

Annual Report

2023/24



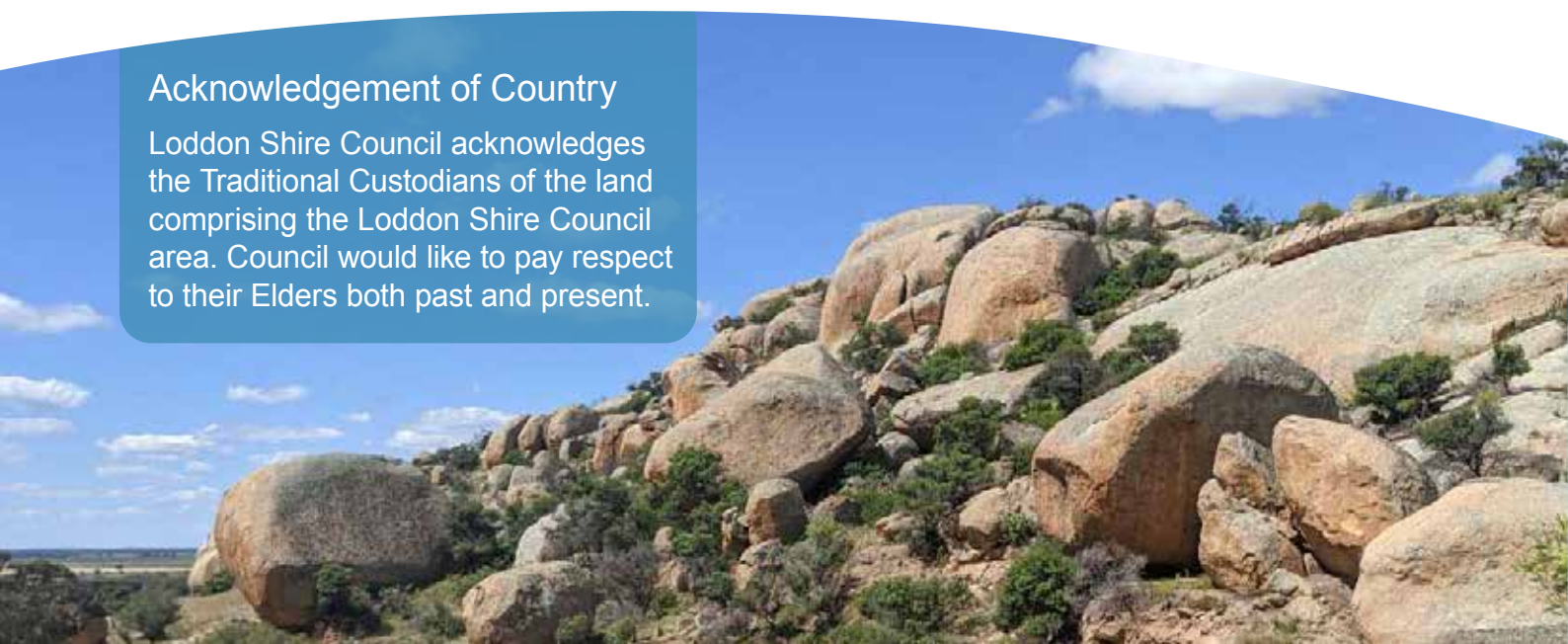
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Cover: Australian Masters Water Ski Championships, Bridgewater, Photo: Levi Ingram
 Back cover: Wehla Sunset, Photo: La Toya Schroeder

Acknowledgement of Country

Loddon Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land comprising the Loddon Shire Council area. Council would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.



Introduction



Welcome to Loddon Shire's Annual Report for 2023/24

About our Annual Report

Loddon Shire Council is committed to transparent reporting and accountability to the community.

The Report of Operations is the primary means of advising the Loddon Shire community about Council's operations and performance during the financial year.

The report also provides the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of Council, Council staff and the community and will serve as an important reference that will provide 'point in time' information about Council and the community for readers of the future.

About our Council Plan

Council engaged a facilitator to work with Councillors, senior officers and members of the community to assist in preparing the Council Plan 2021-2025 (the Plan).

The ideas and philosophies contributed by those involved led to a restatement of Council's vision, mission and strategic objectives, all of which were included in the Plan.

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council reviews the Council Plan annually to ensure it still reflects the Council's strategic intent.

The Council Plan 2021-2025 was adopted by Council at its meeting on 26 October 2021.

Community Vision and Council Plan

There is a strong link between the Community Vision and the Council Plan. This reflects Council's commitment to the community in focusing on the areas that are important to the Community Vision.



Facts and figures



12,549
Incoming calls to
the office



8,638
Rates notices
issued



448
Land information
certificates



2,726
Tonnes of garbage
and recycling from
kerbside bins



82
Planning
applications
received



37
Local law permits
issued



14,928
Visits to
swimming pools



28,219
Physical library
collection item
loans



1,781
Trees and plants
planted



2,704
ha of grass
mowed covering
10,017km



1,310
Dog registrations
286
Cat registrations



53
Births



81
Children enrolled
in kindergarten



46
Community
groups supported
with Council
grants



5
New citizens
welcomed at
citizenship
ceremonies



Shire profile

Geography

Loddon Shire is located in central Victoria, about 175km north-west of Melbourne. It is bounded by Gannawarra Shire in the north, the Shire of Campaspe and the City of Greater Bendigo in the east, Mount Alexander and Central Goldfields shires in the south and Northern Grampians and Buloke shires in the west.

Loddon Shire is a predominantly rural area, with many small towns and communities. The larger towns are Boort, Bridgewater-on-Loddon, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn.

The Shire encompasses a total land area of approximately 6,700km². Land is used mainly for agriculture and horticulture, particularly grain, sheep, wool, beef cattle, dairy, pigs and poultry.

In recent years, there has been an increase in viticulture, olives and fodder crops.

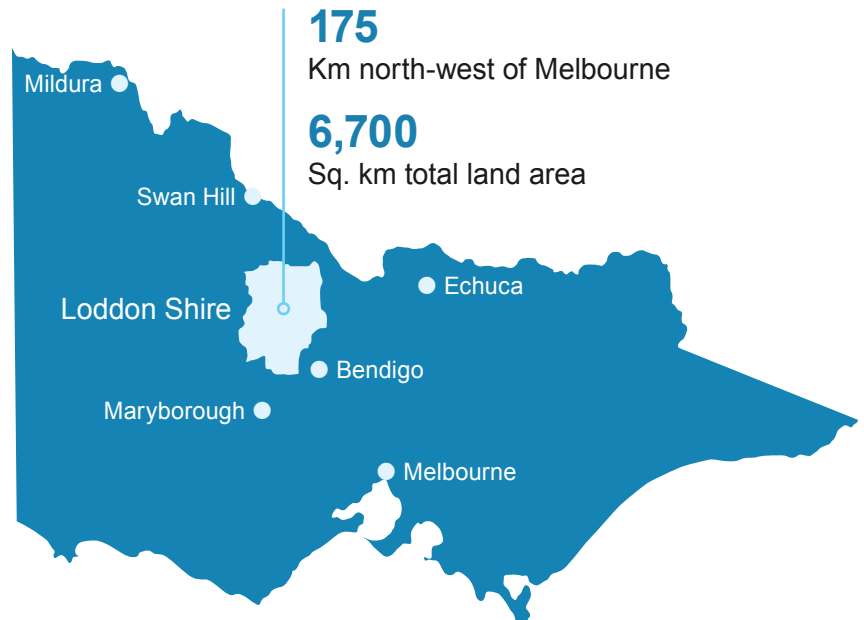
Major features of the Shire include the Loddon River, Terrick Terrick National Park, Leaghur State Park, Kooyoora State Park, Lake Boort, Major Mitchell Trail, Mount Korong, Melville Caves and Laanecoorie Reservoir.

Major highways passing through the Shire are the Calder Highway, the Loddon Valley Highway and the Wimmera Highway.

Population

The estimated resident population in Loddon Shire for 2023 was 7,749 with an overall median age of 52 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)).

During the year, Council recorded 53 births in the Shire.



Family composition

Of the families in Loddon Shire, the ABS 2021 Census shows that 51.8% were a couple family without children and around 34% were a couple family with children, while 12.6% were one-parent families.

Origin

The 2021 Census shows a little over 20% of our residents were born overseas. The percentage of people born overseas has progressively increased from 7% in 2001. Other than Australia, the top five countries of birth were England, Philippines, New Zealand, Netherlands and Germany. The Philippines joined the top five most common countries of birth for the first time in 2016.

Median weekly incomes

According to the 2021 Census, the median weekly personal income in Loddon Shire was \$554.

The median weekly family income was \$1,394, while the median weekly household income was \$1,039.

Volunteers

Loddon Shire has a strong sense of self-reliance and community spirit, and this is reflected in the rate of volunteerism.

The 2021 Census showed 25.4% of the population volunteer and many of those volunteers held roles in a number of community organisations in the previous 12 months.

This figure is compared with a total of 14% in Australia. In addition, 14.8% of our people provided unpaid care for others.

Education

Overall, 4.9% of our youth population were attending pre-school, 24% were in primary education and 20.5% were attending secondary education. Furthermore, 9.6% were attending further education, including university or a technical institution.



7,749

Estimated Residential
Population (ABS 2023)

52

Median age



51.8%

Family with no children

34%

Family with children

12.6%

One parent family



20%

Born overseas



4.9%

Attending pre-school

24%

Primary education

20.5%

Secondary education

9.6%

University/technical
institution



\$554

Median weekly personal income

\$1,394

Median weekly family income

\$1,039

Median weekly household income



25.4%

Population volunteer
(14% Australia-wide
comparison)

14.8%

Provided unpaid care

About our Challenges and Future Outlook

Our challenges

- Maintaining and upgrading Council's assets, including its extensive road network and building infrastructure.
- Budgetary constraints and financial sustainability within a revenue-constrained environment.
- Ongoing recovery from the October 2022 flood event, including Council infrastructure and community recovery.
- Availability of housing and accommodation.
- An ageing population.
- Retaining our youth.
- Technology and innovation, including advocating for connectivity, and access to technology for our communities, particularly in the lead-up to closure of the 3G network in October 2024.
- Changing weather patterns and unreliable rainfall.
- Water security.
- Attracting and retaining staff.
- Sparsely populated Shire.

Future outlook

- Continuing to advocate to State and Federal politicians and their representatives on behalf of our community.
- The expanding renewable energy sector.
- The growing agribusiness sector.
- Continuing to encourage tourism within the Loddon Valley.
- Delivering the final year of the Council Plan 2021-2025, Community Vision 2031, Financial Plan, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025, and asset management plans.
- Local government elections in October 2024.
- Development of Council's new four-year Council Plan following election of new Council.
- Pyramid Hill Community Centre Development.
- Responding to service delivery expectations in a financially-sustainable way.



The year in review



Message from the Mayor and CEO

Welcome to the Loddon Shire Council Annual Report 2023/24.

It has been another year of opportunities and challenges for Loddon, and it's great to reflect on what we have achieved alongside our community over the last 12 months.

Celebrating the opening of the new Donaldson Park

Among the highlights of the year was the official opening of the new Donaldson Park Community Hub on 1 June, and the first home game of the season for the Wedderburn Redbacks.

We were pleased to welcome Member for Ripon Martha Haylett MP, and other official representatives to officially open the new facility.

The new community hub brings together years of planning and community engagement – from its initial feasibility study in 2016, to the resulting multi-purpose building.

It was wonderful for the Wedderburn Redbacks and community members to enjoy these marvellous new facilities at their first home game of the season. The Wedderburn Harness Racing Club also looks forward to showcasing its new facility at its cup meeting on 26 January 2025.

We thank everyone involved in getting the new facility from the ground up to this first-rate community hub. It demonstrates what can be achieved with community leadership and co-operation.

This includes funding from the Federal Government and the Victorian Government – without which this project would not have been possible.

There was also funding support from the Donaldson Park Community Asset Committee, user groups, Wedderburn Development Association, Inglewood and Districts Community Enterprises Limited, and Council.



Mayor Gavan Holt and CEO Lincoln Fitzgerald

We would also like to acknowledge the Donaldson Park Steering Committee, which provided input throughout the project, including the community hub's design.

Projects roll on

In addition to marking the opening of the Donaldson Park Community Hub, projects continued to be rolled out across the Shire. This was in conjunction with our day-to-day works activities, including road maintenance inspections, rectification and grading.

We thank our community, committees and community groups for providing feedback towards these projects.

These include Stage 1 of the Pyramid Hill Community Centre redevelopment, Pyramid Hill Streetscape Project (anticipated to be completed by August 2024), and detailed design for the Inglewood Streetscape project (the design of which is to be undertaken by DJAARA).

Also underway is the replacement of roofs at the Old Boort Court House and Inglewood Town Hall Hub, and major footpath works in Tarnagulla – to name just a few of the ongoing projects around our Shire.

Engagement with our community

The year also saw engagement with our local community around a number of significant projects and strategies.

Among these were the Social Infrastructure Strategy, the Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy, Inglewood Sports Centre Masterplan, Little Lake Boort Recreation Precinct, Inglewood Streetscape and the Loddon Shire Inclusive Communities Plan.

This engagement has included community face-to-face sessions, listening posts, surveys and direct engagement with local businesses, State and Federal organisations, community groups and clubs and schools.

We'd like to thank everyone who has provided their feedback to Council during the past year, and for helping shape projects, plans and strategic future of our Shire.

Childcare facility announcement welcomed

In December, Council welcomed the announcement by Member for Ripon Martha Haylett MP around the establishment of a childcare facility in Wedderburn.

This announcement is a great step towards the start of the growth of childcare in our municipality.

We acknowledge the hard work and efforts of the local community – particularly the local parents' group, in advocating for childcare in our Shire.

Council, together with our community and local organisations, will continue to work and promote the need for childcare facilities in other towns around our Shire.

Flood recovery efforts continue

In October we marked one year on from the 2022 floods, when the Loddon River, along with the Buloke Creek, Bendigo Creek and Myers Creek flooded a significant portion of our municipality.

Additionally, storms and torrential rain experienced in the Christmas/New Year period of December 2023 and January 2024, impacted the homes and properties of many members of our community.

Our community showed tremendous determination during the response and recovery phases of these flood events and we commend everyone who pitched in with sandbagging, building temporary levees, moving equipment to high ground and cleaning up those businesses and facilities that could not be spared from the floodwaters.

We also congratulate the Loddon community on how you have looked out for each other and remained connected after such difficult times.



Donaldson Park Complex Opening



Flood damage in Waitchie Street, Wedderburn, 2023/24 flood event

Council's flood recovery team continue to guide the community recovery following this flooding, including through supporting Federal, State and community support services and information.

The flood recovery program, supported by both State and Federal funding, included a large number of events across the year including presentations by disaster recovery and preparedness consultant David Younger at Bridgewater and clinical psychologist Dr Rob Gordon OAM at Dingee, and a live performance by George the Farmer for children and families at the Serpentine Memorial Hall amongst many other events.

The recovery program also provided \$66,000 in community recovery grant allocations. These grants enabled a diverse range of events and activities encouraging social connectedness and supporting communities to maintain strong relationships during recovery.

Advocating on behalf of our communities

Council continued to advocate on behalf of its communities and the broader region, including through its membership of the Murray River Group of Councils (MRGC), Rural Councils Victoria and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).

In his former role as Loddon Shire Council Mayor, Cr Dan Straub represented Loddon Shire at the Victorian Parliamentary Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee flood inquiry public hearing in Echuca on 24 August.

Cr Straub highlighted the profound impact flood events have had on our Shire, economies and lives. He was joined by members from the MRGC who presented their insights and findings.

The hearing, part of the inquiry into the 2022 Flood Event in Victoria, investigated the state's preparedness for and response to the event. These hearings enabled various groups and individuals to share their experiences and provide their viewpoints on the flood's causes and effects.

Through its membership of the MRGC, Council continued to advocate for our Shire and region, including around water management and involvement in the #pushbackbuyback campaign. This campaign highlighted the detrimental social and economic effects on the region by taking water away from communities.

In the area of childcare, and through its involvement in the Loddon Mallee and Wimmera Southern Mallee collaboration, Council continues to advocate for access to universal early years education for rural areas, including involvement in a presentation at the Productivity Commission's inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care public hearing in March 2024.

New visitor guide and Dipper put the spotlight on Loddon

In April, we saw the launch of the 2024 Loddon Valley Official Visitor Guide.

Featuring unique and compelling stories, itineraries, local profiles, must-dos and editorials, the new visitor guide puts a spotlight on the Loddon Valley's diverse tourism offerings.

It also highlights our history and heritage, arts and culture, gastronomy, natural environment, tracks and trails, First Nations, tours, events, and more.

In October 2023, we welcomed Hawthorn Football Club legend Robert 'Dipper' DiPierdomenico to our region.

Together with his filming crew, Dipper toured local tourism businesses and destinations throughout the Shire, filming content for "Dipper's Destinations," which was aired in early 2024.

This visit offered significant exposure for our local businesses and was an excellent way to promote our wonderful Shire and its diverse tourism experiences and product.

Capital projects highlight of budget

Looking ahead to Council's 2024/25 Budget, which, following a public comment period, was adopted by Council on 25 June, features almost \$7M in capital works projects, including \$3.5M towards roads.

The budget sees the continuation of a strong cash position, with no new borrowings, and a rate increase of 2.75% – in line with the Victorian Government's Fair Go Rates System. This 2.75% increase also applies to the 2024/25 Fees and Charges schedule.

The 2024/25 budget includes \$500,000 for recreation and community facilities, and full funding of Council's ongoing commitment to community planning of \$750,000.

Additionally, there is flood restoration works of \$20M, in addition to the \$20M budgeted in 2023/24.

Thank you

Finally, we'd like to thank our local community, including volunteers, who continue to contribute so much to our Shire.

We also thank Councillors and Council staff for another productive year, where much was achieved against a backdrop of continued recovery efforts.



Cr Gavan Holt
Mayor



Lincoln Fitzgerald
Chief Executive Officer



Financial summary

A summary of our financial performance is outlined below. Detailed information relating to Council's financial performance is included within the financial statements and performance statement section of this report.

Operating position

Council finished the year with a deficit of \$6.42M. This deficit contrasts with the prior year surplus of \$6.95M. The Comprehensive Income Statement in the Financial Statements indicates that the variance is due to the timing of Loddon's Financial Assistance Grant allocation. Unlike previous years, Council did not have an upfront payment of the next year's allocation which has skewed the operating result.

Liquidity

Cash has remained steady however, even without the early payment of the Financial Assistance Grant allocation. The 2023/24 funding allocation was paid early which enabled Council to complete some of the scheduled works for 2023/24 earlier than expected.

Our working capital ratio, which assesses Council's ability to meet current commitments, is calculated by measuring Council's current assets as a percentage of current liabilities. Council's result of 609% is an indicator of a favourable cash position.

Council operates a number of reserves to fund future expenditure. The balance of these reserves at the end of 2023/24 was \$18.28M. This amount was held by Council in cash and term deposits at the end of the financial year.

Obligations

Council aims to maintain its infrastructure assets in accordance with its Asset Management Plans, while at the same time continuing to deliver the services needed by the community. It continues to be a challenge for Council to maintain a level of expenditure on the renewal of our large asset base that keeps up with the ongoing decline of asset condition. This gap between demand and expenditure is referred to as the 'renewal gap' and is measured by Council's asset renewal ratio.

To make progress on addressing Loddon's renewal gap, in 2023/24 Council invested \$10.39M in renewal and upgrade works during the year. This was funded from grants, rate income and cash reserves with no borrowings. Council's asset renewal ratio, which is measured by comparing asset renewal and upgrade expenditure to depreciation, was just over 92%, compared to just under 48% in 2022/23.

At the end of the year, Council's debt ratio, which is measured by comparing interest bearing loans and borrowings to rate revenue, was zero per cent.

Stability and efficiency

Council has a range of revenue sources including rates, user fees, fines, grants and contributions. Council's rates concentration, which compares rate revenue to adjusted underlying revenue, was 49.09% for the financial year. This figure has increased significantly from previous years (2021-23 has tracked between 30-37%) due to the absence of Financial Assistance Grants from Council's revenue in the 2023/24 financial year. Council was restricted to increasing its revenue base for the year by a 3.5% rate cap. This resulted in an average rate per assessment of \$1,315.10 which is the lowest average rate assessment in Victoria.



Soldiers Memorial Park, Tarnagulla

Grants

Community Grants Program

The Loddon Shire Community Grants Program is a competitive funding program aimed at helping clubs and organisations to enhance the provision of facilities, services or activities that improve the quality of life for people in their community.

This funding is open to not-for-profit organisations wanting to deliver projects/programs that directly benefit Loddon Shire residents.

Grant recipients

Bears Lagoon Serpentine Football Netball Club

Boort Football Club

Boort Lakeside Croquet Club

Boort Memorial Hall

Boort Netball Club

Bridgewater Bowling Club

Bridgewater on Loddon Development

Bridgewater on Loddon Football Netball Club

Calivil Bowling Club

East Loddon Food Share Program

Inglewood Golf Club

Rheola Pioneers Memorial Recreation Reserve Committee

Tarnagulla Recreation Park Committee

Wedderburn Community Centre

Wedderburn Community House - Rejoov Salon

Wedderburn Lions Club

Event Promotion Scheme

Council provides sponsorship for events that are held within the municipality and that may provide important community development opportunities or attract a significant number of visiting participants, officials and families.

Sponsorships

Active Farmers

Boort Amity Club

Boort Bowls Club

Boort District Agricultural and Pastoral Society

Boort District P-12 School

Boort District School Parents' Club

Boort Football Club

Boort Hockey Club

Boort Indoor Bias Bowls Club

Boort Lakeside Croquet Club

Boort Tennis Club

Boort Netball Club

Bridgewater Bowling Club

Bridgewater Water Ski Club

Calivil Bowling Club

Dingee Bush Nursing Centre

Inglewood Bowling Club

Laanecoorie Gold Bash

Loddon Darts Association

Mitiamo Golf Club

Newbridge Social Club

Northern District Community Health

Pyramid Hill and District Historical Society

Pyramid Hill Bowling Club

Pyramid Hill Golf Club

Rheola Charity Carnival

Serpentine Bowling Club

Southern Loddon Tourism

Unified Filipino-Australian Association

Wedderburn Bowls Club

Wedderburn Community House

Wedderburn Historical Engine and Machinery Society

Wedderburn Patchwork Group

Wedderburn Tourism



Inglewood Bowling Club – Charlie Catto Memorial Fours



Launch of the 'Walk This Way' project - a 'Healthy Loddon Campaspe' initiative, Inglewood

Description of operations

Council is responsible for a variety of services, from family and children's services, parks and gardens, road infrastructure, waste management and community development, to matters concerning business development, planning for appropriate development and ensuring accountability for Council's budget.

This broad range of services and infrastructure for residents helps Loddon Shire to be a proactive, sustainable and prosperous community of communities. Council's vision, strategic objectives and strategies to further improve services and facilities are described in our Council Plan 2021-2025 and budget.

The delivery of services, facilities, support and advocacy to achieve the strategic objectives is determined by a set of strategic indicators, service performance indicators and measures. Council also has a wide range of responsibilities under Victorian and Commonwealth legislation.

Major capital works

During 2023/24 major capital works included:

Buildings and recreation reserves

- Contract awarded for replacement of roofing on the Bort Historical Society and Inglewood halls.
- Nine separate projects completed to replace lighting, undertake re-stumping and complete maintenance on a number of Council buildings.
- Lighting upgrade projects delivered at the Calivil and Mitiamo recreation reserves.

Roads, bridges and culverts

Council completed:

- 7.8km of sealed road reconstruction
- 30km of local road gravel resheets
- 13km of local road shoulder gravel resheets
- New footpaths in Newbridge, Inglewood and Bort.

Road inspections and maintenance

Inspection summary:

- 606 inspections were completed with 5,061 defects identified.

Defect rectification:

- 8,007 defects were rectified, with 94.6% of all defects (7,572 in total) completed before their due date.

Maintenance grading program:

- 1,016 maintenance grading work actions were completed on Loddon's unsealed road network, resulting in 1,983km of grading and 5,620km of inspections.

Flood rectification works

Council is continuing to progress recovery from the October 2022 flood event and the December 2023/January 2024 event.

