residents. The sample of residents is matched as closely as possible to Loddon community demographics as per recent census data. As noted on page 82 of the attached CSS report, the highest number of respondents were those aged 65 years and over, representing 45% of the data. The breakdown of respondents by age demographic and ward groupings are as follows:

Age group	Percentage of respondents
65 or over	45%
50-54	21%
35-49	18%
25-34	16%
18-24	1%

Ward Grouping	Number of Respondents
Boort/Terrick	152
Wedderburn	73
Inglewood/Tarnagulla	168
Undisclosed	7



## ISSUES/DISCUSSION

The overall performance index score for Loddon Shire Council is 53. Council's overall performance is rated in-line with both the State-wide and Small Rural group averages (index scores of 54 and 53 respectively). Across the state, a multi-year trend of decline has continued since 2021 results.

Council has performed in line with the Small Rural group and State-wide averages on most service areas evaluated, including Value for Money in Services and Infrastructure. Council's top three performing areas in the 2024 results are:

- Appearance of public areas (index score of 71)
- Waste management (index score of 70)
- Recreational facilities (index score of 67)

This is a positive result, with Council performing higher than the Small Rural group and State-wide averages for waste management in particular.

In contrast to the above results, Council's performance continues to fall behind benchmarks of both the Small Rural group and State-wide averages for emergency and disaster management and elderly and family support services; a trend that has continued for the last four years of survey data.

Another similar trend is observed in Loddon Shire's lowest performing areas from the 2024 survey:

- Unsealed Roads (index score of 32)
- Planning and building permits (index score of 38)
- Sealed Local Roads (index score of 38)

Unsealed Roads continue to feature at the lower end of the list, and while Loddon is behind State-wide and Small Rural group averages this year (36 and 35 respectively), there is a consistent trend downward across the state for community satisfaction with unsealed and sealed roads generally.

Large parts of the state were subject to extensive flooding over the past two years, with higher than average rainfall in these years having impacts on road networks. Additionally, higher rainfall contributes to larger harvest seasons which in turn increase heavy traffic on already damaged roads. Delays in access to disaster recovery infrastructure funding has also subsequently delayed repairs to flood affected roads due to lengthy assessment timelines. All of these factors may contribute to the community's lower satisfaction with the road network.

Another factor that Loddon contends with in its scoring for satisfaction with sealed roads are community perceptions of road management responsibilities. A number of surveyed community members identified arterial roads when asked which roads in particular they were not satisfied with Council's management of. Arterial roads are the responsibility of the Department of Transport, not Council.

Conversely, service performance reporting on Council's road management at its May council meeting indicate that despite major impacts to our road network as outlined above, Loddon is operating well against its Road Management Plan (RMP) for the maintenance of its local road network with the most recent quarter seeing over 94% of defects resolved and over 90% of grading activities completed within timeframes outlined in the RMP. Over the last 12 months, over 4,850 defects have been managed and over 1,910km of unsealed roads have been graded by Loddon Shire Works teams.

Another contrast seen in the 2024 CSS results is that of the Planning and Building Permits service area, noting that this space is dictated by State Government process, which Council does not control. Despite its low index score of 38, service performance reports to Council at its May council meeting note that in quarter 3 of 23/24 financial year 100% of planning applications were approved within statutory timeframes (well above rural shire average of 54%), with the median processing days for Council to make a determination on applications being 51 days, well below the rural median of 112 days.

Despite internal resourcing challenges in the Building Permit space, Council has issued 137 new building permits over the last 12 month period. It is also noted that if delays are likely, then residents are advised that they can also seek private sector assistance for building survey work.

### Overall Council Direction

The index score of 45 for the overall direction of councils across the state is at its lowest level in ten years and is another score that continues a downward trajectory over recent years. Loddon's index score is 42 in this area. This particular question asks residents to measure their views on the trajectory of Council's overall performance – having improved, stayed the same, deteriorated or can't say. Despite Loddon's stubborn, year-on-year drop in overall performance from 60 in 2021 to 53 in 2024, this year's results on its direction of performance note that 73% of residents feel Loddon's overall performance has either improved or stayed the same.

In the 2023 survey, 18-34 year olds were most likely to rate Council's direction as deteriorating. It is pleasing to note that this group is at the opposite end of the spectrum in the 2024, having jumped up 7 index points, making them the most likely to respond that direction had improved over the last 12 months.

### Value for money in Services and Infrastructure

At an index score of 48, Loddon maintains performance in line with State-wide and Small Rural groups in Value for Money. 64% of those surveyed felt Loddon provided good value for money in infrastructure and services provided to the community. Residents aged 35-64 and those located in Inglewood and Tarnagulla wards were more likely to be part of the 33% that said value for money was poor or very poor.

The full results of Loddon Shire Council's Community Satisfaction Survey are attached to this report including responses to tailored questions that provided data specific to Loddon Shire.

## **COST/BENEFITS**

The Community Satisfaction Survey was administered externally by JWS Research and its cost is contained within Loddon's operational budget. The benefit of conducting the Community Satisfaction Survey is obtaining results for mandatory reporting along with valuable insight and benchmarking into how Council and its operations are perceived now and over time.

## **RISK ANALYSIS**

There is a risk that results may reflect poorly on Council and have negative outcomes for Council's reputation, despite areas where Council has little or no control over results, such as deterioration on particular roads which are not in Council's remit.

## **CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

A sample of 400 residents was used to establish levels of satisfaction. A copy of the 2024 Survey results will be made available on Loddon Shire Council's website.

As in past years, data collection was undertaken at four quarterly intervals rather than one annual data collection in order to normalise seasonal factors that may skew data outcomes.

## **RESOLUTION 2024/83**

Moved: Cr Dan Straub

Seconded: Cr Neil Beattie

That Council note Loddon Shire Council's results from the 2024 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey.

**CARRIED**

**12 COMPLIANCE REPORTS**

Nil

**13 URGENT BUSINESS**

Nil

**14 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council considers the confidential report(s) listed below in a meeting closed to the public in accordance with Section 66(1) and 66(2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020:

**14.1 Chief Executive Officer Performance Review**

This matter is considered to be confidential under Section 3(1)(f) of the Local Government Act, and the Council is satisfied that discussion of this matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest as it deals with personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.

This report contains personal information regarding the Chief Executive Officer Performance Review.

**RESOLUTION 2024/84**

Moved: Cr Neil Beattie  
Seconded: Cr Dan Straub

That the meeting be closed to the public in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2020 while Council considers the confidential report listed below:

- 14.1 Chief Executive Officer Performance Review

**CARRIED**

**RESOLUTION 2024/85**

Moved: Cr Dan Straub  
Seconded: Cr Neil Beattie

That Council:

- 1. receive and note the Chief Executive Officer Performance Review Report 2024
- 2. review the salary component of the CEO Remuneration Package in accordance with clause 5.7.1 and 5.7.2 of the CEO Employment Contract
- 3. authorise the Mayor to apply an amendment to schedule two of the CEO Employment Contract in accordance with any agreed salary changes effective 1 November 2024.

**CARRIED**

**NEXT MEETING**

The next Meeting of Council will be held on 23 July 2024 at Wedderburn commencing at 3.00pm. There being no further business the meeting was closed at 5.30 pm.

Confirmed this.....day of..... 2024

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**CHAIRPERSON**