

21 April 2021

AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY ADOPTED

At last night's meeting, Council adopted an Affordable Housing Policy and committed to consideration of an additional scope of works to tackle the issue as part of Council's Strategic Planning Program 2021/2022.

Council adopted the following resolution at the December 2020 meeting to develop a "high level" affordable housing policy, with a commitment to engage with the community to consider how affordable housing best fits with the Council Plan and 2021/2022 Budget.

Council convened a workshop in February 2021 to engage community and government stakeholders to facilitate a better understanding of the local, state and national policy context, the breath of potential Council roles and responsibilities in relation to housing affordability.

Mayor, Cr Lesley Hewitt said that affordable housing was a significant issue state-wide, and Hepburn Shire is experiencing affordable housing shortages in purchase and rental stock.

"Affordable housing is a complex issue for Local Government. We are aware that rising costs of housing over the past decade has made access to safe and secure housing, along with mortgage and rental stress, a critical issue for our community."

"There has been significant community and media interest highlighting in the lack of affordable housing in our Shire and we have heard considerable feedback as part of the Hepburn Together project, developing our Council Plan 2021-2025."

"The lack of affordable housing is having a significant impact on recruiting staff for key industries and businesses in the Shire, with some businesses having to reduce their operating times and services offered," said Cr Hewitt.

The adoption of this policy is a first step to enable a broader range of work that will be required over a 2-to-3-year period, including undertaking additional research on housing affordability (from the perspective of social policy and land use planning). This research will build on pre-existing knowledge and seek to inform policy, community awareness and the real-life implications of housing affordability. Significant funding will be required for this work to be undertaken; Council will seek government support to complement available resources.

Council has been working with Safe Place Inc., a community group committed to improving the availability of affordable housing in the Hepburn Shire, to determine the roles and responsibilities in relation to decision and resourcing pathways and looks forward to continuing our relationship with key partners including the State Government.

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