An update of each follows:

October 2022 event

- Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) claims for relief and recovery, counter disaster operations, emergency works, and immediate reconstruction works have been lodged and completed. Of the \$4.6M claimed only \$14,911 was rejected, representing a 99.8% success rate.
- Council is now moving into the reconstruction of essential public assets stage and have 33 'packets' of work lodged with the DRFA, comprising over 640 identified items of damage, totalling an estimated cost of more than \$21M.

December 2023/January 2024 event

- A single Counter Disaster Operations claim has been lodged with the DRFA for \$37,000.
- 49 specific emergency works were undertaken to repair and restore road conditions to an acceptable level of service to support the immediate flood recovery efforts.
- There are further works identified at over 100 locations at an estimated cost of \$5M.

Department of Transport and Planning (VicRoads) Agreement expires

Council's Department of Transport and Planning (VicRoads) 'Agreement 9290' expired on 31 December 2023. The Agreement was for the routine maintenance of pavement, shoulders, roadside areas, drainage systems, road furniture and structures on various arterial roads (394km) within Loddon Shire.

Prior to the agreement expiry, from 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023, Council rectified 1,058 arterial road defects with 95% of these (1,005 in total) completed before their due date.

Council participated in maintenance agreements with VicRoads for over 20 years. Due to ongoing changes and the new Victorian Road Maintenance Contract (VRMC) requirements, Council made the decision not to enter into a new agreement.

The following list of roads are now the full responsibility of Department of Transport and Planning (VicRoads):

- Calder Highway
- Loddon Valley Highway
- Wimmera Highway
- Bendigo Maryborough Road
- Bendigo Pyramid Road
- Boort Charlton Road
- Boort Kerang Road
- Boort Mitiamo Road
- Boort Pyramid Road
- Boort Wedderburn Road
- Boort Wycheproof Road
- Bridgewater Dunolly Road
- Bridgewater Maldon Road
- Bridgewater Serpentine Road
- Dunolly Eddington Road
- Echuca Mitiamo Road
- Leitchville Pyramid Road
- Logan Wedderburn Road
- Prairie Rochester Road

Department of Transport and Planning (VicRoads) can be contacted on 13 11 70.

Major changes

With the culmination of Home Support Services from 30 June 2023, an assessment of directorate structures was undertaken and a service realignment came into effect from 1 October 2023.

The change impacted Council's Community Wellbeing Directorate and Operations Directorate. It was implemented to support the timely delivery of capital works, and Council's commitment to progress with the cleanup of unsightly properties across the municipality.

In addition, the realignment ensures Council's future role in contributing to the needs of older people in the municipality is achievable.

Major achievements

Assets and infrastructure

- Donaldson Park redevelopment completed after many years of planning, construction and input from Council and the community.
- Significant sealed road reconstruction works completed including 4km of Echuca Serpentine Road, 2.6km of Pyramid Yarraberb Road and 1.2km of Newbridge Road.
- 57km of roads re-sealed as part of Council's annual resealing program.
- Upgrades undertaken to floodways and culverts on Brenanah Wehla Road, Wedderburn Junction East Road and Appin South Road.
- Significant works underway in Pyramid Hill including flood levee banks, streetscape project and community centre.



Community events

- Council provided monetary support to 35 organisations holding 41 events throughout the Shire during the 2023/24 financial year. In total \$20,800 was allocated under Council's event promotion scheme.
- Six community groups were successful in obtaining sponsorship for a major event. These included the Bridgewater Run4Resilience, 2024 Australian Masters Waterski Championships, Laanecoorie Gold Bash, Rheola Charity Carnival and the Wedderburn Annual Engine Rally.
- Community groups successful in obtaining minor event sponsorship included Boort Golf Croquet Tournament, Dingee Bush Nursing Centre Centenary, Charlie Catto Memorial Fours Bowls Tournament, Gold Fossickers Cup Dart Tournament, Newbridge Market and Car Show, 2023 Garden Expo and the Tarnagulla Strictly Vintage Fair.

Community project management

- Council's 2023/24 Community Grants Program saw over \$110,000 in funding allocated to 19 community groups.
- The Calivil Bowling Club Synthetic Green Installation project was completed and officially opened on 1 January 2024 during the club's annual New Years Day tournament.
- Searle Brothers was awarded the contract for the Pyramid Hill Community Centre (Stage 1) redevelopment project. The project commenced in February 2024.
- The Donaldson Park Community Hub redevelopment project was completed. The project commenced in November 2022 and was officially opened on Saturday 1 June 2024 to coincide with the Wedderburn Redbacks Football Hockey Netball Club's first home game for the season.

- Sports field lighting projects were delivered at the Mitiamo and Calivil recreation reserves.
- Barbecues and shelters were erected in Progress Park, Newbridge and Lions Park East, Pyramid Hill.
- Bridgewater Hall refurbishment was completed in time for centenary celebrations.
- Footpath works were completed at Inglewood Community Sports Centre.
- New floating pontoon installed at the Bridgewater swimming hole.
- Completion of Bridgewater Foreshore Stage 2, including footpath extensions, park furniture and landscaping.
- Council officers commenced community engagement throughout a number of towns within Loddon Shire for various projects including the Recreation and Open Space Strategy (ROSA), Inglewood Community Sporting Hub redevelopment, Little Lake Boort Recreation Precinct Masterplan and Loddon Social Infrastructure Strategy.
- Council's 2023/24 Community Planning Program received 22 applications, submitting 56 priority projects for our Loddon communities.

Compliance and development

- Appointment of a building inspector.

Customer service

Council has implemented a new Customer Request Management (CRM) platform that will streamline all internal and external customer requests providing greater efficiency for the customer experience.

The CRM creates greater opportunity to analyse the customer service experience and support the review of the Customer Service Strategy in which Council aims to embed a high level of responsiveness and good customer service culture over the next four years.



Wedderburn Playgroup. Image: Goldfields Library Corporation

Early childhood and early years

- Boort Pre-school celebrated 60 years at its current site.
- Dingee Pre-school was assessed and rated by the Department of Education, receiving a rating of Meeting the National Quality Standards in all seven Quality Areas, and an overall rating of Meeting the National Quality Standards.
- Pyramid Hill Pre-school was assessed and rated by the Department of Education, receiving a rating of Meeting the National Quality Standards in all seven Quality Areas, and an overall rating of Meeting the National Quality Standards.
- Four kindergarten services hosted Early Childhood Educator Trainees for the first time.
- The Loddon Shire Early Childhood workforce plan 2024-2029 was developed.
- The State of Loddon's Children and Young People Report 2023 was developed and made available online for other providers in the Shire.

- The state-wide manager of the Smiles 4 Miles Program Fiona Gallagher from the Department of Health presented each local kindergarten (Pyramid Hill, Wedderburn, Dingee, Boort and Inglewood) with certificate of accreditation under Dental Health Services Victoria's Smiles 4 Miles Oral Health Promotion and Prevention Program. This program works with kinder children and their families to support and increase the uptake of evidence-based oral health care under three themes: Eat Well, Drink Well and Clean Well.

Emergency management

- Council provided response, relief and recovery to communities impacted by flood events on Christmas Day, 2 January (Wedderburn and Korong Vale areas) and 7-8 January (communities in the Bullock, Myers and Bendigo creek floodplain in the east of the municipality).
- Council continues to participate in the Northern Victorian Emergency Management Cluster and the Cluster Management Board, and chairs the Loddon Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee.

- Council supported the delivery of the Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program, with Central Goldfields Shire Council as lead agency, participating in the SES Community Emergency Risk Assessments (CERA) for Loddon, ongoing assurance of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) and local Emergency Management agency networking.
- Council added five deputy Municipal Recovery Managers to the staff team who support community recovery following an emergency event.
- Council officers participated in emergency management training including Introduction to Personal Support, MRM and MEMO training.
- Council's Mayor and CEO presented to the 2022 Flood Inquiry Committee Hearing in August 2023.

2023/24 flood events

Significant rain events resulted in flooding of the Nardoo and Korong creeks on 25 December 2023 and 2 January 2024. These flood events impacted the townships of Wedderburn and Korong Vale along with surrounding rural lifestyle blocks and primary producers.

This resulted in 90 residential, rural living and farming properties being impacted, with 18 experiencing inside above-floor flooding, and a further nine reporting water inside from storm/roof damage. These properties, along with a number of other residences, also experienced water in shedding and other outbuildings, destruction of yards and gardens, and water under homes. In addition, rural properties experienced damage to driveways/property entrances, rural fencing, pasture, crop and grain storage damage, soil and waterway erosion, and some stock losses.



Pyramid Hill CERT vehicle

Significant rain events forecast for 7 and 8 January resulted in heightened preparedness by these same communities, including relocation of SES units and equipment into Weddeburn and extensive sandbagging.

The resulting rainfall events saw Bendigo Creek, Myers Creek, Bullock Creek and Seven Months Creek impact communities on the eastern side of the municipality including Tandarra, Dingee, Prairie, Mitiamo and Pyramid Hill.

The road network experienced significant damage, impacting on the ability for community, and particularly primary producers, to move safely around the district.

Current assessments are a damage estimate of \$4.38M. Damage to the road network infrastructure includes culverts, floodways, sealed roads, sealed road shoulders and unsealed roads.

Council coordinated a range of initial community relief and recovery activities, including the engagement of BlazeAid to support farmers in the Wedderburn and Korong Vale areas with restanding or reconstruction of fences. Fifteen properties in Loddon Shire registered with the BlazeAid base camp established at Boort. Volunteers provided approximately 60 days of labour during January and February 2024.

Finance

- Implementation of new finance system.

Governance

- Governance Rules reviewed and adopted by Council following a period of community engagement.
- Council's Risk Management Policy and Framework and Risk Appetite Statement reviewed and endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee, and adopted by Council in January 2024.
- Council's Business Continuity Management Policy and Framework and Business Continuity Plan were reviewed and endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee, and adopted by Council in June 2024.

- New Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy, relevant to staff, and consistent with the policy applicable to Councillors, was developed.
- Council's Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy were reviewed and approved by Council in March 2024.
- Two new Audit and Risk Committee independent members were appointed by Council.
- Neighbourhood Safer Places (Places of Last Resort) Plan was reviewed and adopted by Council in October 2023.
- 168 individual members of Council's 18 Community Asset Committees were appointed by Council in November 2023.
- The CEO presented a report to Council on the performance and activities of Council's 18 Community Asset Committees in December 2023.
- Council's Privacy Policy was reviewed and adopted by Council in January 2024.
- Rod Poxon was appointed Chairperson of Council's Audit and Risk Committee by Council in February 2024.
- Council reviewed its delegation to the Chief Executive Officer in April 2024.

Health and safety

Council's OHS Committee reviewed a number of sun/heat related policies in consultation with management and staff within their respective Designated Work Groups.

The OHS Committee met four times during the year, reviewing injury, incident and near miss data and health and safety-related policies, and discussed a range of occupational health and safety matters across the organisation.

Four members were re-elected to three Designated Work Groups for a further term.

Healthy Loddon Campaspe (HLC)

- Healthy Sports Club:

Serpentine Bowling Club, Calivil Bowling Club, Serpentine Bears Lagoon Football Netball Club, Newbridge Football Netball Club and Boort Football Netball and Hockey Club were supported to make healthy changes to their canteen menu and catering meals through HLC supporting the purchase of equipment, healthy eating messaging and healthy recipes.

- Active Footpath Project:

The Active Footpath Project was branded Walk this Way and was delivered in Inglewood and Pyramid Hill. The project involved the installation of a series of fun footpath decals, including hopscotch, balance on the lines and calf raises to encourage children and adults to be active in Inglewood and Pyramid Hill.

Six seats were installed along walking paths to encourage older adults to walk and rest when required. An accessible walking loop was mapped and promoted in Inglewood, which loops up Inglewood District Health Service (IDHS), medical centre, new community gardens and the main street.

- Story Walk:

The Story Walk Project was installed along the Nardoo Creek Walking Track in Wedderburn. Eighteen boards including a trailhead sign were designed and fabricated to create a story walk set. Six boards were attached to existing infrastructure and 12 were concreted with steel posts into the ground.

A story walk is an innovative way for children and adults to engage in physical activity and enjoy reading in the outdoors at the same time. Fun animal footprint wayfinding decals were installed on the footpath between the Wedderburn agency library and the start of the story walk. The Goldfields Library will maintain the story boards and change the story each quarter.

- Cooking healthy meals:

Inglewood Community Neighbourhood House (ICNH) and Boort Resource Information Centre (BRIC) were supported to run Cooking Healthy Meals classes for community members. Class facilitators were supported through training to build their confidence, knowledge and skills. Cooking equipment, healthy recipes and nutrition recipes were provided to ICNH and BRIC.



Walk this Way launch

- Community gardens:

Community gardens at IDHS and Boort District Health were activated through community working bees and workshops to make wicking beds and plant seedlings. School students, aged care residents and community members participated in the workshops and will continue to be involved in the community gardens. The gardens were also supported through new gardening equipment, soil and plants.

Municipal public health and wellbeing

- Council participated in the State Government's free Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) distribution program, extended to December 2023, including liaising with local distribution points and promoting availability.
- Director Community Wellbeing is a member of the Loddon Public Health Unit Loddon Primary Care and Population Health Advisory Sub-Committee.
- Council continued to pursue advocacy for a sustainable rural childcare model, including participation in the Strengthening Rural Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Roundtable in Warracknabeal and the Productivity Commission ECEC public hearing.
- Director Community Wellbeing returned as chair of the Buloke Loddon Gannawarra (BLG) Health and Wellbeing Executives Network. Shared projects delivered or in progress in 2023/24 include smoking prevention research, place-based antenatal model, and presentation on access to mental health supports in Buloke, Loddon and Gannawarra to the Loddon Mallee Mental Health and Wellbeing Interim Regional Body.
- Council participates in the Loddon Local Safety Committee, facilitated by Victoria Police.
- Council continues to support the facilitation of the Loddon Healthy Minds Network (LHMN). Shared projects delivered or in progress include: Delivery of annual LHMN Art Competition, with a record 305 entries; maintenance of the LHMN website; development of a suicide post-vention protocol; and design of a mobile 'Blue Tree' to raise awareness of mental health and suicide prevention.

Information technology

- Council introduced a new Enterprise Resource Planning system - Civica Altitude. This project was supported by the Rural Councils Corporate Collaboration (RCCC) and covered changes to frameworks and process across multiple departments including rates, finance, payroll, local laws and customer service.
- Introduced new devices to all kindergartens in the region, enabling the use of technology for interactive show-and-tell sessions and the sharing of art and creativity among kindergartens.
- Enhanced video conferencing capabilities across the network to improve access and foster greater collaboration within Council.
- Improved collaborative workspaces to unite departments, strengthen relationships and boost productivity.
- Through the Loddon Family Violence Network, Council participated in the 16 Days of Activism campaign, joining the call to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls with postcard distributions, footpath stencilling and localised promotion.
- Through the BLG Health and Wellbeing Executives Network, Loddon Shire participated in a research project to understand the underlying drivers of high smoking and vaping rates in Loddon, Buloke and Gannawarra to assist in the development of a targeted approach to reducing the uptake and increase cessation of smoking and vaping in Loddon.
- Loddon Shire hosted the Annual Seniors Festival Gala day at Boort Memorial Hall as part of the month-long event aimed at honouring and engaging our seniors. The day saw 100 seniors attend the luncheon and concert.

In addition, Council supported numerous events across the Shire including historical talks and morning teas, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for our seniors.
- Over 170 meal vouchers were provided to seniors encouraging social interaction and promoting economic stimulus for local businesses.

- Council participated in the Loddon Children's Health and Wellbeing Local co-design, resulting in a place-based service being offered in Loddon through a regional partnership arrangement with the North Central Local Learning and Employment Network (North Central LLEN) as the lead agency. The Strong Children Strong Families program has been re-established to govern the early childhood programs delivered in partnership across the municipality.

Organisation development

- In February 2024, Council moved to an integrated corporate system that included payroll and human resources management modules. The payroll model requires less manual input, and provides online leave applications and electronic timesheet processing. The human resources module will provide an interactive approach for employees to enrol into training opportunities and make changes to their personal details. It will address previous demographic data gaps and provide for a skills gap analysis, allowing for more streamlined reporting.
- The Consultative Committee is a forum for management and employees to consult on matters pertaining to the employment conditions of staff, workplace relations and human resource matters. The committee met quarterly throughout 2023/24.
- In November 2023, the Staff Reward and Recognition Program was endorsed by the Management Executive Group. This program aims to provide a positive incentive to motivate employees to perform to the best of their ability and receive reward and recognition for extraordinary effort, service milestones and positively exhibiting the Council values. It also allows staff to nominate peers for extraordinary effort.

- In November 2023, the first Donated Sick Leave Policy was endorsed and provides employees the ability to donate sick leave into a central sick leave donation register that can be utilised by Council employees who may at some time be affected by a significant and/or potentially long-term illness and have exhausted all their sick leave entitlements.
- Biannual all-staff meetings were held that brought all staff together for collaboration and included a presentation about real life resilience from the engaging and dynamic duo known as 'Legless and Blind'.

Parks and townships

- In 2023/24, 4,182 programmed maintenance and defects that consisted of maintenance actions on footpaths, streets and park trees, garden beds, grass mowing and playgrounds were rectified with 3,547 completed before their due date.
- Council planted 1,781 trees and plants, and mowed approximately 2,704ha of grass – travelling 10,017km.
- Completed six capital projects including upgrades to irrigation, shelters and Myrning Beach, Boort.

Procurement

- Updated procurement system underway.

Records

- Council approved Version 2 of the Records Management Strategy. This will ensure efficient data management and compliance with relevant legislation over the next four years.
- The digitisation of Council property files has been finalised. The completion of this project has provided digital accessibility of property files on Council's electronic document management system.



Staff recognising RUOK? Day, September 2023

Roadside weeds and pests program

Council continued to implement control activities for weeds and pests on municipal rural roadsides. The Roadside Weeds and Pests Program (RWPP) is a state-funded program.

Council engaged a contractor to conduct a roadside weed audit across the Shire. This involved the identification and mapping of regionally-controlled and restricted weeds and pests, resulting in 370,511 weeds being identified in 10,555 locations.

Through feedback from the community and the efforts of other government agencies, Landcare and private property groups, contractors were engaged to treat Prickly Pear and Wheel Cactus.

This resulted in the treatment of approximately 21,109 cacti in 748 locations.

Strategic planning

- A review of the Loddon Planning Scheme was completed this year and adopted by Council. The review found that the planning scheme is generally supportive of Council's aspirations in relation to population growth, economic development and environmental protection. Opportunities were identified to update policy and refine provisions to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of the scheme.
- The Unlocking Loddon's Residential Growth Potential report was completed this year and associated action plan was adopted by Council. The action plan includes initiatives for Council to facilitate the delivery of residential land and housing.

These initiatives include the pursuit of grants, development of a marketing plan, conduct of a Housing Expo, development of Council-owned land, detailed precinct planning and a review of infrastructure standards.

Statutory planning

- 75 applications were received – 58 were standard applications and 17 VicSmart applications.
- 93.5% of standard applications were decided within the 60-day statutory timeframe.
- 100% of VicSmart applications were decided within the 10-day statutory timeframe.
- The median number of days to determine a standard application was 28 days.
- The median number of days to determine a VicSmart application was five days.

Tourism and economic development

- The 'Unlocking Loddon's Growth Potential' Project has formed the backbone of work and activity to support housing and residential development.

An action plan has been developed and is being delivered in collaboration with strategic planners, supported by industry stakeholders and consultants.

- In March 2024, economic and demographic specialist REMPLAN was engaged to lead the generation of the Loddon Shire Economic Development Strategy (2025-2029).
- Collaborated with Workforce Australia to deliver the Loddon Employment Showcase planned for October 2024 in Pyramid Hill.
- In March 2024, supported the delivery of a successful 'Coffee with the Boss' event in Bridgewater, hosted by Workforce Australia and attended by employment agencies and job seekers.
- Developed Community Connectivity Plans with NBN Co and Telstra, to identify key threats and opportunities in digital connectivity, literacy and accessibility.
- Worked with NBN to promote upgrades to fixed wireless services in Loddon Shire, as well as notifying business and community of associated outages.



Coffee with the Boss event

- Supported Birchip Cropping Group's (BCG) Young Farmer Network Ball held in Bridgewater on 14 March and attended by over 300 community members, as well as supported BCG's Sprayer Day event in March at Lake Meran.
- Collaborated with Community Power Agency and Central Victoria Greenhouse Alliance to assist Council in its work to ensure renewables projects prioritise and deliver local community and economic benefit, and that existing and future business and agriculture is considered and protected.
- Supported the Small Business Bus visit to Wedderburn.
- Supported re-establishment of the Inglewood Community Market, as well as marketing and promotional support for flood and storm-impacted retail business in January 2024.
- Advocated for local tourism and hospitality businesses with a major submission to Regional Development Victoria's 'Bendigo Region Workforce Plan', as well as contributing to the Victorian Government's Tourism Development Survey.
- Advocated for the Loddon Shire and its tourism businesses in a regional context, with membership on the Bendigo Regional Tourism Board, as well as representation on UNESCO City and Region of Gastronomy, and the Victorian Goldfields World Heritage working groups.
- Leveraged Victorian Government grants to fund the Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan, the Bendigo Region Visitor Servicing Review, the Loddon Shire Local Area Action Plan and the Goldfields Gateway project.
- Delivered a Visitor Servicing Strategy (August 2023) and a Tourism Marketing Strategy (October 2023) to support visitor attraction, increased length-of-stay and dispersal.
- Supported the successful delivery of a touring local food truck concept, Flavours of Loddon. Five local hospitality businesses supported major community and tourism events in Inglewood, Wedderburn, East Loddon and Bort.
- Co-produced the Loddon Valley Arts Trail, with more than 40 local artists exhibiting their work in 20 venues across the Loddon Shire.
- Co-designed and delivered the Whole Loddon Love music series to support flood-affected towns, as well as acquiring and supporting the Festival of Small Halls concert at the Pyramid Hill Memorial Hall in March 2024.
- Supported the promotion and visitor experience at the Bridgewater Australian Masters Waterski event, Inglewood Alive, Tarnagulla Strictly Vintage Fair, Wedderburn Detector Jamboree, Rheola Charity Carnival and many other events across the Shire.
- In addition to successful seasonal campaigns promoting the Loddon Shire's tourism destination, sights, experiences and businesses, the team designed, wrote, published, launched and distributed the Loddon Shire's Official Visitor Guide. Additionally, the team created and published advertising campaigns, billboards across regional Victoria, social media content, created an extensive stills and video content bank, and hosted television productions for 'Dippers Destinations' and Zeller.
- Supported local tourism with quarterly tourism business networking events and familiarisation tours, as well as regular engagement with Loddon Shire's tourism, progress and development committees.
- Managed the operation of the Visitor Information Centre in Wedderburn, including coordination of a dedicated volunteer team, and commenced plans to launch a network of 'Welcome Shops' across the Shire in 2024/25.
- Conducted an audit of tourism signage across the Loddon Shire, with design work now underway and plans for signage upgrades soon to commence.
- Contributed to the Inglewood Streetscape Project, which aims to enhance the visual appeal, functionality, safety and cultural significance of the streetscape in Inglewood. During 2024, the project appointed civil and landscape design firms to develop the community-driven concept and masterplan to detailed design stage, in preparation for future State Government funding applications.



Loddon Valley Arts Trail

- Acquired and deployed the Spendmapp tool in 2024, which allows the team to monitor local and visitor spending in key retail and business sectors.
- In June 2024, delivered the first of a series of retail business workshops in Inglewood, with future events planned for Wedderburn, Boort, Pyramid Hill and Bridgewater.

Waste management

Hard waste

The annual kerbside hard waste collection for 2024 commenced on Monday 4 March to coincide with Clean Up Australia Day. The annual hard waste collection of metal, e-waste, furniture and white goods for residents (excluding businesses) within township boundaries was completed over a two-week period with approximately 629 collections, including:

- 157 items of e-waste
- 98 white good items
- 300m³ of furniture
- 332m³ of metal
- 234m³ of general waste

During the year, 303,862 kerbside garbage and recycling collection bin collections were scheduled, with 99.97% of these collections occurring as scheduled during normal operating conditions.

Waste vouchers

Residents are provided with four vouchers with their rates notices - one for each quarter. Each voucher can be used to dispose of up to four cubic metres of general domestic waste free of charge at Council's landfill and transfer stations.

This includes green waste, mixed recyclables, general household waste and e-waste (white goods, televisions, computers, electronic items, etc.).

Tyres, bricks and concrete, and mattresses are not included as these items have additional third party costs associated with their disposal, and are charged as per normal disposal charges.

Each voucher can only be used once, and only one voucher used per transaction. The voucher must be presented to attendants at landfill and transfer stations. Each voucher must be used by its expiry dates.

During 2023/24, 3,279 vouchers were used.

Youth

Council participates in the BLG Health and Wellbeing Executives Network governing the delivery of the Strong Youth Strong Communities program across the three municipalities.

Activities and programs delivered under the Strong Youth Strong Communities umbrella included:

- BLG Rural Youth Network
- BLG youth awards
- Careers Education Partnership
- Careers News and Wellbeing Portal
- Comprehensive Monitoring System
- Engage
- FreeZA
- Headstart
- L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program
- Live 4 Life
- School Focused Youth Service

- School to Work
- Secondary School Agriculture Fund
- The Umbrella Project
- VET Cluster
- VET transport
- Youth Take Over

Volunteers

- To celebrate National Volunteers Week, Council prepared recognition of service badges for volunteers of Council with five or more years of service. These badges will be distributed to volunteers by Council representatives at the annual committee meetings.
- Council continues to identify opportunities in the volunteer area to promote and recruit, support and develop, recognise, celebrate and value, and partner and collaborate. These are the key strategic directions in Loddon's Volunteer Strategy.



Loddon Shire Visitor Information Centre volunteers



Wedderburn hockey shed, Wedderburn, 2023/24 flood event

Recovery continues following flood event

In October 2022 Loddon Shire was hit by flooding, affecting many communities, with impacts similar to the January 2011 event. There was also three individual flood events in December 2023 and January 2024.

Community Flood Recovery

During 2023/24 Loddon Shire Council's Community Flood Recovery team continued an event-led approach to recovery from the October 2022 flood. Council's Community Flood Recovery Hub Program is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian governments.

Working closely with impacted communities, identifying key community contacts and maintaining regular contact with these residents, was an important element of the community recovery journey across Loddon Shire.

During the year, the team organised or attended more than 50 recovery events attended by over 1,500 Loddon residents. This level of participation as a percentage of the residents affected by the October 2022 flood event is very encouraging.

The top three attended recovery events in 2023/24, connecting flood-affected communities, were:

- 'George the Farmer' Family Day in Serpentine (180 participants - 59 adults and 121 children).
- Pyramid Hill Family Fun Night, February 2024 (130 participants).
- Yarrowalla Community Bonfire Night, July 2023 (76 participants).

Additionally, the Community Recovery team:

- Convened the Municipal Flood Recovery Committee in response to the October 2022 flood.
- Convened the Municipal Flood and Storm Events Recovery Committee in response to the severe weather events in December 2023/ January 2024.
- Developed and implemented a Municipal Flood Recovery Plan and associated Action Plan.
- Convened and facilitated a Health and Wellbeing Flood Recovery Network.

- Supported community and other key stakeholders to build community resilience and capability.
- Provided regular distribution of recovery information to the Loddon community.
- Provided guidance to individuals as needed, to navigate access to recovery support.
- Participated in regional and state community recovery meetings.
- Provided local information and connection to funded external agencies to support their delivery into Loddon.

The Community Flood Recovery Program continues to support the community and other key stakeholders to connect and access the financial, health and wellbeing support services available to Loddon Shire residents. It is also building community resilience and capability.

Furthermore, the program is allowing continual reflection on the response and recovery process, and contributing new information to guide the Loddon Flood Management Plan being prepared by the SES.

Family Twilight Fun Fest, Pyramid Hill

23 February 2024, Mitchell Park, Pyramid Hill

This free event, which featured live music, circus activities, wood-fired pizzas and souvlakis (just to name a few), attracted 130 people from Pyramid Hill and the surrounding area. This gave the community a valuable opportunity to catch up, reconnect and relax together.

Local support agencies also got on board with Boort District Hospital whipping up pedal-powered smoothies and Northern District Community Health running mini golf, while also promoting the health and wellbeing support available.

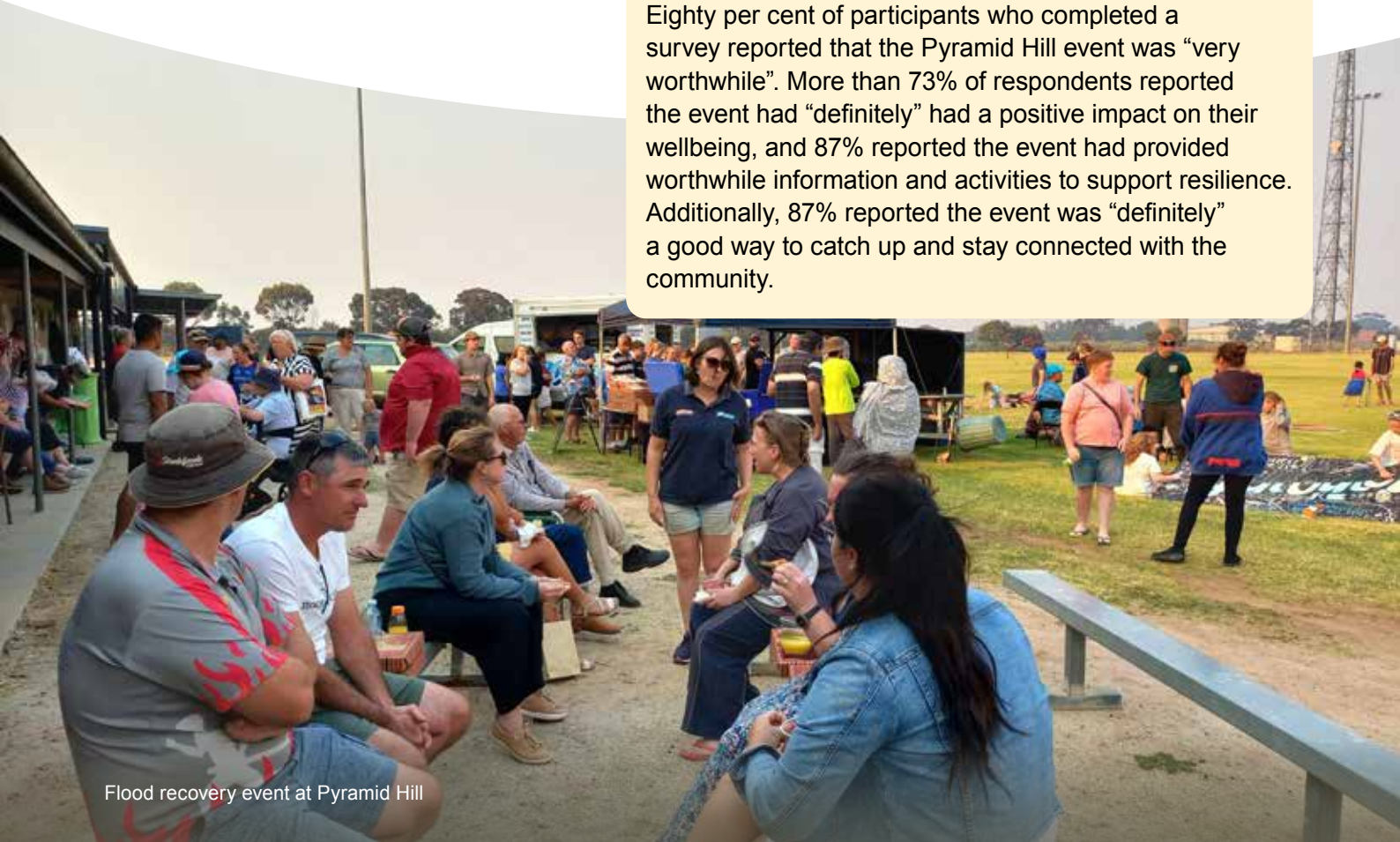
With plenty on offer to entertain and delight, the crowd certainly seemed to enjoy the night which was developed by local volunteers, including Progress Association President and event emcee Drew Chislett.

One of the evening's many highlights included the community mural activity facilitated by artist Wes Franklin, inspired by a quote from Dr Rob Gordon who presented at recovery events in Loddon following the 2022 floods.

Following the event, the chalk mural went on display in the Pyramid Hill Supermarket window.

Community feedback

Eighty per cent of participants who completed a survey reported that the Pyramid Hill event was "very worthwhile". More than 73% of respondents reported the event had "definitely" had a positive impact on their wellbeing, and 87% reported the event had provided worthwhile information and activities to support resilience. Additionally, 87% reported the event was "definitely" a good way to catch up and stay connected with the community.



Flood recovery event at Pyramid Hill

Feedback on the successful event-led recovery program illustrates the benefit of this approach:

George the Farmer in Serpentine

"I just wanted to thank you and the Loddon Shire for the great day we had at the George the Farmer show at Serpentine yesterday.

"Everything was so well executed from the main performance to the food, drinks and music on the lawn.

"Thanks again for organising this fun community event."

2023 Community Recovery Grants

"Can I also add that our event was a roaring success with double the amount of attendees than we expected.

"These funds are just perfect for small communities like Mysia by reunifying the community after the flood and bringing joy without tedious volunteer obligations. Thank you."

Morning tea with Dr David Younger

David Younger met with a group of residents in the Wedderburn Community Neighbourhood House on 1 February 2024.

One of the participants wrote the following on the (public) Wedderburn Noticeboard Facebook page:

"What a great morning at Wedderburn Community House hearing about and discussing the impacts of flooding on communities and individuals. I took a lot of notes. First time I've felt calm and in control since the October 2022 floods."



George the Farmer participants



Flood recovery team in action at Elmore Field Days, October 2023

Partners in the Community Flood Recovery Program

- 18 Loddon community planning groups
- Agriculture Victoria
- Bendigo Community Health
- Boort District Health Service
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Department of Education
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Department of Families Fairness and Housing
- Department of Health
- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- Department of Transport and Planning
- Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Corporation
- Emergency Recovery Victoria
- Goldfields Library Corporation
- Headspace
- Inglewood and Districts Health Service
- Loddon Plains Landcare Network
- Loddon Shire community
- Loddon Shire Councillors and staff
- Loddon sporting clubs
- National Centre for Farmer Health
- Neighbourhood houses
- North Central Catchment Management Authority
- North Central LLEN
- Northern District Community Health
- National Emergency Management Agency
- Orange Door
- Red Cross
- Royal Flying Doctor Service
- Rural Financial Counselling Service
- State Emergency Service (SES)
- Tourism and Economic Development Committees
- Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry
- Victorian Farmers Federation
- Victoria Police
- VicTrack

Partner of note: The Rural Financial Counselling Service has helped Loddon Shire residents access \$21.7M in rural finance assistance of which approximately \$20.8M has been paid to Loddon farmers.



Emergency Services Minister Jacyn Symes at funding announcement for NCCMA's expansion of FloodEye mapping tool to Newbridge and Bridgewater

Key flood projects in partnership

Key projects being implemented by partner agencies with input from Council:

Rural Levees Project

- North Central CMA (with three other CMAs) have completed a tender assessment and appointed a panel of three preferred consultancies to provide technical support.
- North Central CMA is developing works packages to send out to the appointed consultants.
- North Central CMA and VICSES are developing an interim action plan to be included into the Municipal Flood Emergency Plan for the Tandarra levee which includes temporary works on the Bendigo Pyramid Road.

Korong Vale Flood Study

- A community dinner and presentation on the Korong Vale Flood Study in November 2023 attracted 45 local residents.

Following the dinner, North Central CMA staff met with several Korong Vale residents who provided feedback on the study outcomes.

The flood modelling consultants have been engaged to undertake extra work to verify the feasibility of several of these 'community-led' flood mitigation options.

- The North Central CMA is working with VicTrack regarding replacing culverts on railway lines in Korong Vale to reduce the risk of flooding.

Loddon Total Flood Warning System Review

- North Central CMA has received an Emergency Management Victoria grant to identify and prioritise improvements to inform fit-for-purpose total flood warning systems to service at-risk communities in the Loddon River catchment.

Erosion control in waterways

- North Central CMA has addressed more than 90% of 81 Loddon flood damage reports in Loddon waterways..
- Funding has been secured to repair to a large erosion site on Bullock Creek.
- A funding package has been put forward to government to undertake further erosion mitigation works.
- Repairs to community surface drains infrastructure commenced in April. Five locations were due for completion in June.

VICSES update

- VICSES will incorporate information (e.g. location, trigger and activation procedure) about road levees (e.g. Bendigo Pyramid Hill Road) into the next version of the Municipal Flood Emergency Plan.

Our Council



Councillors

Council elections were last held in October 2020.

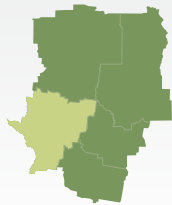
The Council area is divided into five wards. There is one Councillor for each ward. Councillors have responsibility for setting the strategic direction for the municipality, policy development, identifying service standards and monitoring performance across the organisation.

Representing the community

Councillor representation on committees

Councillors provided representation on many local committees. This representation helps to ensure the community has access to Council and their voices are heard.





Wedderburn Ward

Cr Gavan Holt

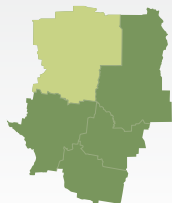
First elected: 2003

Representation on committees

- Audit and Risk Committee
- Calder Highway Improvement Committee (substitute)
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- Murray River Group of Councils
- Loddon Campaspe Group of Councils

Section 65 Community Asset Committees

- Donaldson Park
- Hard Hill Tourist Reserve
- Wedderburn Community Centre
- Wedderburn Engine Park and Market Square Reserve
- Wedderburn Mechanics and Literary Institute Hall



Boort Ward

Cr Neil Beattie

First elected: 2005

Representation on committees

- Audit and Risk Committee (substitute)
- Municipal Association of Victoria (substitute)
- Rail Freight Alliance

Section 65 Community Asset Committees

- Boort Aerodrome
- Boort Memorial Hall
- Boort Park
- Korong Vale Mechanics Institute Hall
- Korong Vale Sports Centre
- Little Lake Boort
- Yando Public Hall



Tarnagulla Ward

Cr Linda Jungwirth

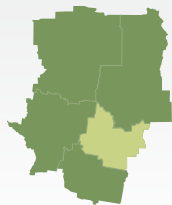
First elected: 2020

Representation on committees

- Australia Day Committee
- Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance
- Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee
- North Central Goldfields

Regional Library

- Tarnagulla Community Centre Committee incorporated



Inglewood Ward

Cr Wendy Murphy

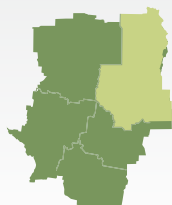
First elected: 2020

Representation on committees

- Calder Highway Improvement Committee
- Local Government Women's Charter
- Loddon Healthy Minds Network

Section 65 Community Asset Committees

- Campbells Forest Hall
- Inglewood Community Elderly Persons Units
- Inglewood Community Sports Centre
- Inglewood Town Hall Hub



Terrick Ward

Cr Dan Straub

First elected: 2020

Representation on committees

- Local Government Women's Charter (substitute)
- North Central Local Learning Employment Network

Section 65 Community Asset Committees

- East Loddon Community Centre
- Pyramid Hill Memorial Hall

Council contacts

Municipal office

41 High Street
Wedderburn, 3518

Local call: 1300 365 200

Phone: (03) 5494 1200

Fax: (03) 5494 3003

Office hours: 8.15am - 4.45pm
Monday to Friday
(except public
holidays)

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service.

- TTY/voice users phone 133 677 then ask for (03) 5494 1200
- Speak and Listen users phone 1300 555 727, then ask for (03) 5494 1200

For more information, visit:
www.relayservice.gov.au

Website:

www.loddon.vic.gov.au

Email:

loddon@loddon.vic.gov.au

Library services

Council's library services are provided by:

Goldfields Library Corporation

259 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo, 3550
PO Box 887, Bendigo, 3552

Telephone: (03) 5449 2790

Email: helpdesk@ncgrl.vic.gov.au

Website: www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au/libraryagencies

Library agency locations and opening hours

Boort

Boort Resource and Information Centre,
119 - 121 Godfrey Street, Boort

Hours: Monday to Friday 10.00am - 3.30pm
Closed from 12.30pm - 1.00pm

Dingee

Dingee Railway Station Progress Park,
Mack Street, Dingee

Hours: Tuesday 9.00am - 11.00am

Inglewood

Inglewood Community Neighbourhood House,
Inglewood Town Hall Hub, 20 Verdon Street, Inglewood

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
9.00am - 4.30pm

Pyramid Hill

Pyramid Hill Neighbourhood House,
Units 5-8/43-45 Kelly Street, Pyramid Hill

Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10.00am - 4.00pm

Tarnagulla

Tarnagulla Community Centre,
8 Sandy Creek Lane, Tarnagulla

Hours: First Monday of the month 2.00pm - 3.00pm

Wedderburn

Wedderburn Community Centre,
24 Wilson Street, Wedderburn

Hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm

Maternal and child health centres

Council operates six maternal and child health centres.

Phone: 0409 166 891

Email: earlyyears@loddon.vic.gov.au

Online: www.loddon.vic.gov.au/Live/Services-for-our-younger-residents/Maternal-and-Child-Health-Service

Location and opening hours

Boort

Boort District Health Service
31 Kiniry Street, Boort

Hours: Tuesday 9.00am - 3.30pm

Dingee

Bush Nursing Centre, King Street

Hours: Monday (weeks 1 and 3) 9.00am - 4.00pm

Inglewood

75 Grant Street

Hours: Wednesday 8.30am - 4.00pm

Pyramid Hill

Northern District Health Service
12 Victoria Street, Pyramid Hill

Hours: Monday (weeks 2 and 4) 9.00am - 3.00pm

Serpentine

Loddon Shire Council Office,
37 Peppercorn Way

Hours: Tuesday (week 1) 9.00am - 12.00pm

Wedderburn

Community Centre, 24 Wilson Street

Hours: Thursday 9.00am - 3.30pm





Kindergartens

Council operates five kindergartens.

Location/contact and hours		
Boort Pre-school	123-127 Godfrey Street, Boort, 3537 P: (03) 5455 2292 M: 0498 707 799	Hours: 4 year olds Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am - 1.45pm 3 year olds Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am - 1.45pm
Dingee Pre-school	785 Dingee-Serpentine Road, Dingee, 3571 P: (03) 5436 8401 M: 0498 606 345	Hours: 4 year olds Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am - 1.45pm 3 year olds Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am - 1.45pm
Inglewood Kindergarten	75A Grant Street, Inglewood, 3517 P: (03) 5438 3533 M: 0498 505 277	Hours: 4 year olds Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 8.45am - 1.45pm 3 year olds Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 8.45am - 1.45pm
Pyramid Hill Pre-school	67 Kelly Street, Pyramid Hill, 3575 P: (03) 5455 7230 M: 0498 606 023	Hours: 4 year olds Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am - 1.45pm 3 year olds Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.45am - 1.45pm
Wedderburn Kindergarten	77 Ridge Street, Wedderburn, 3518 M: 0498 707 005	Hours: 4 year olds Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 8.45am - 1.45pm 3 year olds Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 8.45am - 1.45pm

Landfill and transfer stations

Council operates three unlicensed landfills and three transfer stations.

Landfills are the most widely utilised solid waste management option. The waste is typically compacted in order to increase its density and stability, and covered to prevent the attraction of pests.

A transfer station is a building or processing site for the temporary disposal of waste.

All transfer stations and landfill facilities are closed on public holidays and days of 'catastrophic' fire danger.

Location and hours

Boort landfill Off Boort-Quambatook Road	Hours: Tuesday 8.00am - 12.00pm Sunday 1.00pm - 5.00pm
Dingee transfer station Lawry's Road	Hours: 1 April – 30 September Third Sunday of month 10.00am - 2.00pm 1 October – 31 March First Wednesday of month 8.00am - 12.00pm Third Sunday of month 10.00am - 2.00pm
Inglewood transfer station Inglewood Salisbury Road	Hours: Wednesday 8.00am - 12.00pm Saturday 8.00am - 12.00pm
Newbridge landfill Ryan Street	Hours: Wednesday 1.00pm - 5.00pm Sunday 1.00pm - 5.00pm
Pyramid Hill landfill Ballast Road	Hours: Tuesday 1.00pm - 5.00pm Sunday 8.00am - 12.00pm
Wedderburn transfer station Godfrey Street	Hours: Thursday 8.00am - 12.00pm Sunday 8.00am - 12.00pm



Our people





Management Executive Group: Lincoln Fitzgerald, Michelle Stedman, Wendy Gladman and Steven Phillips

Our Organisation

Council is the governing body that appoints a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO has responsibility for the day-to-day management of operations in accordance with applicable legislation and the strategic directions of the Council Plan.

The CEO and three directors form the Management Executive Group (MEG) and lead the organisation.

Chief Executive Officer

Lincoln Fitzgerald

Lincoln has a wealth of experience in local government, coming to Council from the City of Greater Bendigo and having previously worked for Mount Alexander Shire Council.

Lincoln has held diverse roles including project management of major projects, asset management, health promotion, strategy development, contract and facility management. Lincoln's career has focused on building, leading and managing diverse teams and large businesses in the region and overseas.

The Chief Executive Officer role of Council includes prescribed duties in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, providing leadership to the Council, strategic planning, promoting external relationships, and managing the operations of the Council.

Director Corporate

Michelle Stedman

Michelle Stedman was appointed Director Corporate in February 2024, having worked in the local government sector since 2008, focusing on regional and rural Victoria.

Before her position at Loddon Shire Council, Michelle was Director Corporate at Buloke Shire Council, and before that held a diverse range of roles at the City of Greater Bendigo in the areas of finance, strategic asset and capital management, project management office, engineering, emergency management, strategic planning and tourism.

Michelle holds a Bachelor of Business with a major in tourism and is a graduate of LGPro's Emerging Leaders Program (2020) and Executive Leadership Program (2024).

The Director Corporate role is responsible for managing finance, rates, procurement, governance, risk, occupational health and safety, human resources, payroll, records management, customer support and information technology.

Director Operations

Steven Phillips

Steven Phillips was appointed as Director Operations in November 2017 after holding the position of Manager Works at Loddon Shire Council since 2011.

Steven commenced with Council in 2009 as the Assistant Manager Works. Steven has a Diploma in Forestry from Melbourne University's School of Forestry, and has worked in the forestry and fire management sector, providing supervision and management of commercial timber harvesting operations, forest road infrastructure and fire management for several years before making the move to local government.

The Director Operations role is responsible for the management and ongoing delivery of a wide range of Council services including infrastructure policy and program development, works and maintenance, strategic and statutory planning, statutory building control, contract management and engineering services.

Director Community Wellbeing

Wendy Gladman

Wendy Gladman was appointed as Director Community Wellbeing in July 2013 after holding the position of Manager Community Services since 2010.

Wendy previously held a number of positions in aged and disability services since commencing with Council in 1995.

Wendy has extensive experience in local government, with a particular emphasis on delivery of community services and health and wellbeing.

Wendy has a Diploma of Business Management, a Diploma of Community Services Management, a Diploma of Business (Governance) and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD).

The Director Community Wellbeing role is responsible for the management and delivery of a wide range of community supports including early years, youth, inclusive communities (including positive ageing), sport and recreation, community planning, emergency management, community recovery, rural access, community compliance, environmental health and municipal public health and wellbeing.

Organisational structure



Loddon leaders

The MEG is supported by Loddon Leaders. Its members are:



Deanne Caserta

Corporate Services Directorate

Manager Financial Services, Deanne Caserta

Deanne Caserta commenced work with Council in 2004 in an administration capacity. In 2007 Deanne commenced as a Cadet Accountant and was awarded an accounting cadetship through Council's Scholarship Program. In 2012 she graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce and achieved CPA status in 2016.

Deanne's role involves overseeing the preparation of key finance documents including financial plan, annual budget and financial statements along with development and review of key financial strategies and policies. She is responsible for reporting to various government departments and the functions of accounts payable, accounts receivable, property/rating and procurement.



Lisa Clue

Manager Governance, Lisa Clue

Lisa Clue commenced with Council in August 2022, having previously worked in a number of roles within the local government sector.

Lisa has qualifications and experience in risk management, OHS and emergency management, as well as experience in a diverse range of other Council functions.

The Manager Governance role leads and manages the governance, risk, occupational health and safety and communications functions, which includes insurance, compliance and decision making through both Council and officer delegations.



Janine Jackson

Manager Organisation Development, Janine Jackson

Janine Jackson has extensive experience in local government having commenced with Council in 2004 in an administration capacity and from 2005 to 2020 successfully gaining appointment to roles in finance, payroll and human resources. In November 2020 Janine was appointed to the role of Manager Organisation Development.

The role of Manager Organisation Development encompasses human resource management including volunteers, organisation learning and development, payroll services, customer service and records management – while providing programs that support the development of a positive, engaging collaborative culture.

Manager Information Technology, Daniel Hirth

Daniel Hirth joined Council in 2022 after working in the private sector, including for a multi-national company with primary offices in the United States and United Kingdom.

Daniel's previous experience includes delivery of IT infrastructure and security, disaster recovery and business continuity planning, multi-vendor system implementations (supporting a single, unified solution), and testing and implementation delivery of new customer and consumer websites.

The Information Technology Manager role is responsible for implementing key strategies relating to information technology and information management. Since his time at Council, Daniel has migrated key technology systems to secure cloud solutions and increased the level of information security to ensure protection of all data.



Daniel Hirth

Executive Directorate

Manager Tourism and Economic Development, David Stretch

David Stretch commenced at Loddon Shire in October 2022 as the Manager Tourism and Economic Development.

David brings extensive business experience to the Council, having performed in both private sector and local government roles in marketing, business development and management.

David is recognised as an Australian Certified Economic Developer (ACEcD).

The Manager Tourism and Economic Development is responsible for the implementation of Loddon Shire's economic development strategy and the support of tourism growth in the Shire and region.

Operations Directorate

Manager Assets and Infrastructure, David Southcombe

David Southcombe commenced with Council in 2018 in the Assets and Buildings Coordinator position and was appointed Manager Assets and Infrastructure in 2019.

David's previous experience includes positions in asset management, energy efficiency and operations.

His role is responsible for contract and project management, capital works program development and implementation, civil engineering design and asset management.

Manager Development and Compliance, Glenn Harvey

Glenn Harvey commenced with Council in August 2015 as the Municipal Building Surveyor (MBS), after working in the building industry for 35 years, both in the private sector as a builder and building surveyor, and in building control in local government.

In 2016 Glenn was appointed as the Manager Development and Compliance, which resulted in the expansion of his responsibilities to encompass the management and oversight of Council's town planning and building control. With this appointment, Glenn manages the broader portfolio of development services, which Council provides or administers for the local community.

Manager Works, Daniel Lloyd

Daniel Lloyd commenced with Council in July 2002 in an administration and GIS (Geographic Information System) capacity for the Technical Services Department.

In September 2011, Daniel was appointed as the Assistant Manager Works before being appointed as the Manager Works in December 2017.

The Manager Works role includes the management of Council's day labour workforce and all subcontractors involved in the delivery of maintenance and construction activities on Council's road and township street network as well as Council's parks and gardens network, building maintenance and waste services.

This position is also responsible for plant fleet management activities and Municipal Emergency Response.



David Stretch



David Southcombe



Glenn Harvey



Daniel Lloyd



Orrin Hogan

Community Wellbeing Directorate

Manager Community Partnerships, Orrin Hogan

Orrin Hogan joined the Loddon Shire Council leadership team in 2024, returning to his home Shire region with over 20 years' experience working in various roles across local and state government sectors.

Orrin brings a wealth of experience in customer service, project management, service delivery and emergency preparedness.

With qualifications in Business Management and Natural Resource Management, Orrin contributes to building resilient and sustainable communities across the Loddon Shire municipality.

The Manager Community Partnerships is responsible for the management of Council's grant schemes, swimming pools, strategic planning for community facilities, community planning and capital works project management.



David Price

Manager Community Services, David Price

David Price commenced at Loddon Shire in 2017 in the local laws and compliance area and was appointed Manager Community Services in 2023.

He has previously worked in public health and community service roles within both state and local government. David has a Graduate Diploma in Management and a Bachelor of Applied Science (Environmental Health).

The Community Services department encompasses early years/children and youth, public health, local laws, animal control, community safety and emergency management.

Manager Community Recovery, Malcolm Brown

Malcolm Brown commenced at Loddon Shire Council in December 2022 as the Manager Community Recovery following the October 2022 flood event.

The Manager Community Recovery is responsible for managing the planning, programming and delivery of community recovery initiatives in partnership with a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders.

The position facilitates the Municipal Flood Recovery Committee, and oversees the community recovery plan.



Malcolm Brown



Council staff

Welcome to new staff

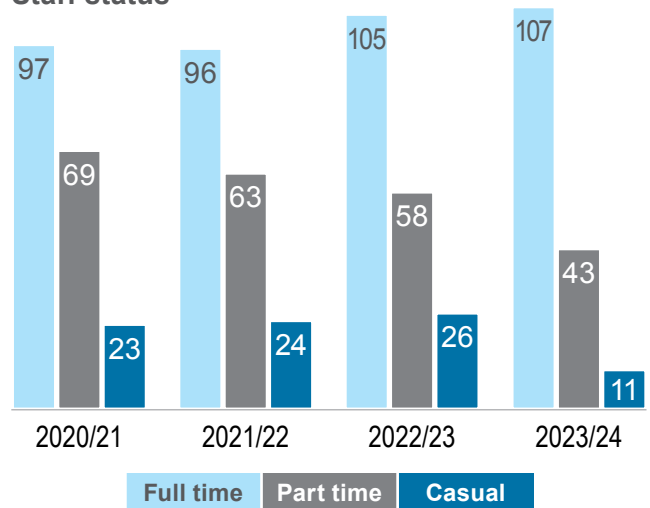
Alycia O’Sullivan	Danielle Jenkinson	Jennifer Hurrell	Nabin Dhakal	Rebecca Sterling
Anthony Thomas	Frances Clarke	Jessica Vickers	Nicole Taylor	Reece Carroll
Bianca Hendry	Graeme Smith	Laura Naughton	Orrin Hogan	Taryn Roberts
Brian Minogue	Jamie Roberts	Marianne Jones	Paul Gericke	Wendy Twigg
Bruce Arthur	Janine Lakey	Michelle Stedman	Rebecca Hughes	

Staff analysis

Status

Council employs 107 full-time, 43 part-time and 11 casual staff. Council also employs a number of staff on behalf of other organisations across the region to support shared service projects.

Staff status



Our people

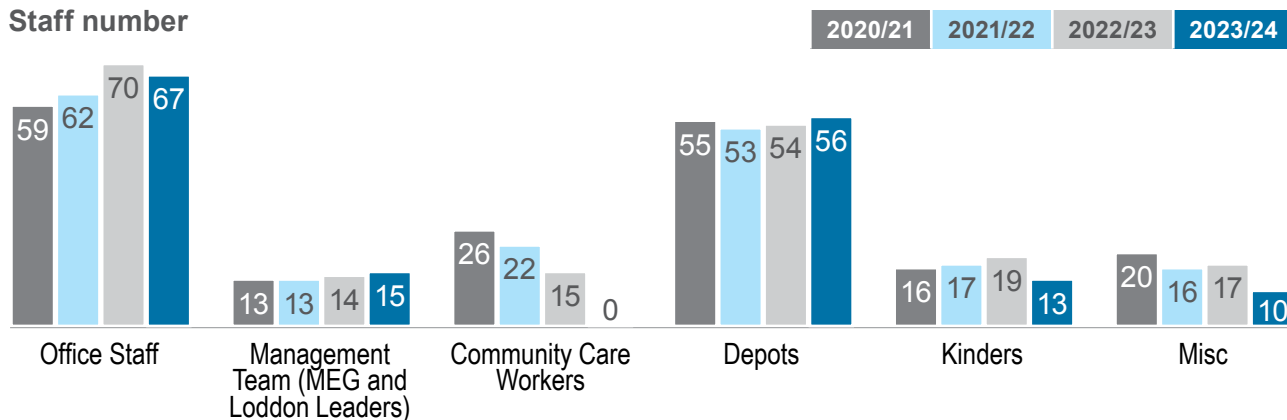
Number

As at 30 June 2024, Council employed 161 staff in total, with an effective full-time equivalent staff of 133. The statistics indicate a decrease of 28 staff over the past 12 months or a turnover rate of 26%. The decrease is attributed to the cessation of aged care services resulting in 26 staff ending employment with Council in 2023/24. This analysis captures staff employed as at 30 June 2024 but does not capture vacant roles. As at 30 June 2024, there were two full-time vacant roles

that will be filled in early July. Other factors that contribute to the findings is the ongoing turnover of casual pre-school staff and administration staff.

Fifty-one per cent of staff work out of the Council office or the outdoor operations office, 35% work in the field, 8% work in pre-schools. The remaining 6% of staff are made up of school crossing supervisors, casual rangers, Immunisation and Maternal and Child Health Nurses, and Visitor Information Centre employees.

Staff number



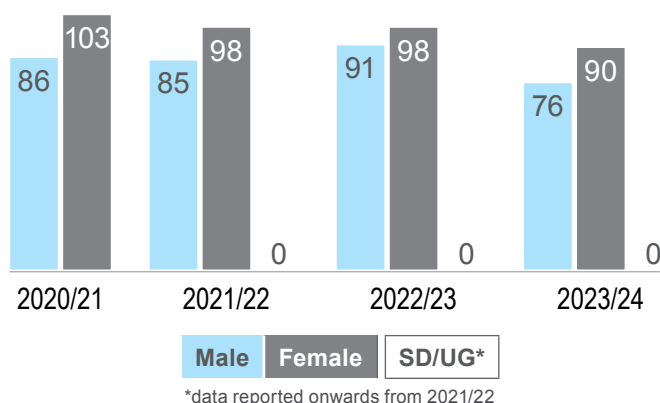
Gender

Of the 161 staff employed by Council, 43% are female and 57% are male. This is a 10% reduction in female staff attributed to the cessation of the Home Care Services which was predominately an all female workforce. At the present time, no reports were received of staff identifying as self-described or unspecified gender (SD/UG).

Male representation at the executive and leadership level has increased from 54% to 67%, with female representation decreasing from 46% to 33%. An additional two staff in this area contributes to these results.

Outdoor operational staff remains predominantly a male workforce being 60% of Council’s male staff. These results highlight an opportunity for greater gender representation in this area. Council’s five pre-schools consist

Staff gender



of an all-female workforce, which highlights further opportunity for mixed gender representation.

Office administrative roles are occupied by 66% female staff and 34% male staff. This remains consistent with the last annual report.

Age

The age demographic of Council staff in 2023/24 shows a reduction in the proportion of staff over the age of 36.

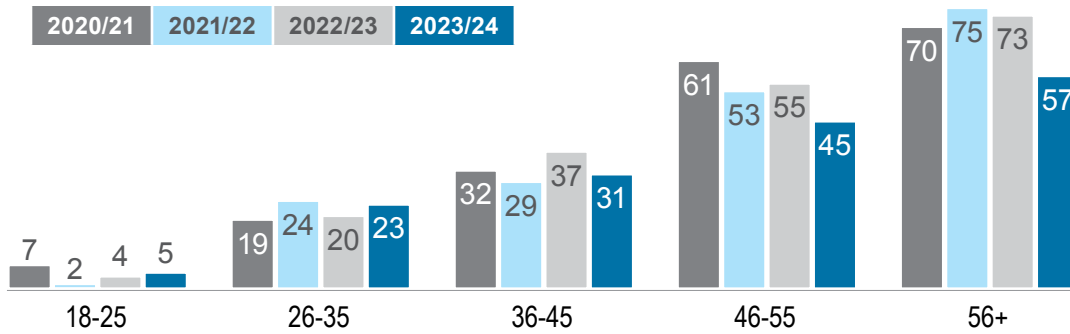
Council has seen growth in the younger age demographic with the 18 to 25 age group increasing by one, and the 26 to 35 age group increasing by four.

This data is positive for Council, resulting in succession planning through natural attrition and supports the strategic direction of the workforce plan 2021-2025.

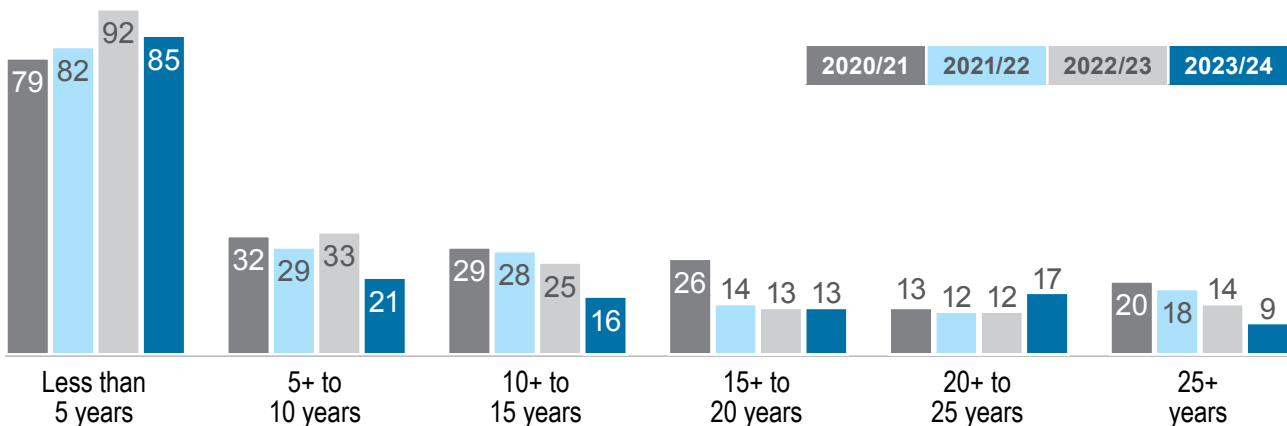
Length of service

Fifty-three per cent of staff have been employed by Council for less than five years. This is an increase of 4%, while there has been a reduction of staff who have been with Council for over 25 years. This is indicative of natural attrition resulting from an ageing workforce and the increase in the younger age demographic.

Staff age



Length of service



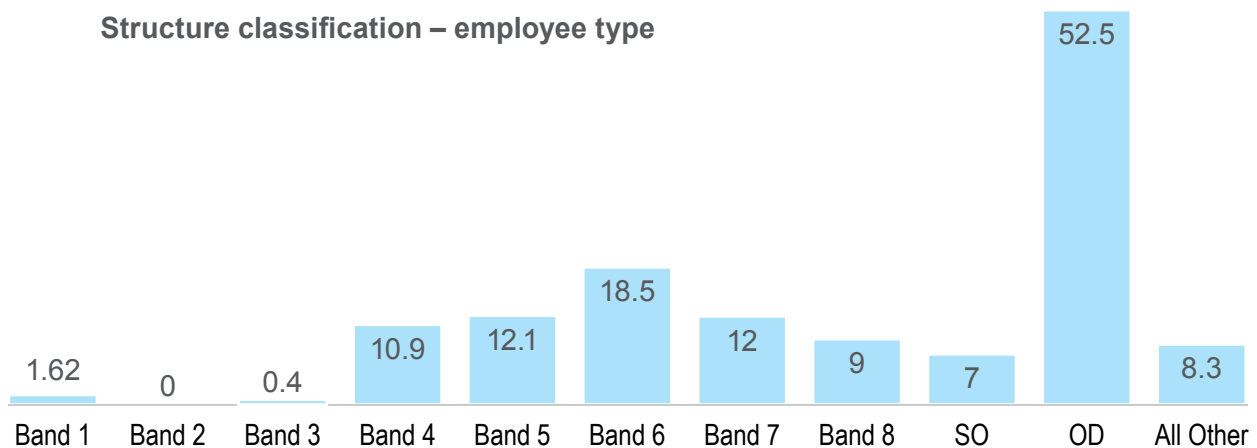
Council staff classification

Structure classification – employee type

A summary of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff categorised by employment classification and gender is set out below. Employment classifications are Band 1 to 8 as per Council's Enterprise Agreement. The column 'SO' includes contracted staff paid outside the banded structure. 'All other' includes pre-school staff and nurses, OD includes staff who are under the 'outdoor staff' classification structure in Council's Enterprise Agreement.

Structure Classification	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8	SO	OD	All Other	Total
Permanent FT - F				6	4	7	2	1	1			21
Non-Permanent FT - F					3		1		3			7
Permanent FT - M					2	5	7	6		50		70
Non-Permanent FT - M				1		3		2	3			9
Permanent FT - X												
Permanent PT - F	1.1		0.4	3.04	1.8	1.2	1.3				6.4	15.24
Non-Permanent PT - F				0.9	0.4	0.4					0.8	2.5
Permanent PT - M	0.52				0.8	1.9				2.5		5.72
Non-Permanent PT - M							1.05					1.06
Permanent PT - X												
Casual - F											1.0	1.0
Casual - M											0.1	0.1
Casual - X												
Total	1.62		0.4	10.94	12.1	18.5	12.35	9	7	52.5	9	133

Structure classification – employee type



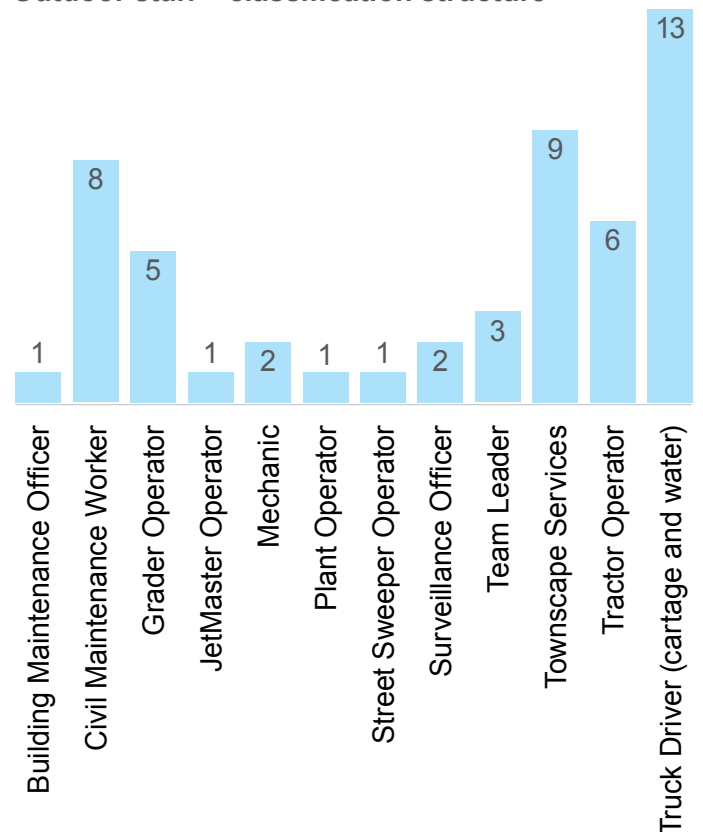


Outdoor staff – classification structure

A summary of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff categorised by the Loddon Shire outdoor staff employment classification structure is set out below. The workforce that makes up the table below is an all-male workforce. This provides an opportunity to promote any vacancies that arise in a way that may encourage mixed gender applications.

Position	Occupancy
Building Maintenance Officer	1
Civil Maintenance Worker	8
Grader Operator	5
JetMaster Operator	1
Mechanic	2
Plant Operator	1
Street Sweeper Operator	1
Surveillance Officer	2
Team Leader	3
Townscape Services	9
Tractor Operator	6
Truck Driver (cartage and water)	13
Total	52

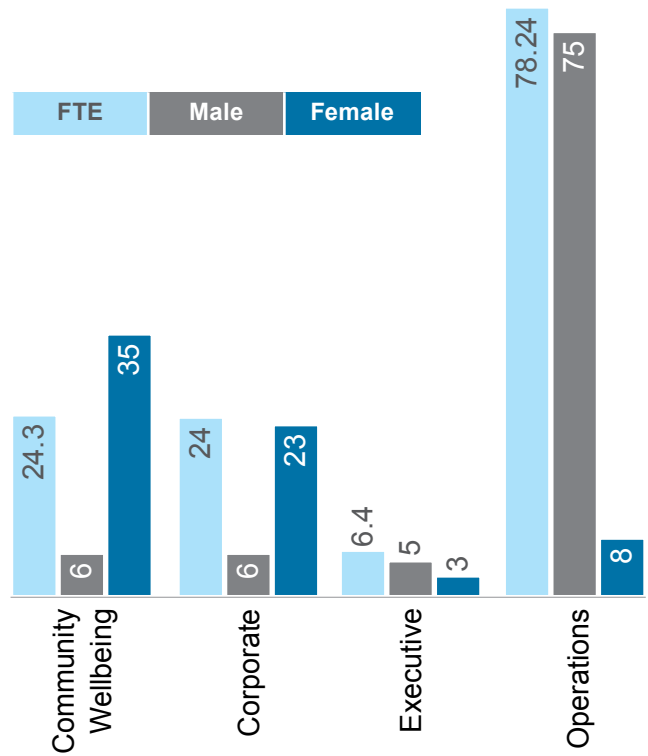
Outdoor staff – classification structure



Directorate – employee type/gender

A summary of the number of Council staff by organisational structure, employment type and gender is set out below.

Directorate	FTE	Male	Female	Non Specified
Community Wellbeing	24.3	6	35	0
Corporate	24	6	23	0
Executive, Tourism and Economic Development	6.4	5	3	0
Operations	78.24	75	8	0



Staff farewells

Over 30 years

Carol Ritchie

Over 20 years

Julie Dean

Lynette Don

Roslyn Stone

Over 10 years

Christine Mann

Heather Gale

Kaye Leech

Louise Bewley

Mark Arnup

Mark Simmonds

Pauline Brown

Teresa Arnup

Over 5 years

John Rollinson

Kristin Ferguson



Lynette Don

Staff recruitment and retention

Council is committed to implementing innovative practices that attract, retain and develop the right people who have, or can develop, the necessary skills and attributes to ensure Council operates effectively and efficiently.

Onboarding and induction

Council ensures a smooth onboarding process is provided for new staff using a cloud-based system that supports people managers and guides new employees through every step of their onboarding journey in a modern and engaging way.

This all-inclusive system provides the new staff member with an overview of Council, its values, mission and vision, and introduces the staff member to the organisation and its people.

Importantly, this system is designed to be about the new staff member, their new role at Council and expectations of them as an employee. It provides them with an overview of the benefits of being part of Council and key links and resources to assist the staff member with settling into their new position.

Further, Council's Organisation Development team runs a bi-annual Corporate Induction Day where new staff learn more about how local government is structured and Loddon Shire Councillors. Staff also meet subject matter experts from all departments to better understand the wide range of services Council staff deliver for our community.

Staff retention initiatives

In 2023/24, the Organisation Development department proactively encouraged new staff to undertake Retention and Stay surveys. This process provides new staff the opportunity to provide feedback on their first impressions and worked experiences at Loddon Shire during their first three months. This information is vital in understanding what Loddon is doing well and where improvements can be made to retain high-performing staff.

A one-on-one approach for exit interviews was introduced in 2023/24 to increase the participation rate. The valuable information gained from exiting staff provides data and insights that can be analysed to pinpoint areas Council can focus on to reduce unwanted attrition.

Staff Health and Wellbeing Program

Council is committed to looking after the health and wellbeing of all staff.

Council's Health and Wellbeing Committee provides the foundation for developing activities and implementing initiatives that support the health and wellbeing of all employees.

These activities and initiatives include:

- Workplace-specific programs to address lifestyle, health, fitness and safety issues
- Proactively managing risk of illness
- Encouraging and allowing staff to maintain a positive work/life balance
- Actively promoting exercise, healthy eating and a smoke-free environment to improve or maintain staff members' personal wellbeing
- Providing targeted physical and mental health and wellbeing programs
- Ensuring all staff have access to the Employee Assistance Program and regularly promoting its services
- Providing relevant resources to staff pertaining to health and wellbeing via Council's dedicated intranet page

Programs offered to all staff in 2023/24 included:

- Active April activities
- STEPtember activities
- Flu vaccinations
- Healthy eating initiatives
- Hearing checks

Achievement Program

The Achievement Program is a Victorian Government initiative that aims to encourage healthier lifestyles and prevent lifestyle-related diseases. The program provides a framework for promoting health in the workplace. Council's Health and Wellbeing Committee organises regular activities for staff aligned with the goals of the program.

Employee Assistance Program

Council offers a free, confidential Employee Assistance Program giving all staff access to an extensive range of professional support services if they are experiencing difficulties in their personal or professional lives.

The service offers face-to-face counselling as well as appointments out of business hours.

Car pooling

The geographic location of Council often results in staff travelling long distances to work. To support the attraction and retention of skilled and appropriate staff, Council has a car pooling program for staff travelling to the main operational office.

Senior staff are rostered to drive their cars on specific days or in some instances are able to access a pool car to ride share. Staff meet at a central point and return to that point at the end of the day.

Enterprise Agreements

Council staff are employed under two Enterprise Agreements being:

- The *Loddon Shire Council Enterprise Agreement* has a nominal expiry date of 30 June 2025 and covers all employees of Council, excluding the Chief Executive Officer. Notice of intent to commence bargaining for a new agreement to replace the Council Enterprise Agreement No. 9 2022, will commence in January 2025.
- The *Early Education Employees Enterprise Agreement* has a nominal expiry date of 30 September 2024 and covers all early childhood teachers and educators employed with Council.

The agreement is negotiated with the Australian Education Union by the Municipal Association of Victoria on behalf of Council and other participating councils. The early stages of negotiations have commenced to make a new enterprise agreement to replace the *Early Education Employees Agreement 2020*.

Communicating with staff

Staff newsletter

The staff newsletter is circulated periodically, featuring content inspired by both the organisation and its employees. It showcases stories, events and milestones that encapsulate our experiences within the office and the broader community.

Six staff newsletters were circulated over the past 12 months.

Intranet

Council has an intranet site that is used to communicate information, store updated versions of all policies and procedures, and provide staff with access to the minutes of all internal committees. All staff have access to Council's intranet.

All-staff meetings

All-staff meetings are held bi-annually and provide the opportunity to inform staff about current events, showcase presentations from external groups, provide training, recognise staff achievements (both personal and professional) and allow for staff to ask questions of the Management Executive Group.

All-staff meetings were held in October 2023 and May 2024 at the Serpentine Hall.



Staff years of service recognition

The Staff Recognition of Service Policy provides for staff to receive a Certificate of Service for each five years of service, with a Certificate of Service and badge at each 10-year increment.

Staff who had reached service periods of 10 and 20 years were presented with Certificates of Recognition and a Service Badge, and staff who had reached service periods of five, 15 and 25 years were presented with Certificates of Recognition.

These awards were presented to each staff member in October 2023 and May 2024.

The staff who received recognition for their service were:

35-year certificate

Anthony Webb
Dale Stephenson

30-year certificate and badge

Dale Jackson

20-year certificate and badge

Brett Jackson
Ian Hargreaves
Janine Jackson
Jodie Lock

15-year certificate

Anne Hassell
Craig Williams
Glenn Wright
Ronald Kuno
Steven Phillips
Teresa Arnup
Tony Benaim
Trudi Van De Wetering

10-year certificate and badge

Brendan Pickles
Shane Gamble
William Moody

5-year certificate

Amber King
Bradley Haw
Carly McNaulty
Cody Wishart
David Patterson
David Southcombe
Michael King
Rosie Last
Russell Windridge



Clockwise from far left: Celebrating 35 years service - Anthony Webb and Dale Stephenson, 20 years - Ian Hargreaves and Janine Jackson, 15 years - Tony Benaim and Glenn Wright

Other staff matters

Equal employment opportunity program

Council is committed to providing an accessible and equitable environment for all employees. Council recognises that attracting people who bring unique characteristics, abilities and perspectives is a valuable strength that will create benefits for the organisation and the wider community.

Council's Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Policy demonstrates that Council has zero tolerance to any unlawful discrimination, both indirect and direct, on the basis of attributes and areas listed under both State and Federal anti-discrimination legislation and the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

Council regularly reviews its policies, procedures and practices to ensure equity and transparency for all staff.

Gender equality

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* requires defined entities such as Victorian councils to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality.

Council participated in the People Matter Survey in 2023 using these results to develop initiatives that will create an organisation where all employees have an equal lived experience, and where gender, disability and cultural background are not barriers in recruitment, promotion, learning, professional development and employment conditions.

Council submitted the first progress report to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector in February 2024. The actions from the first Gender Equality Action Plan continue to be implemented and Council are undertaking Gender Impact Assessments on identified policies, programs and services.

Professional development

Staff training and development program

Council recognises that its staff are the most vital component in achieving success for the Loddon community. An annual learning and development program is provided to enable continuous learning and career growth in line with individual aspirations while also equipping staff with the necessary skills they require to achieve the strategic priorities of Council.



Loddon Shire Council traineeships help to build capability of young people in the community

Our people

Individual needs and aspirations are identified through Staff Development Reviews and are aligned to Council's Capability Framework. Mandatory skills and qualification requirements are captured in Council's skills matrix and compliance modules are undertaken via the eLearning platform. Compliance modules include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Course
- Child Safe Standards
- Culture
- Disability Awareness
- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Fraud and Corruption Awareness
- Gender Course
- Human Rights and Responsibilities
- Information Privacy
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Workplace Bullying and Harassment

Study assistance is offered for staff undertaking relevant undergraduate or postgraduate studies. In the past year, three staff have accessed this program. The following staff graduated with qualifications during the year:

- Darcy Jackson - Bachelor of Urban Rural and Environmental Planning
- Belinda McKnight - Bachelor in Emergency Management

During the year, Council staff undertook training courses in the following areas:

Managing Risk

- Fraud and Corruption Awareness
- Construction Induction Refresher
- Conflict of Interest Awareness
- Health and Safety Representative Training

Health and Wellbeing

- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid
- Emergency First Aid Response in Education and Care Setting

Job effectiveness training

- Consultative Committee Member Training
- Emergency Management training
- Loddon Induction
- Introduction to Local Government

Leadership and personal effectiveness

- Positive Intelligence Workshop

Compliance training

- Traffic Management
- ChemCERT Training
- Chainsaw Training

Seminars and Conferences

- FinPro Conferences
- Taxation and Payroll

Return to work information

Council understands the positive impact returning to work post injury has on workers and actively supports injured workers to return to work by providing support such as:

- A dedicated Return to Work Coordinator
- Regular contact and support
- Collaboration in creating a graduated return to work plan
- Identifying alternative duties

Traineeships, work experience and placements

Council offers trainee pathways for students or any person looking to commence a career in local government.

During 2023/24 Council partnered with Central Victorian Group Training (CVGT) to engage three trainees in a Certificate III in Business while four trainees commenced a Certificate III in Early Childhood.

Council supports work experience opportunities for students interested in learning about the diversity of Council activities.



In 2023/24 Council hosted the following work experience students:

- Hamish Draper – Assets and GIS
- Aaron Thomas – Townscape Services
- Jamie Turner – Mechanic
- Lauren Gawne – Boort Pre-school
- Ben Jardine – Community and Recreation
- Ella Maxted – Boort Pre-school

Council also supports students under school-based apprenticeship programs. This program provides an extended learning environment in the workplace while students remain at school.

Council hosted one tertiary student in 2023/24, undertaking placement in the Maternal and Child Health team. Council continues to look for opportunities to partner with universities for work placement.

North Central LLEN - Youth Take Over Program

Youth Take Over addresses challenges young people face entering the workforce after leaving school in the Loddon Campaspe region.

Take Overs include short, facilitated initiatives in which a group of 10 young people work on a project that leads the 'take over' of a workplace.

In partnership with North Central LLEN and East Loddon P-12 College, Council gained the assistance of students studying the VCE Vocational Major to assist in the development of a recruitment video to assist Council in attracting young people to join Council.

The students leave the program with industry knowledge and contacts, references for their resume and the skills and confidence to launch their career.

Staff values workshop

Over the past 12 months, Council staff have been given the opportunity to provide input into the formation of a new set of organisational values, which will be embedded into the way all staff operate as a team.

A series of workshops were conducted and a survey was provided for staff to share their ideas and suggestions to support the introduction of the new values. By conducting workshops and providing surveys, Council has created a platform for open communication and input from all levels of the organisation. This inclusive approach not only encourages participation, but promotes transparency and accountability in the values formation process.

The following values and their supporting statements have been implemented:

- **We Respect** – We practice respect
- **We Communicate** – We communicate openly and honestly
- **We Collaborate** – We leverage the strengths of others
- **We Innovate** – We adapt and innovate to ensure success
- **We Deliver** – We deliver positive outcomes for our community

Council's initiative to review and redefine its values demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and organisational growth. By involving the entire workforce in this project, Council is fostering a culture of engagement, innovation and shared responsibility.

Volunteers

Council recognises that volunteers are the backbone behind its communities. Volunteers of Council include Community Asset Committee volunteers and Visitor Information Centre volunteers. These volunteers collectively create invaluable benefit to Council and make a positive impact in the community.

Council has a Volunteer Strategy that captures its vision and approach to supporting and growing community volunteering across the Shire.

The strategy includes four strategic directions:

- Promote and Recruit
- Quality and Culture
- Recognise, Celebrate and Value
- Support and Develop

The high-level strategic direction allows for implementation to be achievable within existing resources.

In 2023/24 Council undertook the following initiatives in accordance with those strategic directions:

- Collaborated with Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre for training opportunities.
- Continued to develop resources on a dedicated Council Volunteer web page.
- Commenced a recognition of service campaign during National Volunteers Week.



Cr Murphy and Campbells Forest Hall Community Asset Committee members with volunteer certificates

Our performance



Integrated strategic planning and reporting framework

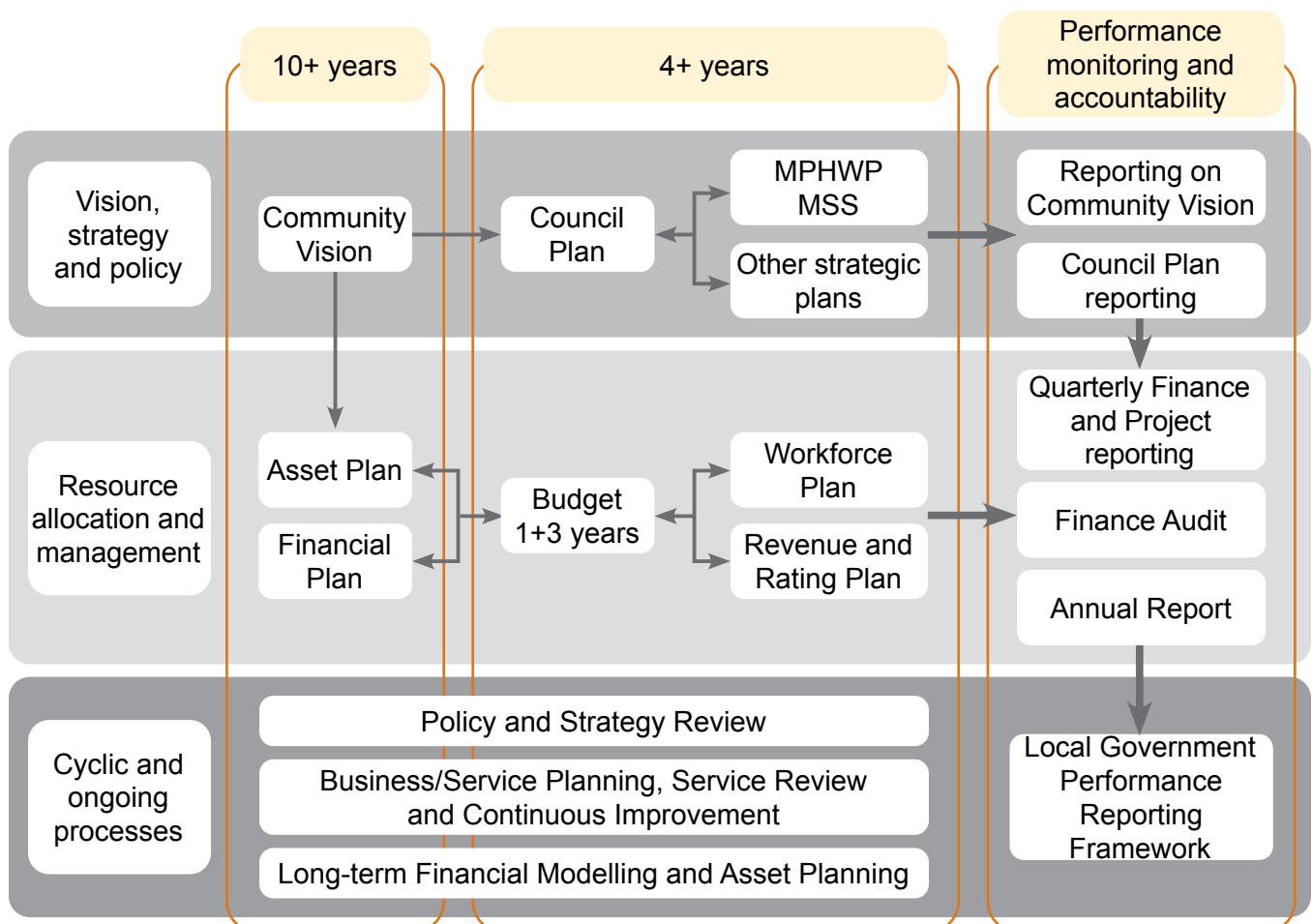
Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires councils to prepare the following:

- a Community Vision (for at least the next 10 financial years)
- a Council Plan (for at least the next four financial years)
- a Financial Plan (for at least the next 10 financial years)
- an Asset Plan (for at least the next 10 financial years)
- a Revenue and Rating Plan (for at least the next four financial years)
- an Annual Budget (for the next four financial years)

- a Quarterly Budget Report
- an Annual Report (for each financial year)
- financial Policies.

The Act also requires councils to prepare a Workforce Plan (including projected staffing requirements for at least four years).

The following diagram shows the relationships between the key planning and reporting documents that make up the integrated strategic planning and reporting framework for local government.



Council Plan

The Council Plan 2021-2025 includes strategic objectives, strategies for achieving these objectives for the four-year period, strategic indicators for monitoring achievement of the strategic objectives and a Strategic Resource Plan.

The following are Council's four strategic themes, with their strategic objectives as listed in the Council Plan:

Council Plan 2021-2025



A sustainable
built and natural
environment



A growing and
vibrant community



A diverse and
expanding economy



A supported and
accessible community

Performance against the Council Plan 2021-2025

Over the following pages, Council's performance for the 2023/24 year has been reported against each strategic objective to demonstrate how Council is performing in achieving the Council Plan 2021-2025. Performance has been measured as follows:

- progress against key actions
- results achieved in relation to the strategic indicators in the Council Plan
- progress in relation to the major initiatives identified in the budget
- services funded in the budget and the persons or sections of the community who are provided those services
- results against the prescribed service performance indicators and measures.



A sustainable built and natural environment

Services:

These Council services have directly contributed to being able to meet the following Council Plan objectives:

- We will implement financially and environmentally sustainable infrastructure that supports our social and economic needs
- We will work with our partners to preserve and protect our local environment. We will support our community to respond to the impacts of climate change.

Service	Description
Building surveyor	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: building permit and occupancy approvals and administering the <i>Building Act 1993</i> .
Community planning	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: support in building Loddon communities through facilitation, logistical and financial means to improve the aesthetic of communities and develop key community assets; supporting communities to identify their strengths and opportunities; facilitating novel approaches and solutions to local issues.
Infrastructure management	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: long-term asset management planning for roads, buildings, recreational facilities, pools, parks, waste facilities and bridges; development and delivery of annual infrastructure projects and programs; contract administration, survey and design; digital mapping.
Town planning	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: planning permit and subdivision approvals; planning scheme compliance and enforcement; changes to the planning scheme; protection of significant heritage, cultural and environmental assets within the Shire.



Llanelly Public Hall








Scar Tree tours, Boort










Performance against the Council Plan 2021-2025

A sustainable built and natural environment

Finalise asset management plans and long-term strategies for Council assets

Comments	Status
Review and implement the Road Asset Management Plan	
The Asset Management Plan for roads was completed and adopted at the March 2022 Council meeting. Council is operating in accordance with the new plan and the improvement projects in the plan will be delivered as resources permit.	 Completed
Review and implement the Bridges Asset Management Plan	
The Asset Management Plan for bridges was completed and adopted at the February 2022 Council meeting. Council is operating in accordance with the new plan and the improvement projects in the plan will be delivered as resources permit.	 Completed
Review and implement the Footpaths Asset Management Plan	
The Asset Management Plan for footpaths was completed and adopted at the November 2021 Council meeting. Council is operating in accordance with the new plan. The improvement projects in the plan will be delivered as per the schedule.	 Completed
Develop and implement the Tracks and Trails Asset Management Plan	
This project has not commenced.	 Not due to start
Develop and implement an Urban Drainage Asset Management Plan	
The Asset Management Plan for urban drainage was completed and adopted at the February 2022 Council meeting. Council is operating in accordance with the new plan. The improvement projects in the plan will be delivered as resources permit.	 Completed




Finalise asset management plans and long term strategies for Council assets (continued)

Comments	Status
<p>Develop and implement a Recreational Leisure and Community Facilities Asset Management Plan</p> <p>The Asset Management Plan for recreational leisure and community facilities was completed and adopted at the January 2022 Council meeting. Council is operating in accordance with the new plan. The improvement projects in the plan will be delivered as resources permit.</p>	 Completed
<p>Review and implement the Parks, Open Space and Streetscapes Asset Management Plan</p> <p>The Asset Management Plan for parks, streetscape and open spaces was completed and adopted at the January 2022 Council meeting. Council is operating in accordance with the new plan. The improvement projects in the plan will be delivered as resources permit.</p>	 Completed
<p>Develop and implement an Asset Plan that has been informed by the completed asset management plans</p> <p>The Asset Plan was completed and adopted at the June 2022 Council meeting. Council is operating in accordance with the new plan. The improvement projects in the plan will be delivered as resources permit.</p>	 Completed
<p>Develop and implement a Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic Strategy</p> <p>The final draft Recreation, Open Space and Recreation Strategy is completed. Expected to go to Council in August 2024 to place on public display for community feedback.</p>	 Progressing
<h3>Embed long-term planning into project management framework</h3>	
<p>Develop and implement a register which documents all projects from concept through to delivery and post project evaluation to provide information about timing of projects that can be incorporated into grant applications and the Financial Plan</p> <p>Process has started on this project with the development of a template that is to be used by all necessary parties to capture all income sources for a project, expected timing of receipt or progress reports along with expected delivery timeframes for the expenditure of the project. Testing has commenced with some of the minor grants by the Senior Accountant but has been put on hold currently with flood reporting still taking precedence along with new system implementation. These forms still need have input sourced from other key user groups.</p>	 Progressing
<p>Review and implement Project Management Framework to embed project register model including assessment matrices used to identify priority projects</p> <p>The Project Management Framework has been developed and reviewed by Council's internal leadership group. Minor modification will be made in early 2024/25.</p>	 Progressing
<p>Incorporate assessment of alternative energy and innovative design in planning for, or repurposing, Council facilities and infrastructure</p> <p>This project has not commenced.</p>	 Not due to start



Embed long-term planning into project management framework (continued)

Comments	Status
Provide resources for the development and delivery of projects through the Project Management Framework	
Resources were reallocated between the Assets and Infrastructure and Community Partnerships departments which allowed the creation of the Major Project Program Manager position. This officer has been working on and delivering Council projects in accordance with the Project Management Framework.	 Completed
Work with communities to understand their strategic projects for consideration in long-term planning	
Council has continued to support community planning committees to be recognised by Council, develop community plans and submit projects for assessment. Ongoing consultation with the community planning committees and relevant community organisations, identifies areas for improvement at their respective facilities.	 Ongoing

Complete funded major infrastructure projects in the planning phase

Comments	Status
Construct Pyramid Hill Community Centre Stage 1	
The construction of the Pyramid Hill Community Centre Stage 1 has commenced with works due to be completed in 2024/25.	 Progressing
Construct Donaldson Park Community Hub	
Construction of the Donaldson Park Community Hub is complete.	 Completed
Deliver Pyramid Hill Streetscape Revitalisation Project	
Construction of the Pyramid Hill Streetscape Revitalisation Project is in progress and will be completed in Quarter One 2024/25.	 Progressing
Deliver the Lake Boort Sporting Precinct Project	
A masterplan has been developed for the Little Lake Boort Sporting Precinct Project. Council officers will continue to progress this project through to detailed design and eventually delivery during 2024/25.	 Progressing




Ensure Council assets are accessible

Comments	Status
Review and implement actions in Access and Inclusion Plan	
Loddon Shire Council is developing an Inclusive Communities Plan. The Plan will include recommendations and actions to help Loddon Shire be a more inclusive place. There are many diverse communities within Loddon Shire, with people of different ages, genders, cultural backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientations and religious beliefs. We're planning for inclusive communities so that everyone in our Shire feels safe, valued, respected and supported. Inclusive communities enable everyone to access the information, opportunities, services and support that they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.	 Progressing
Ensure new infrastructure projects consider opportunities to improve accessibility and convenience for all ages, abilities and stages of life	
All new infrastructure projects are developed with the assistance of the 'Design for Everyone Guide' which assists in the planning, design and development of inclusive sport and recreation facilities.	 Ongoing





Soldiers Memorial Park, Wedderburn




Ensure community facility use is maximised

Comments	Status
Work with community facility managers to identify new ways of expanding use of their facilities such as co-location opportunities	
Facility managers have been involved in the development of the draft Recreation, Open Space and Aquatic (ROSA) Strategy with actions likely to come out of both the Social Infrastructure Strategy and ROSA Strategy once adopted in the next financial year.	 Ongoing
Undertake an audit of current masterplans for all community facilities to identify any gaps	
Council officers have reviewed the master plan requirements, identifying that Mitchell Park (Pyramid Hill), Mitiamo Recreation Reserve, Inglewood Recreation Precinct and Calivil Recreation Reserve required masterplans as priorities.	 Completed
Prepare business cases to develop masterplans for community facilities without a plan	
A budget bid was submitted as part of the 2023/24 Council budget process to develop a current masterplan at Mitchell Park (Pyramid Hill), Mitiamo Recreation Reserve and Calivil Recreation Reserve. Council officers will continue to seek funding opportunities to support the development of these plans.	 Completed
Implement masterplans developed for various community facilities	
The development of the Inglewood Sports Centre Masterplan has continued and is expected to be finalised in Quarter One of 2024/25.	 Progressing
The Community Wellbeing Directorate continues to support and work closely with Council's Community Asset Committees to manage facilities and present them in a safe and accessible manner to the community for organised and passive use.	

Participate with regional groups to implement environmental priorities

Comments	Status
Partner with Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance to support the community to take advantage of opportunities around renewable energy	
Council continues to collaborate with the CVGA to support the community to take advantage of opportunities around renewable energy.	 Ongoing
Implement the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan items related to mitigating the impacts of climate change on health and wellbeing	
Key projects and programs include Council administering the Vulnerable Persons Register; implementing shade options during the Donaldson Park and Pyramid Hill Streetscape projects; continued provision of a range of community capacity and resilience building initiatives related to emergency event recovery delivered through the Community Recovery Officer and Flood Recovery Hub Program; and facilitation of the Municipal Flood Recovery Committee and the Flood Recovery Health and Wellbeing Committee.	 Progressing



Participate with regional groups to maximise opportunities to support biodiversity and habitat

Comments	Status
Partner with North Central Catchment Management Authority to implement the priorities in the North Central Catchment Partnership Agreement to protect and improve land, water and biodiversity	
Council staff attended and participated in partnership meetings. Over the last year Loddon has also worked with North Central Catchment Management Authority to complete a flood study in Korong Vale.	 Ongoing
Participate in the Integrated Water Management Forum for the region	
Loddon representatives have attended forum meetings as required.	 Ongoing
Advocate for funding for weed management programs to support the natural environment	
Council staff continue to work with Department of Government Services to deliver the Roadside Weeds and Pests Program and have been successful in advocating for a \$10,000 increase to the funding program over the last 12 months. In 2023/24 Council engaged a contractor to conduct a roadside weed audit across the Shire. This involved the identification and mapping of regionally-controlled and restricted weeds and pests, resulting in 370,511 weeds being identified in 10,555 locations.	 Ongoing
Following feedback from the community and the efforts of other government agencies, Landcare and private property groups aiming at target species, contractors were engaged to treat Prickly Pear and Wheel Cactus. This has resulted in the treatment of approximately 21,109 cactus in 748 locations.	




Deliver effective waste management

Comments	Status
Deliver actions in Council's Waste Management Strategy 2020-2030	
Council staff continue to deliver actions from Council's Waste Management Strategy 2020-2030 including the continuation of waste vouchers, hard waste collection, bin audits and the development of landfill masterplans.	 Ongoing
Actively participate in the regional waste and recycling management group	
Council staff continue to participate in regional group workshops and meetings.	 Ongoing




Deliver effective waste management (continued)

Comments	Status
Investigate and implement where practical, the use of recycled or reclaimed products for Council's operations	
When practical, Council continues to purchase and install recycled and reclaimed products throughout the Shire.	 Ongoing
Promote the three Rs – "Reuse, Reduce, Recycle" to the community	
Council staff continue to work with Recycling Victoria which provides leadership and oversight of waste and resource recovery services to support the circular economy.	 Ongoing

Prepare for adverse weather events

Comments	Status
Advocate for funding for the continuation of the Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program (MERP)	
Council advocacy continued during 2023/24 culminating in an announcement of a further four years of funding for the MERP program for 2025-2028.	 Completed
Participate in the Northern Victorian Integrated Emergency Management Planning Committee	
Director Community Wellbeing and Emergency Management Coordinator attend the Northern Victorian Integrated Emergency Management Planning Committee (NVIEMPC) meetings and undertake associated strategic and operational tasks, including review of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.	 Progressing
Develop a process for capturing infrastructure information to facilitate applications for grant funding from National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements	
Council officers undertook a trial of photographing all of Council's gravel roads in 2023/24. The findings from this trial will be used as part of developing a process to capture infrastructure information.	 Progressing

Implement infrastructure to protect towns

Comments	Status
Complete delivery of flood mitigation works in Boort	
The design for the levee is complete and on-ground works have started. The project will be completed during 2024/25.	 Progressing
Complete delivery of flood mitigation works in Pyramid Hill	
Construction of the levee is in progress with works to be completed in 2024/25.	 Progressing
Source funding to deliver flood mitigation works in Serpentine	
Council officers will progress this project to detailed design and source funding once the Pyramid Hill and Boort flood levee projects are completed.	 Not due to start



A growing and vibrant community

Services:

These Council services have directly contributed to being able to meet the following Council Plan objectives:

- We will promote population growth to support a growing and diverse community
- We will support a connected and inclusive community that provides opportunities for current and new community members at all ages, abilities, and stages of their life
- We will support our youth to access pathways for education and employment and the ability to connect to their community.


Service	Description
Community grants scheme	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: administration of various community grants.
Environmental health	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: septic tank and waste water management approvals; food safety inspections and certification; monitoring of tobacco and alcohol sales; compliance with the <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</i> and <i>Environment Protection Act 2017</i> and their enforcement.
Libraries	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: in collaboration with Goldfields Library Corporation, provide a wide range of relevant, contemporary library collections and services in library agencies and online; provide community spaces for individual and group study, reflection, activity and discovery; provide family, children and adult library programs and activities.
Local Laws	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: stock and domestic animal management permits; management of unsightly premises; roadside bushfire management works; local laws enforcement and compliance.
Loddon Healthy Minds Network	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: involvement in meetings and activities designed to boost mental health awareness and personal support for residents of Loddon Shire.
Recreation	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: financial and administrative support to sporting clubs; management of Council's swimming pools; applications for government grants; assistance with long-term strategies for recreation facilities.
Youth support	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: financial support for youth-related initiatives and long-term planning for youth development and retention.




Performance against the Council Plan 2021-2025

A growing and vibrant community



Pursue development opportunities

Comments	Status
Implement remaining actions in Settlement Strategy	
Unlocking Loddon's Growth Potential project, led by Loddon Shire's Strategic Planning department, will report on residential development viability across key towns, identify the most viable opportunities, prioritise projects to enhance viability and determine other initiatives to encourage availability of this land.	 Progressing
Work with the community to lobby government to provide reticulated sewerage and water for Newbridge.	
Advocating for water and sewerage is ongoing as opportunities arise.	 Progressing
Undertake detailed assessment and costing of Wedderburn Housing Estate Stage 2	
A detailed assessment and costing of Wedderburn Ridge Street Stage 2 has been completed.	 Completed




Promote our Shire as a great place to live

Comments	Status
In conjunction with regional partners, investigate opportunities to increase residential housing stock.	
Council has worked with a consultant to commence a project to provide a clear, action-oriented roadmap for Loddon Shire to accelerate the planning and development of high-value residential development within the Shire – driving investment, economic growth and community benefit.	 Progressing



Promote our Shire as a great place to live (continued)

Comments	Status
As opportunities arise, work with local partners, including employers and real estate, to develop a coordinated approach to marketing the municipality for new residents	
Preparations underway for a new residents' information pack in the lead up to a Housing and Living Showcase event in November 2024.	 Progressing
Deliver marketing campaigns and media content that attract new residents and clearly positions Loddon Shire as a great place to live and work	
A promotional plan and digital assets, have been developed to promote Loddon Shire. Preparing for future investment in the 'Loddon' brand to better detail the positive amenity and opportunity that living in Loddon Shire provides.	 Progressing

Support Community Asset Committees

Comments	Status
Allocate a Council resource as the key contact for Community Asset Committees	
Manager Governance and Administration Officer Governance are available to assist and support Community Asset Committee volunteers.	 Completed
Implement a governance framework for Community Asset Committees that is manageable for our volunteers	
CEO sub-delegations and Loddon's Community Asset Committee (CAC) Policy cover responsibilities assigned to these Committees. A CAC Volunteer Handbook is being developed to which Conduct Standards will be incorporated over the next 12-month period.	 Progressing
Provide support documentation to the Community Asset Committees to help them understand their responsibilities to Council	
A Community Asset Committee Volunteer Handbook is being developed to which Conduct Standards will be incorporated over the next 12-month period. Council officers also assist Committees with any enquiries they may have about their responsibilities.	 Ongoing

Support volunteers

Comments	Status
Deliver the Re-Engaging Volunteers in Rural Towns Projects	
The Re-engaging Volunteers in Rural Towns Project was completed and acquitted in July 2022.	 Completed
Facilitate an event to celebrate our volunteers annually during National Volunteer Week	
To celebrate National Volunteers Week, Council prepared recognition of service badges for volunteers of Council with five or more years of service. These badges will be distributed to volunteers by Council representatives at the annual committee meetings.	 Completed





Cr Jungwirth and Council staff alumni, Kerry Hanrahan, at LEAD Loddon Murray Graduation, November 2023


Support community groups

Comments	Status
<p>Provide in-kind and financial support to community planning groups</p> <p>Throughout 2023/24, Council provided \$19,414 in financial support to community planning groups, through the Community Support Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development, Progress, Tourism and Community Plan Committee Administration Allocation. • Community planning committees were supported by Council's Community Development Officer. 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Provide financial support to community groups through our policies and programs.</p> <p>Throughout 2023/24, Council provided the following financial support to community groups, through the Community Support Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Grants Program - \$128,656 • Public Halls and Recreation Reserves Allocation - \$123,636 • Event Promotion Scheme - \$21,800 • Major Active Recreation Reserves Water Subsidy - \$16,069 • Community Newsletter Allocation - \$17,000 • Major Recreation Reserve Oval Mower Replacement Program - \$35,000 • Development, Progress, Tourism and Community Plan Committee Administration Allocation - \$19,414 <p>Council also provides support through the following as of right allocations: recreation waterway maintenance allocation, scholarships, LEAD Loddon Murray leadership program, sponsorships and donations, and Australia Day events. Council also provides access to interest-free loans and sport and recreation co-contribution grants.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Promote community safety

Comments	Status
Work with Victoria Police to identify ways to promote community safety	
A member of the Community Wellbeing Directorate attends quarterly Municipal Emergency Management meetings. These meetings are attended by a Victoria Police representative. Council is a member of the Loddon Local Safety Committee facilitated by Victoria Police.	 Ongoing
Review the Child Safe Standards Framework	
Council have a Child Safe Standards Statement of Commitment that is enacted through the implementation and monitoring of Council’s Child Safe Standards Policy and Child Safe Standards Framework as specified under the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment Act 2015</i> that incorporates the amendments made to the Child Safe Standards as at 1 January 2023.	 Completed




Promote a welcoming and inclusive environment for all

Comments	Status
Promote reconciliation through respect, relationship building and promotion of opportunities with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the review and implementation of the Community Aboriginal Partnership Plan	
Council’s Inclusive Communities Officer is an active member of the Central Victorian Local Government Reconciliation Network (CVLGRN). Loddon Shire Council continues to work toward reconciliation. The review of the Community Aboriginal Partnership Plan will occur in the 2024/25 financial year. Council continues to deliver components of the plan, such as flying of the Aboriginal flag during Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, providing funding for community groups to host a Welcome to Country, conducting of an Acknowledgement of Country at public meetings and gatherings, and hosting NAIDOC Week activities in Inglewood, Kooyoora and through library agencies.	 Ongoing






Cr Holt and Cr Straub celebrating our volunteers at the Engine Park and Market Square Community Asset Committee AGM

Promote a welcoming and inclusive environment for all (continued)


Comments	Status
Participate with the Loddon Campaspe Local Government Regional Settlement Network which provides a strategic platform to ensure migrants are supported within, attracted to and retained in the region	
Council has an Inclusive Communities Officer available to engage with the Loddon Campaspe Local Government Regional Settlement Network when they have programs being delivered in the Loddon area. There has been no engagement during 2023/24.	 Ongoing
Promote local events on social media and other media to ensure all members of the community are informed and have the opportunity to connect	
Council is proactive in promoting local events on the Loddon Shire website, social media, via media releases, advertisements in local media and through the Visit Loddon Valley Facebook pages. Council has provided a regular Flood Recovery Bulletin promoting community events.	 Ongoing
Deliver official citizenship ceremonies to welcome and celebrate new Australian citizens in our community	
Five citizenship ceremonies have been held over the course of the year.	 Ongoing

Improve local learning and employment pathway opportunities through strategic partnerships



Comments	Status
Partner with schools to promote the work experience program	
In 2023/24 six work experience students were engaged at Council in a variety of roles including parks and gardens, mechanics, early childhood education, recreation and assets. These students were supported from a number of schools across the Shire. Council will continue to connect with schools to provide these opportunities through the work experience and vocational education pathways.	 Progressing
Partner with and support organisations to provide employment opportunities for young people in the Shire	
In 2023/24 Council allocated budget to support three traineeships across Council. Council has partnered with Central Victoria Group Training (CVGT) to support the recruitment of our trainees. The three trainees are undertaking a Certificate III in Business and are relating their studies to the directorate they are working in with Council. Collaboration with the North Central LLEN has continued to support the "Youth Take Over" project due to conclude in August 2024. This partnership supports our youth to be aware of local employment pathways within Council.	 Progressing
Support young people to join our workforce by providing programs in our Workforce Strategy	
In 2023/24 Council allocated budget to support seven traineeships across Council. Council has partnered with Central Victoria Group Training (CVGT) to support the recruitment of our trainees. Three trainees are undertaking a Certificate III in Business and four trainees are undertaking a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education. The trainees are applying their studies within the respective Council directorates where they are employed. Collaboration with the North Central LLEN has continued to support the "Youth Take Over" project due to conclude in August 2024. This partnership supports our youth to be aware of local employment pathways within Council.	 Progressing



Improve local learning and employment pathway opportunities through strategic partnerships (continued)

Comments	Status
Maintain Councillor representation on the North Central Local Learning and Employment Network board to support pathways for employment opportunities and skill investment of our young people.	
Collaboration with the North Central LLEN is continuing to explore the possibility of supporting young people who are not in school, or who are in school and might like to participate in an activity outside of school hours (or possibly after they finish school in November). This initiative is part of the “Youth Take Over” project which is due to be completed in August 2024. Cr Dan Straub is the Council Representative and Chairman of the North Central LLEN board, his involvement includes Finance and Risk Committee member and L2P Program mentor.	 Progressing

Develop connections for our young people

Comments	Status
Finalise the Strong Youth Strong Communities Program model	
The Strong Youth Strong Communities Program model has been completed. The municipalities involved are working with North Central LLEN and other partners to progress implementation of the model.	 Completed
Work with other youth funded agencies to provide youth services and programs in the Shire	
Council works closely with local youth funded agencies including Northern District Community Health and the North Central LLEN through partnerships such as Strong Youth Strong Communities and the Buloke Loddon Gannawarra Health and Wellbeing Executive Network. Council provides in-kind support through use of office space/ meeting rooms and promotes events being undertaken by youth agencies. Council has facilitated a number of youth focused flood recovery events in conjunction with the North Central LLEN.	 Ongoing



A diverse and expanding economy

Services:

These Council services have directly contributed to being able to meet the following Council Plan objectives:

- We will promote our unique tourism opportunities and support our local tourism industry to increase visitation to our area
- We will support established businesses and seek to attract new businesses to grow our local economy.

Service	Description
Economic development	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: support to new and existing businesses through direct facilitation; development of networking opportunities; provision of information; leadership development; promotion and marketing of opportunities within the Shire; referral to internal and external agencies to encourage access to Shire, State and Federal development programs.
Industrial development	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: support to industry with access to infrastructure in developed and zoned industrial land which is appropriately located and priced to encourage the sustainable growth of industry.
Loddon Discovery Tours	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: assistance to the Loddon tourism industry; public speaking; marketing; promotion and booking of group tours; program delivery to improve customer service and business development; financial support for promotion.
Tourism development	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: services, including facilitation of strategic projects; assistance to small business; development of marketing and promotional material; assistance with advertising; direct financial support of key projects; provision and maintenance of tourism promotional signage; advice to new and existing tourism businesses; developing tourism linkages between regional communities and key tourism bodies such as Tourism Victoria, Tourism Alliance, Goldfields Committee and Bendigo Tourism; administrative support to the Loddon Visitor Information Centre.



Lexus Melbourne Cup trophy visits Boort, October 2023





Performance against the Council Plan 2021-2025

A diverse and expanding economy





Leverage tourism opportunities

Comments	Status
Undertake a review of visitor information services and implement any recommendation from the review Visitor Servicing Review completed August 2023. Actions and recommendations now embedded in work plans of relevant officers.	 Completed
Support local businesses, events and activities that contribute to the tourism economy Council has rolled out business workshops, networking events, projects and events to support local communities and tourism businesses; supported existing community-led events such as Inglewood Alive, Wedderburn Detector Jamboree and the Australian Masters Waterski Championships; attracted, established and supported Flavours of Loddon and the Loddon Valley Arts Trail.	 Ongoing
Support Loddon communities in their efforts to facilitate tourism activities in their areas Progress in this area has included digital mentorship programs and workshops to build industry capability; provision of broad support to local tourism groups, business and volunteers to develop product and experience; visitor servicing, event planning and delivery.	 Ongoing


Leverage tourism opportunities (continued)

Comments	Status
Promote and support tourism products and experiences for Loddon, including cultural, food and nature tourism	
Loddon's Tourism team plans and delivers seasonal promotional campaigns that showcase products, events and experiences across the Loddon Shire. The Loddon Valley Arts Trail and the Flavours of Loddon Series are two of many community, tourism and cultural events that attract visitors from across the Loddon Valley, the Bendigo region and beyond.	 Progressing
Participate in the Central Victorian Goldfields World Heritage Bid	
Manager contributes to project team and advocates for Loddon Shire tourism industry and broad economic benefit. Project team provides regular updates to Council, including presentation to Council forum in 2024.	 Ongoing


Enhance Loddon's visitor accommodation through well-managed, well-appointed and competitive caravan parks

Comments	Status
Implement upgrades to Boort, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn caravan parks	
Amenities, lighting and some road works completed in 2021. Cabins and office in Wedderburn installed in 2023. Boort power is in the process of being upgraded, sewerage upgrades to be programmed.	 Completed
Complete purchase of Bridgewater and Wedderburn caravan parks from the Crown	
The purchase from the Crown of the Bridgewater and Wedderburn caravan parks has been completed.	 Completed
Implement leasing arrangements for Bridgewater and Wedderburn caravan parks	
Bridgewater and Wedderburn caravan parks were leased in 2023.	 Completed
Deliver ongoing supervision, support and maintenance or operations at Council's caravan parks	
Council owns the Bridgewater, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn caravan parks, and is the Committee of Management for the Boort Caravan Park. The Boort, Bridgewater and Wedderburn caravan parks have formal leases in place. The Pyramid Hill Caravan Park has a manager appointed, with the park operated under the obligations of a Management Agreement. Ongoing supervision, support and maintenance is undertaken in line with operational requirements for each park.	 Ongoing



Implement strategic plans related to tourism activities

Comments	Status
Develop Boort Scarred Trees Masterplan and pursue opportunities for responsible parties to implement recommendations	
Masterplan completed May 2022. Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation continues to develop plans for the advancement of First Nations cultural tourism in the Boort area.	 Progressing

Implement strategic plans related to tourism activities (continued)

Comments	Status
Pursue opportunities to implement recommendations from Skinners Flat Reservoir Masterplan	
Further action on masterplan awaiting resolution of structural improvements for Skinners Flat Reservoir, now in the project pipeline.	 Progressing



Leverage partnership opportunities to promote and support the local economy

Comments	Status
Collaborate with regional economic development and tourism development organisations to capitalise on broader opportunities	
Membership of regional State Government and Council-grouped entities to support regional economic development. Membership of Bendigo Regional Tourism Board and Visitor Economy Partnership working group.	 Ongoing
In recognition of economic reliance on agriculture, advocate for water security (Murray Darling Basin Authority environmental water, potable water for townships) and right to farm	
Advocacy for water security led by CEO and Council through Membership of Murray River Group of Councils. Water security and advocacy for protection of agriculture is considered and incorporated in the Loddon Shire Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029.	 Completed

Maximise opportunities for economic growth

Comments	Status
Implement the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2019-2024 and develop a new strategy for beyond 2024	
Implementation of 90% actions and activities from the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2019-2024 has been completed. New Loddon Shire Economic Development Strategy and new Visitor Economy Strategy projects have commenced and will be completed before the end of 2024.	 Progressing
Develop and implement an Industrial Land Strategy	
Extending the work of the Loddon Shire Industrial Land Discussion Paper, a Strategy is planned to be developed after adoption of the Loddon Shire Economic Development Strategy (2025-2029) in early 2025.	 Progressing
Manage sale, purchase and leasing of Council's vacant land, residential and industrial property	
Council's property stock is reviewed on an ongoing basis, to consider the need to purchase or dispose of properties to best serve the community. Consideration is taken into if the land/building does not or will not support, facilitate or contribute to current or future service delivery outcomes.	 Ongoing
Support initiatives to improve employment opportunities for Loddon residents and employers	
Officers collaborated with Workforce Australia to deliver a 'Coffee with the Boss' event in Bridgewater, and have attracted funding to deliver a major, region-wide employment expo for Pyramid Hill in 2024/25.	 Progressing
Facilitate emerging niche food and beverages businesses into an integrated artisan food network	
Eight local businesses have been connected through involvement in the Flavours Of Loddon event initiative, which is expected to expand in 2024/25.	 Ongoing

Maximise opportunities for economic growth (continued)

Comments	Status
Continue to support the management of The Loddon Shed and promotion of this initiative	
The Loddon Shed is currently closed while preparations are underway to reopen with new products in 2025.	 Completed
Work with regional partners to advocate for faster and more stable mobile and digital connectivity across the region	
Have supported Telstra's communications plans to inform local business and community of the pending closure of the 3G Network.	 Ongoing

Provide support to current and future local businesses

Comments	Status
Deliver information, programs, workshops and training that support our local business capacity and capability	
Providing regular information to businesses across all sectors via electronic newsletters, direct mail and local media. Completed business and retail workshops in Inglewood and Wedderburn, as well as tourism business networking events in Inglewood, Pyramid Hill and Boort.	 Progressing
Provide supportive services for new, existing and expanding businesses, including staff "facilitators" for investors, partnering with businesses as opportunities arise, and investigating business support packages for businesses	
Facilitation of connection between key businesses and employers in Loddon Shire is ongoing. This action has been updated and incorporated into the Loddon Shire Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029.	 Ongoing





Pyramid Hill streetscape project under construction



A supported and accessible community

Services:

These Council services have directly contributed to being able to meet the following Council Plan objectives:

- We will deliver our core services and advocate for access to other services for our community
- We will listen to our community about how they wish to communicate with us and implement effective communication methods to achieve this. We will provide our community with opportunities to engage with us.

Service	Description
Access programs	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: disability access to improve accessibility in and around the Shire.
Aged Care	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: positive ageing, senior citizens' centres, elderly persons' units and planned activity groups.



A supported and accessible community

Service	Description
Communication	Provision of the following to support Council's direct service delivery areas: enhancing and protecting the Council's reputation; developing communication plans for key initiatives linked to the Council Plan; delivering advocacy campaigns in collaboration with the responsible officer/Councillor.
Council administration	Provision of the following to support Council's direct service delivery areas: customer service and administrative support, records management, municipal building and equipment provision.
Council committees	Provision of the following to support Council's direct service delivery areas: administrative support for Section 65 Community Asset Committees in managing compliance with the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .
Early years	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: maternal and child health, immunisations and cluster management of kindergartens.
Environmental management	Provision of the following to the municipal community as a whole: weed management on Council property and development and implementation of Loddon's response to climate change.
Financial management	Provision of the following to support Council's direct service delivery areas: preparation and management of the Council budget; preparation of financial statements and government statistical returns; collection of various revenue sources; payment of employees and suppliers.
Governance	Provision of the following to support Council's direct service delivery areas: Council, Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer and the Management Executive Group, and administrative support; administering the conduct of Council meetings and elections; managing Freedom of Information, information privacy; protected disclosures and internal ombudsman functions; maintaining statutory registers; authorisations and delegations; coordinating civic events and citizenship ceremonies; administering the risk management framework.







RUOK? Day, Inglewood






Performance against the Council Plan 2021-2025

A supported and accessible community




Support and advocate for services that provide every child with the opportunities to have the best start in life

Comments	Status
<p>Advocate for the options identified in the Childcare Feasibility Study</p> <p>Council has identified childcare as its highest priority in its priorities document. Council continues to advocate Loddon's position as a childcare desert at all suitable opportunities. The location of the State Government operated childcare centre has been announced for Wedderburn and will be operational in 2026.</p> <p>Council participated in a representation from agencies and parents across the Loddon, Buloke and Wimmera areas to the Productivity Commission hearings on Early Childhood Education, specifically childcare.</p>	<p> Ongoing</p>
<p>Participate in, and advocate for funding to continue, the Strong Families Strong Children Program</p> <p>Council continues to advocate for ongoing financial support to facilitate the Strong Families Strong Children collaboration. Council, the North Central LLEN and Northern District Community Health representatives facilitated the design of a place-based model for the delivery of the Child Health and Wellbeing Local program in Loddon, with a position being hosted by the North Central LLEN.</p>	<p> Ongoing</p>
<p>Develop and implement Municipal Early Years and Youth Plan</p> <p>Council has completed the development of the State of Loddon's Children and Youth Report which will inform the development of either a Municipal Early Years Plan, or a sub regional plan with neighbouring municipalities.</p>	<p> Ongoing</p>
<p>Support the community to access maternal and child health and kindergarten services</p> <p>Kindergarten and maternal and child health (MCH) services are operating across the municipality. Council is participating in the free kinder program, providing all enrolments with a fully funded kindergarten program. Implemented increased collaboration opportunities between kindergartens and MCH to support access to kindergarten. Services promoted in media, online and project commenced to integrate more communication and engagement through dedicated parent portals.</p>	<p> Ongoing</p>



Support and advocate for activities that provide older residents with access to the services they need to age in place in Loddon

Comments	Status
Guide Council and the community through the transition to the new Commonwealth Support in the Home aged care program	
Council has provided an Aged Care Navigation role to support Loddon residents access to My Aged Care. Development of the Inclusive Communities Plan has commenced, with a priority area for positive ageing to be included.	 Progressing
Support and promote activities that encourage positive ageing	
Council has allocated 0.4 FTE to embed a specific focus on positive ageing. Council provided activities during the 2023 Victorian Seniors Festival. Council provides support (including financial) and facilities for six senior citizens centres within the municipality. Council also has an aged care navigation role to support residents if they require assistance to access services and supports.	 Ongoing
Participate in and deliver activities during the annual Victorian Seniors Festival	
Loddon Shire hosted the Annual Seniors Festival Gala day at Boort Memorial Hall as part of the month-long event aimed at honoring and engaging our seniors. The day saw 100 seniors attend the luncheon and concert. In addition, Council supported numerous events across the Shire including historical talks and morning teas, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for our seniors. Over 170 meal vouchers were provided to seniors, encouraging social interaction and promoting economic stimulus for local businesses.	 Ongoing



Advocate for high priority, significant services and projects to attract state and federal government funding

Comments	Status
Develop a community priority document to ensure Council can advocate for projects and maximise opportunities for funding.	
The Loddon Shire 2022 Priorities document was published and circulated in 2022. The document is a reflection of the Loddon Shire community and its priorities, connecting with our Community Vision 2031 and Council Plan 2021-2025 – both of which were developed in consultation with our community. A review of this work is scheduled for Quarter One, 2024/25 to ensure currency for upcoming federal elections.	 Completed
In conjunction with regional partners, advocate for increased roads funding	
Council continues to advocate for increased road funding individually and through regional partnerships such as the Murray River Group of Councils and Loddon Campaspe Transport Working Group.	 Ongoing
In conjunction with regional partners, advocate for the Murray Basin Rail Project	
This is being undertaken at Councillor level with assistance from economic development.	 Ongoing

Advocate for high priority, significant services and projects to attract state and federal government funding (continued)

Comments	Status
In conjunction with regional partners, advocate for water and sewerage for our towns where a positive business case has been developed	
Participation and contribution to local government partnerships and Regional Development Victoria discussions regarding existing services and the need to consider expansion to support future residential development.	 Ongoing
In conjunction with regional partners, advocate for broader and more reliable mobile phone and internet services across the Shire	
Council has advocated for improved digital connectivity, literacy and accessibility through regular engagement with Telstra and NBN regional leadership. Through collaboration with Telstra and NBN, a connectivity plan to guide Council's work in this area has been developed.	 Ongoing




Review Council processes

Comments	Status
Improve long-term financial forecasting through the development of the Financial Plan model that is reviewed annually	
Council's Budget and Financial Plan have been reviewed and Budget developed and presented to Council in April 2024 and adopted by Council in June 2024. Similar to 2023, parts of the Financial Plan are included in the Budget.	 Completed
Develop and implement a risk management framework to effectively manage the opportunities and risks across Council's operations and projects	
Council endorsed a revised Risk Management Policy and Framework in January 2024.	 Completed














Review Council processes (continued)

Comments	Status
<p>Review and implement the Information Technology Strategy</p> <p>Implementation of the two-year Information Technology Strategy as approved in June 2023 is underway. RCCC project has significantly progressed with the implementation of Altitude. Info security baseline has been progressed with new vendor Rapid7 (security suite being - managed detection response; vulnerability management and 24/7 Security Operations Centre) in partnership with City of Greater Bendigo. ZScaler implementation providing zero-trust access to IT services. Exchange Server security continues to be reviewed in line with implementation plan. Project Management Framework and System still being worked toward. Education and training undertaken via lunch and learn program (Microsoft Teams usage; IT 101 tips and tricks); Asset lifecycle work has involved consolidation of laptop lifecycles; softphones and move to improved technology access to mobile devices.</p>	 Progressing
<p>Review and implement the Records Management Strategy</p> <p>Version 2 of the Records Management Strategy was approved. This will ensure efficient data management and compliance with relevant legislation over the next four years.</p>	 Completed
<p>Develop and implement a Digitisation Plan to progress operating in an electronic records environment</p> <p>The digitisation of the building, planning and rates records has been completed and the last phase has been set for destruction in September 2024. In line with Council's digitisation plan, documents were securely destroyed through Shred-X.</p>	 Completed



Review Council processes (continued)

Comments	Status
Review Council's Governance Rules to ensure they are operating effectively for Council Meetings	
Version 3 of Loddon Shire Council Governance Rules revised and endorsed by Council on 22 August 2023.	 Completed
Upgrade Council's information technology services to increase security and efficiency	
Council has been investing in information technology security and efficiency with the migration to the Microsoft 365 Cloud platform and ongoing works to migrate to Civica Altitude as part of new software implementation which includes embedded information security tools. As per the IT Strategy - Info security baseline has been progressed with new vendor Rapid7 (security suite being - managed detection response; vulnerability management and 24/7 Security Operations Centre) in partnership with City of Greater Bendigo. ZScaler implementation providing zero-trust access to IT services. Exchange Server security continues to be reviewed in line with implementation plan.	 Progressing
Develop a Workforce Plan to understand the current and future needs of workforce	
The 2021-2025 Workforce Plan was adopted in December 2021. The Workforce Plan aims to ensure Council has the people best able to contribute to its strategic direction, develop innovative approaches to complex issues, develop and maintain partnerships, deliver appropriate services effectively and efficiently, and engage productively with the community.	 Completed
The Plan includes an analysis against the following areas:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan and departmental plans and strategies • Workforce profile • Gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness • Projected staffing requirements • External and internal influences 	
The findings from the analysis of each area inform the actions required over the life of the Plan. The development of the Workforce Plan is complete and progress on the actions will continue over the life of the Plan.	
Undertake service reviews for internal services to understand the service levels required to support service delivery to the community	
Service Review Program undertaken on a needs basis. Reviews undertaken in 2023/24 include immunisations and library services.	 Progressing
Undertake service reviews for key services delivered to the community to understand the service level and the cost of service delivery to inform the Financial Plan	
Initial report of expected future timing of service delivery areas has been developed by the Director Corporate. At the point where input is required from Finance staff to either assist in other key service delivery projects or the one for the finance function itself, full support and assistance will be given.	 Progressing




Implement initiatives and advocate for services to support overall health and wellbeing of the community

Comments	Status
<p>Facilitate the local mental health partnership, the Loddon Healthy Minds Network, to advocate for mental health supports and implement the actions in the Loddon Healthy Minds Network annual action plan to improve wellbeing outcomes for our community</p>	
<p>Council continues to support the facilitation of the Loddon Healthy Minds Network (LHMN), coordinating bi-monthly meetings, distribution of information to member agencies and social media sharing of information. Projects delivered include: Delivery of annual LHMN Art Competition, with a record 305 entries; maintenance of the LHMN website; development of a mobile 'Blue Tree' to raise awareness of mental health and suicide prevention; provision of two smoothie bikes for community use to raise health and wellbeing awareness.</p>	 Ongoing
<p>Deliver and implement the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025</p>	
<p>Four pillars support the implementation of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan: Family Violence Network, Strong Families Strong Children, Loddon Healthy Minds Network and Healthy Eating Active Living/smoking prevention.</p> <p>Activities delivered have included: Operating within Child Safe Standards; free kindergarten; local delivery of Child Health and Wellbeing Local; delivery of Strong Communities Strong Youth; facilitation of the Loddon Healthy Minds Network; Healthy Loddon Campaspe program; Buloke Loddon Gannawarra Health and Wellbeing Executive Network actions; stewardship in the Women's Health Loddon Mallee CARE partnership; member of the Loddon Mallee Primary Health Unity Primary Care and Population Health Advisory Sub-Committee; coordination of the Vulnerable Persons Register.</p>	 Progressing
<p>Promote health promotion initiatives, such as Walk to School, Ride2Work, Smiles for Miles etc</p>	
<p>Council celebrated all kindergartens receiving Smiles for Miles accreditation. Council continues to promote health promotion initiatives including mental health supports; LHMN Art Competition; availability of the LHMN smoothie bikes for community events; Care Finder program; library activities; Healthy Loddon Campaspe activities; flood recovery programs; swimming programs; Victorian Virtual Emergency Department; mosquito protection; heat health; farm safety; Respect Victoria; health during emergencies and family violence supports. Council participates in the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit Primary Health and Population Advisory Sub Committee.</p> <p>Council participates in the Buloke Loddon Gannawarra Health and Wellbeing Executives Network.</p>	 Ongoing
<p>Promote activities delivered through our library hubs within the Shire</p>	
<p>Council supported and promoted Goldfield's library facilitated activities across the Shire at all six locations, including story times, tech help for seniors, awareness days and craft activities, via MCH, kindergarten and media networks.</p> <p>Council partnered with the library agencies to coordinate NAIDOC week activities. Council and library agency representatives meet regularly to support the facilitation and promotion of Loddon Library Agencies.</p>	 Ongoing



Implement initiatives and advocate for services to support overall health and wellbeing of the community (continued)

Comments	Status
Promote local events through social media to provide community members with the opportunity to connect	
Social media has been actively used to promote local events and initiatives, and to keep the community informed.	 Ongoing
Advocate for mental health services that are available to residents when and where they need them	
Council is a member agency of the Buloke Loddon Gannawarra Health and Wellbeing Executive Network (BLG). A primary focus of the collaborative work of the BLG is to advocate for the delivery of appropriate mental health services in the BLG municipalities. Council continues to facilitate the LHMN and has continued to advocate for mental health service support, particularly following significant major events. Council, along with the North Central LLEN and Northern District Community Health fed into the model consultation for the Loddon Child Health and Wellbeing Local, resulting in a place-based position for the Loddon municipality.	 Ongoing


Partner with agencies in the Shire to promote good health and wellbeing

Comments	Status
Participate in the Loddon Healthy Eating Active Living and Smoking Prevention (HEAL-SP) group and support implementation of actions in the HEAL-SP annual action plan	
Council has continued to support the delivery of Healthy Eating Active Living activities through the Healthy Loddon Campaspe Program: Storywalk installation, Walk this Way active footpaths, Healthy Sports Clubs, Community Engagement and Cooking Healthy meals program.	 Ongoing
Participate in the Buloke Loddon Gannawarra Health and Wellbeing Executives Network	
Council is an active member of the Buloke Loddon Gannawarra Health and Wellbeing Executives Network. The Director Community Wellbeing is the current chair of the network.	 Ongoing
Participate in and advocate for ongoing funding of the Healthy Heart of Victoria project	
Healthy Heart of Victoria program was extended and funded for a further four years until 2026. Loddon continues to participate.	 Completed







Provide informative media

Comments	Status
Have an active and informative social media presence	
Social media continues to be actively used to promote local events and initiatives. Examples include: communicating key messages from Council, advertising career opportunities and connecting lost pets with their owners.	 Ongoing
Utilise local media to provide important messages to the community.	
Council continues to have a positive relationship with local media and regularly provides media releases, updates and comments to inform the community.	 Ongoing



Provide informative media (continued)

Comments	Status
Ensure Council's website has up-to-date and relevant information to inform the community about Council's activities	
Council webpages are managed by the relevant departments to ensure that information can be updated in a timely manner. The website also hosts past information such as annual reports and bulletins should the community be interested in progress and past activities as well as current activities.	 Ongoing




Review engagement activities to ensure continuous improvement

Comments	Status
Work with the Community Reference Group to understand the needs of the community around engagement	
Following an expression of interest process the Community Reference Group was re-established. The members of the group have been engaged with and provided valuable feedback to inform Council strategies and the development of the Annual Budget.	 Ongoing
Review and implement the Community Engagement Policy, including the deliberative engagement process	
The current Community Engagement Policy, which includes the deliberative engagement process, is under review as part of the standard policy review cycle.	 Progressing
Explore options for community engagement that other councils in the region are using to identify opportunities to expand our community engagement methods	
Council engages collaboratively with networks such as Loddon Healthy Minds Network, Healthy Eating Active Living/smoking prevention, Buloke Loddon Gannawarra Health and Wellbeing Executives Network, Loddon Family Violence Network, Loddon Mallee Primary Health Unit, Strong Families Strong Children and Strong Youth Strong Communities to deliver a range of health and wellbeing projects such as smoking research, Mental Health in Rural Communities, Healthy Minds Art Competition, 16 Days of Activism, childcare advocacy and many more.	 Ongoing
Undertake evaluation process following key community engagement activities	
The feedback provided, both verbally and via formal submissions from community engagement activities, is considered by officers. This assists in the decision making process, and for shaping what further and future community engagement activities are undertaken.	 Ongoing
Review the Community Satisfaction Survey to understand the community's wants and needs around communication	
2024 Community Satisfaction Survey reviewed and presented to June 2024 Council Meeting.	 Completed
Investigate an online community engagement portal	
Loddon Connect is now established as Council's primary online engagement portal.	 Completed

Review engagement activities to ensure continuous improvement (continued)

Comments	Status
Review and implement the Customer Service Strategy	
Council has implemented a new Customer Request Management (CRM) platform that will streamline all internal and external customer requests providing greater efficiency for the customer experience. The CRM creates greater opportunity to analyse the customer service experience and support the review of the Customer Service Strategy in which Council aims to embed a high level of responsiveness and good customer service culture over the next four years.	 Completed
Investigate the ability to increase online forms to facilitate easier processes	
Investigation into online forms has been completed and implementation of automated forms will gradually be rolled out as required.	 Ongoing

Engage with community groups

Comments	Status
Engage with key stakeholder groups on projects they have an interest in	
The Community Wellbeing Directorate continues to employ various techniques to engage and consult with the community on projects and strategies being delivered by Loddon Shire Council. Projects, strategies and masterplans at various stages of delivery all have stakeholders that require consultation and engagement. Internal teams structure and respond with engagement plans to meet needs or statutory requirements in each individual case.	 Ongoing
Represent Council at community group meetings to communicate current topics and to hear from community groups about their interests	
Councillors and staff have delegated roles for a number of community groups and attend many meetings throughout the year.	 Ongoing
Represent Council on Community Asset Committees	
At the Special Meeting of Council in November 2023, Councillors were appointed to Community Asset Committees. Representation is ongoing with Councillors reappointed annually.	 Ongoing




Performance against major initiatives in the 2023/24 budget


Service Performance Indicators

The following statement provides the results of the prescribed service performance indicators and measures including explanation of results in the comments.



Service Measure


Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
 Aquatic Facilities				
<i>Service standard</i>				
Health inspections of aquatic facilities	1.00	1.80	1.00	0.00
<i>[Number of authorised officer inspections of Council aquatic facilities / Number of Council aquatic facilities]</i>				
Comment: Council's Environmental Health Officer was on extended leave over the summer season and was unavailable to inspect the aquatic facilities. Only a limited public health backfill role could be sourced during this time. Assessments were undertaken by Council's contracted Aquatic Facilities Manager rather than a statutory authorised Environmental Health Officer.				
<i>Utilisation</i>				
Utilisation of aquatic facilities	2.08	1.76	1.93	1.93
<i>[Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Population]</i>				
<i>Service cost</i>				
Cost of aquatic facilities	\$22.34	\$59.06	\$44.36	\$47.85
<i>[Direct cost of aquatic facilities less income received / Number of visits to aquatic facilities]</i>				

Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
 Animal Management				
Timeliness				
Time taken to action animal management requests	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
<i>[Number of days between receipt and first response action for all animal management requests / Number of animal management requests]</i>				
Service standard				
Animals reclaimed	41.38%	25.35%	8.47%	21.78%
<i>[Number of animals reclaimed / Number of animals collected] x100</i>				
Comment: Council takes a proactive approach in reuniting animals with their owners. Following all options being exhausted animals are, as a last resort, impounded – with every effort made to return the animal to their owner.				
Animals rehomed	58.62%	67.61%	86.44%	94.94%
<i>[Number of unclaimed collected animals rehomed / Number of unclaimed collected animals] x100</i>				
Service cost				
Cost of animal management service per population	\$10.67	\$8.02	\$7.78	\$13.32
<i>[Direct cost of the animal management service / Population]</i>				
Comment: There has been additional demand for this service in 2024 compared to previous years with more focus on animal management and less on local laws in general.				
Health and safety				
Animal management prosecutions	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>[Number of successful animal management prosecutions / Number of animal management prosecutions] x 100</i>				
Comment: There has been no animal management prosecutions within the reporting period. Council continues to actively work with the community.				





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Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
 Food Safety				
<i>Timeliness</i>				
Time taken to action food complaints	1.25	1.67	1.33	2.00
<i>[Number of days between receipt and first response action for all food complaints / Number of food complaints]</i> Comment: One complaint was received. It is noted that the officer was on leave at the time and immediately actioned the complaint upon return.				
<i>Service standard</i>				
Food safety assessments	24.74%	46.88%	72.64%	48.31%
<i>[Number of registered class 1 food premises and class 2 food premises that receive an annual food safety assessment in accordance with the Food Act 1984 / Number of registered class 1 food premises and class 2 food premises that require an annual food safety assessment in accordance with the Food Act 1984] x100</i> Comment: The food safety assessment program has been impacted by reduced staff availability due to extended leave and position vacancy.				
Food safety samples	New	New	New	100.00%
<i>[Number of food samples obtained / Required number of food samples] x 100</i> Comment: The number of samples obtained were equal to the minimum Gazetted amount required.				


Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Food Safety (continued)				
<i>Service cost</i>				
Cost of food safety service	\$69.44	\$104.36	\$117.13	\$128.26
<i>[Direct cost of the food safety service / Number of food premises registered or notified in accordance with the Food Act 1984]</i>				
<i>Health and safety</i>				
Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications	100.00%	66.67%	100.00%	100.00%
<i>[Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises followed up / Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises] x100</i>				
Governance				
<i>Transparency</i>				
Council decisions made at meetings closed to the public	10.62%	10.12%	9.82%	7.57%
<i>[Number of Council resolutions made at meetings of Council, or at meetings of a delegated committee consisting only of Councillors, closed to the public / Number of Council resolutions made at meetings of Council or at meetings of a delegated committee consisting only of Councillors] x100</i>				
Comment: The number of decisions made by Council during a part of a meeting closed to the public reduced by two, from 2022/23 to 14 in total. This was in part due to a reduction in the total number decisions relating to commercial matters such as contracts and property transactions.				
<i>Consultation and engagement</i>				
Satisfaction with community consultation and engagement	58.00	56.00	52.00	50.00
<i>[Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how Council has performed on community consultation and engagement]</i>				
Comment: While Loddon Shire had aimed to maintain its previous year score in 2024, the score from the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey was reflective of Small Rural and State-wide averages for this metric which have seen downward trending.				
<i>Attendance</i>				
Councillor attendance at council meetings	100.00%	99.49%	96.57%	96.92%
<i>[The sum of the number of Councillors who attended each Council meeting / (Number of Council meetings) × (Number of Councillors elected at the last Council general election)] x100</i>				
<i>Service cost</i>				
Cost of elected representation	\$58,413.00	\$44,495.60	\$44,495.60	\$45,659.75
<i>[Direct cost of the governance service / Number of Councillors elected at the last Council general election]</i>				



Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Governance (continued)				
<i>Satisfaction</i>				
Satisfaction with council decisions	61.00	58.00	54.00	50.00

[Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed in making decisions in the interest of the community]

Comment: The score from the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey was reflective of Small Rural and State-wide averages for this metric.



 Libraries				
<i>Resource currency</i>				
Recently purchased library collection	72.00%	72.00%	72.00%	54.05%

[Number of library collection items purchased in the last 5 years / Number of library collection items] x100

Comment: The year-to-year variance in purchased items is due to an error in the formula used to calculate the ratio of Library Corporation purchased collection items apportioned to Loddon Shire Council for the 2022/23 report. The correct variance is less than 8%.

Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Libraries (continued)				
<i>Service cost</i>				
Cost of library service per population	\$28.85	\$27.43	\$26.61	\$28.12
<i>[Direct cost of the library service / Population]</i>				
<i>Utilisation</i>				
Loans per head of population	New	New	New	3.64
<i>[Number of library collection item loans / Population]</i>				
<i>Participation</i>				
Library membership	New	New	New	12.75%
<i>[Number of registered library members / Population] x100</i>				
Library visits per head of population	New	New	New	1.99
<i>[Number of library visits / Population]</i>				





Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
 Maternal and Child Health (MCH)				
<i>Service standard</i>				
Infant enrolments in the MCH service	103.70%	100.00%	101.85%	100.00%
<i>[Number of infants enrolled in the MCH service (from birth notifications received) / Number of birth notifications received] x100</i>				
<i>Service cost</i>				
Cost of the MCH service	\$78.74	\$105.81	\$94.70	\$103.80
<i>[Cost of the MCH service / Hours worked by MCH nurses]</i>				
<i>Participation</i>				
Participation in the MCH service	85.11%	87.30%	90.05%	87.47%
<i>[Number of children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of children enrolled in the MCH service] x100</i>				
Participation in the MCH service by Aboriginal children	89.47%	77.78%	93.75%	92.31%
<i>[Number of Aboriginal children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of Aboriginal children enrolled in the MCH service] x100</i>				
<i>Satisfaction</i>				
Participation in 4-week Key Age and Stage visit	90.74%	95.77%	98.15%	111.32%
<i>[Number of 4-week key age and stage visits / Number of birth notifications received] x100</i>				
Comment: Council's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service continues to have high participation rates. The reporting data carries over some information from the previous reporting period (the date of when the birth notification was received to the date of the first home visit crosses two report periods).				
 Roads				
<i>Satisfaction of use</i>				
Sealed local road requests	7.90	9.41	15.67	22.36
<i>[Number of sealed local road requests / Kilometres of sealed local roads] x100</i>				
Comment: The October 2022 and December 2023/January 2024 flood events have had a significant impact on the condition of Council's roads. This has resulted in an increase in service requests.				



Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Roads (continued)				
<i>Condition</i>				
Sealed local roads maintained to condition standards	100.00%	99.99%	98.51%	99.00%
<i>[Number of kilometres of sealed local roads below the renewal intervention level set by Council / Kilometres of sealed local roads] x100</i>				
<i>Service cost</i>				
Cost of sealed local road reconstruction	\$38.62	\$43.19	\$0.00	\$49.94
<i>[Direct cost of sealed local road reconstruction / Square metres of sealed local roads reconstructed]</i>				
Cost of sealed local road resealing	\$4.14	\$3.74	\$5.53	\$5.05
<i>[Direct cost of sealed local road resealing / Square metres of sealed local roads resealed]</i>				
<i>Satisfaction</i>				
Satisfaction with sealed local roads	50.00	50.00	43.00	38.00

[Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed on the condition of sealed local roads]

Comment: The October 2022 and December 2023/January 2024 flood events have had a significant impact on the condition of Council's roads. This has resulted in a decrease in community satisfaction with Council's roads.

Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
 Statutory Planning				
<i>Timeliness</i>				
Time taken to decide planning applications	39.00	42.00	28.00	28.00
<i>[The median number of days between receipt of a planning application and a decision on the application]</i>				
Comment: Median number of days for processing of all applications was 28 days.				
<i>Service standard</i>				
Planning applications decided within required time frames	83.46%	85.04%	97.32%	96.34%
<i>[(Number of regular planning application decisions made within 60 days) + (Number of VicSmart planning application decisions made within 10 days) / Number of planning application decisions made] x100</i>				
Comment: The statistic reflects the 96% of applications assessed within the required timeframes.				
Service cost				
Cost of statutory planning service	\$833.20	\$1,362.68	\$2,165.24	\$2,815.22
<i>[Direct cost of the statutory planning service / Number of planning applications received]</i>				
Comment: The number of planning applications received dropped by 27 which has caused the relatively static costs to increase per application received.				
<i>Decision making</i>				
Council planning decisions upheld at VCAT	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>[Number of VCAT decisions that did not set aside council's decision in relation to a planning application / Number of VCAT decisions in relation to planning applications] x100</i>				
Comment: One Council planning decision was referred to VCAT in the reporting period and it was overturned.				
 Waste Management				
<i>Service standard</i>				
Kerbside collection bins missed	1.05	2.68	2.01	3.13
<i>[Number of kerbside garbage and recycling collection bins missed / Number of scheduled kerbside garbage and recycling collection bin lifts] x10,000</i>				
Comment: An increase in this indicator for 2023/24 is due to a small increase (33) in the number of missed bins. Council continues to work towards reducing the number of missed bin collections with Council's contractor.				

Service / indicator / measure	Results			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Waste Management (continued)				
<i>Service cost</i>				
Cost of kerbside garbage bin collection service	\$143.89	\$151.04	\$145.96	\$155.21
<i>[Direct cost of the kerbside garbage bin collection service / Number of kerbside garbage collection bins]</i>				
Comment: The cost of the kerbside waste bin collection service has slightly increased in line with annual CPI increases.				
<i>Service cost</i>				
Cost of kerbside recyclables collection service	\$83.82	\$93.60	\$101.88	\$114.26
<i>[Direct cost of the kerbside recyclables bin collection service / Number of kerbside recyclables collection bins]</i>				
Comment: The cost to process recycling at Veolia's Echuca Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) has increased and there has been an increase in the lift rate in line with Council's waste contract.				
<i>Waste diversion</i>				
Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill	29.59%	27.52%	28.46%	23.21%
<i>[Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins / Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins] x100</i>				
Comment: There has been a reduction in the amount of recycling collected in 2023/24 compared to the previous year and to the budgeted target. Council attributes this to the introduction of new glass drop off services and the introduction of the Victorian Government's Container Deposit Scheme (CDS). Council has a strong focus on reducing waste and continues to support the community in waste education.				





Mosaic along Loddon River walking trail, Bridgewater

Community Satisfaction Survey

The Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey 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 and an opportunity to consider improvements that would be valued by the community.

Survey fieldwork was conducted across four quarters from 1 June 2023 to 18 March 2024 and represents the opinions of 400 residents.

In 2024, Council 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 most recent results are:

- Appearance of public areas
- Recreational facilities
- Waste management

Further details and this year's results are available at www.loddon.vic.gov.au/Our-Council/Community-Satisfaction-Surveys

Governance management





Inglewood Town Hall Hub, Inglewood

Governance

Introduction

Loddon Shire Council is constituted under the *Local Government Act 2020* to provide leadership for the good governance of the municipal district and the local community. Section 8(1) of the Act states that the role of Council is “to provide good governance in its municipal district for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community”.

This is achieved by adhering to the following governance principles:

- Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law
- Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations
- The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted
- The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making
- Innovation and a continuous improvement is to be pursued

- Collaboration with other councils and governments and statutory bodies is to be sought
- The ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured
- Regional, State and National plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making
- The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured

Council is committed to effective and sustainable forms of democratic and corporate governance as the key to ensuring that Council and its administration meet the community’s priorities. The community has many opportunities to provide input into Council’s decision-making processes including community consultation, public forums and ability to make submissions to Council.

Council’s formal decision-making processes are conducted through Council meetings. Council delegates the majority of its decision-making to Council staff. These delegations are exercised in accordance with the Act and a range of other acts and regulations.

Community Asset Committees

Section 65 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, provides for the establishment of Community Asset Committees for the purpose of managing community assets throughout the municipality.

Council's Community Asset Committees consist of dedicated community members who give their time and energy to managing their respective Community Asset Committees.

By instrument of delegation, the Chief Executive Officer delegates a range of powers, duties and functions of the Council to members of Council's Community Asset Committees to support management of the community assets.

Council respects and appreciates the contribution made by our volunteer Community Asset Committee members to enrich our community, and provide a much broader range of services and activities than Council could provide without this support.

Loddon Shire Council has established Community Asset Committees to manage the following community assets:

- Boort Aerodrome
- Boort Memorial Hall
- Boort Park
- Campbells Forest Hall
- Donaldson Park
- East Loddon Community Centre
- Hard Hill Tourist Reserve
- Inglewood Community Elderly Persons Units
- Inglewood Community Sports Centre
- Inglewood Town Hall Hub
- Korong Vale Mechanics Institute Hall
- Korong Vale Sports Centre
- Little Lake Boort
- Pyramid Hill Memorial Hall
- Wedderburn Community Centre
- Wedderburn Engine Park and Market Square Reserve
- Wedderburn Mechanics and Literary Institute Hall
- Yando Public Hall

Meetings of Council

Council conducts open public meetings generally on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Members of the community are welcome to attend these meetings and observe from the gallery or watch proceedings online. Council meetings provide the opportunity for community members to submit a question to the Council as detailed in the Governance Rules.

For the 2023/24 financial year, Council held 13 Council meetings, including one Special Council Meeting for the purpose of electing a Mayor for the 2023/24 term.

Mayor and Councillor attendance at functions

During the year, the Mayor and Councillors attended a vast range of functions on behalf of Loddon Shire Council, some associated with their appointments to external and Community Asset Committees, others following invitations from community groups, local government bodies, politicians and other stakeholders.

Council meeting agendas provide an opportunity for the Mayor and Councillors to report on their attendance at these functions, which are subsequently recorded in the meeting Minutes.

Code of conduct

The Councillor Code of Conduct, most recently reviewed in 2021, sets out minimum standards of conduct for Councillors in their role and documents Loddon Shire Councillors' commitment to working together in the best interests of the people within the municipality and to discharging their responsibilities to the best of their skill and judgement.

Conflict of interest

Councillors are elected by the residents and ratepayers to act in the best interests of the community. This is a position of trust that requires Councillors to act in the public interest. When Council delegates its powers to a Council officer or a committee, the committee or officer must also act in the public interest.

A conflict of interest occurs when a personal or private interest might compromise the ability to act in the public interest. A conflict of interest exists even if no improper act results from it.

Council's Governance Rules contain processes for the disclosure of a conflict of interest.

Disclosure of a conflict of interest is a standing agenda item for Council and committee meetings.

While the conflict of interest disclosure procedures vary depending on the particular role and circumstances, in general they involve disclosing the relevant interests in a specific way and then stepping aside from the decision-making process, or from the exercise of the public duty.

During 2023/24, two Councillor conflicts of interest were disclosed at a Council meeting.

Councillor allowances

In accordance with section 39 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Councillors are entitled to receive an allowance for performing their duties as a Councillor. The Mayor is entitled to receive a higher allowance.

The State Government sets the upper and lower limits for all allowances paid to Councillors and Mayors. Councils are divided into three categories based on the income and population of each council. In this instance, Loddon Shire Council is recognised as a Category One Council.

The following table contains a summary of the allowances relating to each Councillor during the year.

Name of Councillor	Councillor allowance paid 2023/24
Cr Neil Beattie	\$26,034.59
Cr Gavan Holt (Mayor*)	\$60,539.75
Cr Linda Jungwirth	\$26,034.59
Cr Wendy Murphy	\$26,034.59
Cr Dan Straub (Mayor*)	\$45,995.73
Total	\$184,639.25





Tarnagulla Public Hall, Tarnagulla

Councillor expenses

In accordance with section 40 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council is required to reimburse a Councillor for expenses incurred while performing their duties as a Councillor. Council is also required to adopt and maintain a policy in relation to the reimbursement of expenses for Councillors. The Councillors Support and Reimbursement of Expenses Policy provides guidance for the reimbursement of expenses and the provision of resources, facilities

and other support to the Mayor and Councillors to enable them to discharge their duties. Council publishes in its Annual Report the details of the expenses, including reimbursement of expenses for each Councillor and members of a Council committee.

The details of the expenses including reimbursement of expenses for each Councillor for the 2023/24 year are set out in the following table:

Name of Councillor	TR \$	CM \$	CC \$	IC \$	CT \$	Total
Cr N Beattie	\$0	\$2,889.60	\$0	\$0	\$1,918.18	\$4,807.78
Cr G Holt (Mayor*)	\$0	\$11,344.03	\$0	\$133.84	\$3,957.42	\$15,435.29
Cr L Jungwirth	\$0	\$11,282.56	\$1,536.24	\$0	\$3,273.94	\$16,092.74
Cr W Murphy	\$0	\$590.04	\$0	\$0	\$900.00	\$1,490.04
Cr D Straub (Mayor*)	\$0	\$9,216.40	\$0	\$0	\$1,281.82	\$10,498.22
Total	\$0	\$35,322.63	\$1,536.24	\$133.84	\$11,331.36	\$48,324.07

TR = Travel, CM = Car mileage, CC = Carer and dependent related expenses, IC = Information and communication expenses, CT = Conferences and training expenses

* Cr D Straub was Mayor for the period July 2023 to November 2023; Cr G Holt has been elected Mayor since November 2023.

Audit and Risk Management

Audit and Risk Committee

Council has an established Audit and Risk Committee, and prepared and approved an Audit and Risk Committee Charter in accordance with sections 53 and 54 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The Audit and Risk Committee's role is to oversee and monitor the effectiveness of Council in carrying out its responsibilities for accountable financial management, good corporate governance, maintaining an effective system of internal control and risk management, and fostering an ethical environment.

Council's five-member Audit and Risk Committee consists of four independent members and one Councillor representative. Current membership is:

- Cr Gavan Holt (Cr Neil Beattie as alternate)
- Mr Rod Poxon (Chair)
- Ms Rachelle Tippett
- Ms Marg Allan
- Ms Amber Currie (from 1 May 2024)
- Mr Rodney Baker (to 30 April 2024)

In accordance with the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, Council's Chief Executive Officer and Director Corporate (or their delegate in exceptional circumstances) attend all meetings in full, except for relevant confidential matters.

Cr Holt was reappointed to the Audit and Risk Committee at the Special Meeting of Council held 14 November 2023.

In February 2024, both the Audit and Risk Committee and Council recognised the dedication and efforts of Rodney Baker as an independent member of the Audit and Risk Committee over three four-year terms, including five terms as Committee Chairperson.

On the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 27 February 2024, Council resolved to appoint Rod Poxon as Chairperson of the Loddon Shire Council Audit and Risk Committee for the period 29 February 2024 to 28 February 2025.

In accordance with the Charter, the Audit and Risk Committee met quarterly during 2023/24, on 7 August 2023, 13 November 2023, 5 February 2024 and 6 May 2024. A summary of each meeting was reported by the Chief Executive Officer to Council on 22 August 2023, 28 November 2023, 27 February 2024 and 28 May 2024.



Audit and Risk Committee



2024 Chair Rod Baker retiring



Internal audit

Council's internal audit function provides independent and objective assurance that the appropriate processes and controls are in place across Council.

The function is resourced under contract by AFS and Associates Pty Ltd.

A four-year Strategic Internal Audit Program (SIAP) was presented to and endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 13 November 2023.

The Audit and Risk Committee receives reports at each meeting on the status of the SIAP, findings of completed audits and the status of actions to implement past audit recommendations.

The following internal audits were conducted during the year, in accordance with the SIAP 2023 – 2026:

- Emergency Management
- Depot Operations
- Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Human Resources – Workforce and Succession Planning, Recruitment and Retention.

External audit

Council is externally audited by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO), who utilises contractors to undertake audit fieldwork. Council's 2023/24 external audit fieldwork was undertaken by RSD Audit.

The external auditor's primary role is to provide assurance that the financial statements fairly present the performance and financial position of Council at the end of the financial year.

RSD Audit presented the draft External Audit Strategy to the February 2024 meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee, while the External Audit Interim Management Letter was presented to the May 2024 meeting.

Actions arising from the external audit are included on the Audit and Risk Committee's outstanding action list to be completed within the timeframe included in the report.

Risk management

Risks have the potential to impact Council's ability to meet its objectives. While many risks cannot be eliminated, they can be identified, managed and monitored.

Council's suite of risk management documents, including the Risk Management Policy and the Framework and Risk Appetite Statement articulate how Council will identify, manage and report on its risks.

Council's suite of business continuity management documents, including the Business Continuity Management Policy and Framework, and the Business Continuity Plan support Council's commitment to building the capability of the organisation to continue delivery of services at acceptable predefined levels following disasters and disruptive events.

During 2023/24 the full suite of risk management and business continuity management documents were reviewed by both the Audit and Risk Committee and Council.

A Risk Management Procedure was developed to guide staff in assessing new risks for inclusion in Council risk registers, and reviewing current risks in accordance with timeframes identified within the Risk Management Framework.

Three risk management workshops were conducted during the year, providing risk management refresher training for Loddon Leaders and application of the new Risk Management Procedure.

A comprehensive review of risks contained within Council's Strategic Risk Register was undertaken by the Audit and Risk Committee and Council during 2023/24. The review concluded with Council approving the Strategic Risk Report – March 2024, providing details of six strategic risks.

In accordance with Council's Risk Management Framework and the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, regular reports on risk management (including insurance) and occupational health and safety were presented throughout 2023/24 to Council, the Audit and Risk Committee, the Management Executive Group and Loddon Leaders.



Governance and management checklist

We certify that this information presents fairly the status of Council's governance and management arrangements.

Item ID	Governance and Management Item	YES or NO	Date if YES (single item/ date)	Date if YES (multiple items/dates)
GC1	Community engagement policy	YES	23/02/2021	Community Engagement Policy (adopted by Council)
GC2	Community engagement guidelines	YES	3/04/2019	Community Engagement Procedure (approved by Management Executive Group)
GC3	Financial Plan	YES	28/06/2022	Financial Plan required adopted 28/06/2022 in accordance with section 91 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
GC4	Asset Plan	YES	28/07/2022	Asset Plan 2022 v1 (adopted by Council on 27/07/2022)
GC5	Revenue and Rating Plan	YES	24/06/2021	Revenue and Rating Plan 2021-2025 v1 (adopted by Council on 24/6/2021)
GC6	Annual budget	YES	25/06/2024	2024/25 Budget (adopted by Council on 25/6/2024)
GC7	Risk policy	YES	23/01/2024	Risk Management Policy v7 (adopted by Council 23/01/2024) Risk Appetite Statement V2 (adopted by Council 23/01/2024) Risk Management Implementation Plan v2 (adopted by Council 23/01/2024)
GC8	Fraud policy	YES	26/03/2024	Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy v5 adopted by Council 26/03/2024
GC9	Municipal emergency management planning	YES		3 August 2024 16 November 2024 15 February 2024 16 May 2024
GC10	Procurement policy	YES	26/04/2023	Procurement Policy v12 (adopted by Council 26/04/2023)
GC11	Business continuity plan	YES	25/06/2024	Business Continuity Plan - Reviewed Q3 2023/24. Presented to and endorsed by Audit and Risk Committee 06/05/2024 and Council 25/06/2024, Scheduled for presentation to Management Executive Group for final approval 16/07/2024
GC12	Disaster recovery plan	YES	11/09/2019	Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan (IT DRP) 2019 (adopted by the Management Executive Group - internal document)

Item ID	Governance and Management Item	YES or NO	Date if YES (single item/ date)	Date if YES (multiple items/dates)
GC13	Complaint policy	YES	14/12/2021	Complaint Handling Policy (adopted by Council 14/12/2021)
GC14	Workforce plan	YES	1/12/2021	Workforce Plan 2021-2025 adopted 1/12/2021
GC15	Payment of rates and charges hardship policy	YES	25/10/2022	Financial Hardship Policy v3 (adopted by Council 25/10/2022)
GC16	Risk management framework	YES	23/01/2024	Risk Management Framework v4 (adopted by Council 23/01/2024)
GC17	Audit and Risk Committee	YES	23/06/2020	Audit and Risk Committee established by Council 23/06/2020 Audit and Risk Committee Charter v11 (adopted by Council 23/05/2023)
GC18	Internal audit	YES	5/07/2023	Internal Audit Contract with AFS and Associates Pty Ltd signed 05/07/2023
GC19	Performance reporting framework	YES	26/05/2020	Endorsed by Audit and Risk Committee and adopted by Council
GC20	Council Plan report	YES	22/08/2023	Council Plan - Four Year Annual Action Plan adopted by Council in 2021; reviewed with Council each year.
GC21	Quarterly budget reports	YES	28/04/2024	Quarterly reports presented: March 2024 (28/5/2024), December 2023 (27/2/24), September 2023 (24/10/23), March 2023 (23/4/23)
GC22	Risk reporting	YES	26/03/2024	Strategic risks reported to Council Meeting 26/03/2023 Strategic risks reported to Council Forum 12/03/2024 Strategic risks reported to Council Forum 11/07/2023. Strategic risks reported to Council's Audit and Risk Committee in 07/08/2023 Strategic risks reported to Council's Audit and Risk Committee 05/02/2024.
GC23	Performance reporting	YES	22/08/2023	Financial and Performance Statements reported to Audit and Risk Committee, and Council 22/08/2023
GC24	Annual report	YES	24/10/2023	Consideration of the Annual Report for the period ending 30 June 2023 adopted by Council

Item ID	Governance and Management Item	YES or NO	Date if YES (single item/ date)	Date if YES (multiple items/dates)
GC25	Councillor Code of Conduct	YES	27/04/2021	Councillor Code of Conduct v6 (adopted by Council 27/04/2021)
GC26	Delegations	YES	23/04/2024	Council to CEO Delegation reviewed 23/04/2024 Council to members of Council staff Delegation reviewed 27/06/2023
GC27	Meeting procedures	YES	22/08/2023	Governance Rules v3 adopted by Council 22/08/2023



Lincoln Fitzgerald
Chief Executive Officer

Dated: 30 June 2024



Cr Gavan Holt
Mayor



Sloan Park, Inglewood

Statutory information

The following information is provided in accordance with legislative and other requirements applying to Council.

Documents available for public inspection

In accordance with legislation and Council's Public Transparency Policy, the following documents were available for public inspection, including on Council's website or at the Council office in Wedderburn:

- Agendas for, and minutes of, Council Meetings other than those agendas and minutes relating to part of a meeting which was closed to members of the public under the Act and are confidential information within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Act.
- Council's Governance Rules
- Council's Budget, Annual Report, Council Plan, Community Vision and Public Transparency Policy
- Reporting from Advisory Committees to Council (via Council Minutes)
- Register of travel undertaken by Councillors or Council staff
- Register of Conflicts of Interest disclosed by Councillors or Council staff
- Register of gifts, benefits and hospitality offered to Councillors or Council staff
- Public submissions made by Council
- Audit and Risk Committee Performance Reporting
- Terms of Reference or Charters for Advisory Committees
- Register of donations and grants made by Council
- Register of leases entered into by Council, as lessor and lessee
- Register of Delegations
- Register of Authorised Officers
- Summary of Personal Interests Returns
- Summary of Election Campaign Donation Returns
- Submissions received under section 223 of the *Local Government Act 1989* or feedback received through a community engagement process undertaken by Council.

Health Records Act 2001

Council collects health data, particularly in the community service area, to be used solely for the primary purpose for which it is collected or directly related purposes.

Council may disclose this information to other health professionals for continuity of care. If a referral to another health professional is required, consent is obtained unless exempted by other legislation.

Carers Recognition Act 2012

The *Carers Recognition Act 2012* defines every council in Victoria as a 'public service care agency' and therefore a 'care support organisation'. As a consequence, councils are required to comply with the Act and to report on this in their annual reports from 2012/13 and thereafter.

This reporting requirement impacts across a wide range of Council activities, including human resources, home and community care, aged and disability services, leisure and recreation, community services, and family and children's services.

Council has taken all practicable measures to comply with its responsibilities outlined in the Act. Council has promoted the principles of the Act to people in care relationships and to the wider community by distributing printed material through relevant Council services, displaying posters at Council community venues and providing information to organisations represented in Council and community networks.

Council has also taken all practicable measures to ensure that staff, Council agents and volunteers working for the organisation are informed about the principles and obligations of the Act by including information on the care relationship in Council induction and training programs.

Child Safe Standards

Council is committed to protecting the interests and safety of children. Council has zero tolerance for child abuse. As part of its commitment, an organisational-wide approach has been developed to embed a child safe environment. Council has a Child Safe Standards Statement of Commitment that is enacted through the implementation and monitoring of Council's Child Safe Standards Policy and Child Safe Standards Framework as specified under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment Act 2015* that incorporates the amendments made to the Child Safe Standards as at 1 January 2023.



Contracts

Council has an established Procurement Policy that identifies a threshold where works or services valued over \$300,000 require a process of 'invitation to tender' or 'expression of interest' as outlined in the Policy.

Council entered into five contracts above the threshold in 2023/24, covering capital and infrastructure works across the following areas:

- Community buildings
- Major culverts
- Road reseals and reconstruction
- Footpath renewal

No service contracts above the threshold were entered into.

Council did not enter into any other contracts valued at \$300,000 or more for goods or services without engaging in a competitive process.

Disability Action Plan

In accordance with the *Victorian Disability Act 2006*, Council adopted its fourth Disability Action Plan in February 2018. The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2018-2021, now known as the Access and Inclusion Plan (AIP), was extended to March 2023. The AIP will form one of the key pillars in the upcoming Inclusive Communities Plan 2024-2029, which also encompasses positive ageing, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and LGBTQIA+ communities.

Achievements over the course of the four year plan included:

- Embedding the Community Engagement Policy and Procedure to support staff to engage respectfully and inclusively with, and consider the needs of, community members during engagement processes.

- Continued consideration of universal design principles in all applicable infrastructure projects. Examples include the Pyramid Hill Streetscape Project and Donaldson Park Community Hub; Recreation Open Spaces and Aquatics Strategy; Healthy Loddon Campaspe projects such as Walk this Way and Boort and Inglewood Community gardens.
- Updating Council website software to ensure compatibility with the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
- Continued delivery of disability awareness training during staff induction.
- Delivery of training to relevant staff on how to write in easy English.
- Partnering with City of Greater Bendigo to implement the Champions for Change project to increase supports for persons living with a disability to secure employment.

Domestic Animal Management Plan

Council is required to evaluate its implementation of domestic animal management initiatives in the annual report. A new Domestic Animal Management Plan needs to be prepared in accordance with State Government timeframes.

The occurrence of stray and feral cat populations continue to be a source of complaints from residents. Targeted programs, in partnership with local residents, enabled feral cats to be trapped and other stray/unclaimed cats finding new permanent homes. Cat traps were also distributed generally throughout the municipality upon request.

Council's continued initiative in promoting the benefits of "register your dog/cat, get it back for free" were particularly advantageous throughout this time, with several successful pet returns to owners. This reduced costs to pet owners and ultimately decreased instances of impounded animals. Staff place an emphasis on avoiding impoundments wherever possible.

Animal control staff have also noted an increase in pet surrenders and general requests for assistance with rehoming pets or seeking financial help to meet the costs of desexing pets.

Other actions have included:

- Conducting joint inspections with RSPCA officers regarding various dog-breeding activities.
- Investigating and resolving potential dangerous or menacing dog complaints, including dog attacks.
- Participating in online animal welfare forums and workshops.
- Assisting in the Victorian Government Pet Exchange Register.
- Undertaking appropriate staff training and development programs.

Freedom of Information Act 1982

In accordance with section 7(4AA)(a) and 7(4AA)(b) of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act), Council is required to publish certain statements in its annual report or separately such as on its website, concerning its functions and information available. Council has chosen to publish the statements separately, however provides the following summary of the application and operation of the *FOI Act*.

Access to documents may be obtained through written request to the Freedom of Information Officer, as detailed in section 17 of the FOI Act and in summary requests should:

- be in writing
- identify as clearly as possible which document is being requested
- be accompanied by the appropriate application fee (the fee may be reduced or waived in certain circumstances)



Requests for access to information under the FOI Act should be addressed to the Freedom of Information Officer and lodged in person, via post or by email.

Further information regarding Freedom of Information requests, including applicable fees and charges is available from Council's website.

During the year, Council received seven valid requests under the FOI Act.

Public Interest Disclosures

In accordance with section 69 of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012* (former title – *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*), a council must include in its annual report information about how to access the procedures established by the council under Part 9 of that Act. It is also required to provide certain information about the number and types of protected disclosure complaints investigated during the financial year.

The *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012* aims to ensure openness and accountability in government by encouraging people to disclose improper conduct within the public sector and provide protection for people who make disclosures. Procedures on how to make a disclosure are outlined in Council's Public Interest Disclosure Policy which is available to the public on Council's website.

During 2023/24, no disclosures were notified to Council officers appointed to receive disclosures, and no known disclosures were notified to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

Food Act Ministerial Directions

In accordance with section 7E of the *Food Act 1984*, Council is required to publish a summary of any Ministerial Directions received during the financial year in its annual report.

No such Ministerial Directions were received by Council during the 2023/24 year.

Road Management Act Ministerial Directions

In accordance with section 22 of the *Road Management Act 2004*, Council must publish a copy or summary of any Ministerial Direction in its annual report.

No Ministerial Directions were received by Council during the 2023/24 year.

Infrastructure and development contributions

In accordance with section 46GM and 46QD of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, a council that is a collecting or development agency must prepare and give a report to the Minister for Planning on infrastructure and development contributions including levies and works in kind. The report must be published in Council's annual report.

For the 2023/24 year, there were no infrastructure and development contributions.



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