



HEPBURN SHIRE COUNCIL
ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL
PUBLIC MINUTES

Tuesday 24 June 2025

Council Chamber
24 Vincent Street Daylesford

6:00PM

A LIVE STREAM OF THE MEETING CAN BE VIEWED
VIA [COUNCIL'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL](#)

MINUTES

Tuesday 24 June 2025

Council Chamber

24 Vincent Street Daylesford

Commencing at 6:00PM

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BRADLEY THOMAS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Tuesday 24 June 2025

1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work. On these lands, Djaara have performed age -old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We recognise their resilience through dispossession and it is a testament to their continuing culture and tradition, which is strong and thriving.

We also acknowledge the neighbouring Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri to our South East and the Wadawurrung to our South West and pay our respect to all Aboriginal peoples, their culture, and lore. We acknowledge their living culture and the unique role they play in the life of this region.

2 OPENING OF MEETING

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Cr Tony Clark, Cr Shirley Cornish, Cr Tim Drylie, Cr Lesley Hewitt, Cr Don Henderson, Cr Pat Hockey, Cr Brian Hood

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr Bradley Thomas - Chief Executive Officer, Mr Bruce Lucas - Director Infrastructure and Delivery, Ms Brooke Holmes - Director Performance and Transformation, Mr Ron Torres - Director Development and Community, Mr Chris Whyte - Manager Technology and Transformation, Ms Rebecca Smith - Manager Governance and Risk

The meeting opened at 6:00pm.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

“WE THE COUNCILLORS OF HEPBURN SHIRE
DECLARE THAT WE WILL UNDERTAKE ON EVERY OCCASION
TO CARRY OUT OUR DUTIES IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY
AND THAT OUR CONDUCT SHALL MAINTAIN THE STANDARDS OF THE CODE OF
GOOD GOVERNANCE
SO THAT WE MAY FAITHFULLY REPRESENT AND UPHOLD THE TRUST PLACED IN THIS
COUNCIL BY THE PEOPLE OF HEPBURN SHIRE”

3 APOLOGIES

Nil.

4 DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Go to 00:02:39 in the meeting recording to view this item.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 27 May 2025 (as previously circulated to Councillors) be confirmed.

MOTION

That the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 27 May 2025 (as previously circulated to Councillors) be confirmed.

Moved: Cr Lesley Hewitt

Seconded: Cr Pat Hockey

Carried

Voted for: Cr Tony Clark, Cr Shirley Cornish, Cr Tim Drylie, Cr Lesley Hewitt, Cr Don Henderson, Cr Pat Hockey and Cr Brian Hood

Voted against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TIME

Go to 00:03:18 in the meeting recording to view this item.

This part of the Ordinary Meeting of Council allows for the tabling of petitions by Councillors and Officers and 30 minutes for the purposes of:

- Tabling petitions
- Responding to questions from members of our community
- Members of the community to address Council

Community members are invited to be involved in public participation time in accordance with Council's Governance Rules.

Individuals may submit written questions or requests to address Council to the Chief Executive Officer by 10:00am the day before the Council Meeting.

Some questions of an operational nature may be responded to through usual administrative procedure. Separate forums and Council processes are provided for deputations or for making submissions to Council.

Questions received may be taken on notice but formal responses will be provided to the questioners directly. These responses will also be read out and included within the minutes of the next Ordinary Meeting of Council to make them publicly available to all.

BEHAVIOUR AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council supports a welcoming, respectful and safe environment for members of the community to participate at Council Meetings regarding issues that are important to them. Council's Governance Rules sets out guidelines for the Mayor, Councillors, and community members on public participation in meetings. It reinforces the value of diversity in thinking, while being respectful of differing views, and the rights and reputation of others.

Under the Governance Rules, members of the public present at a Council Meeting must not be disruptive during the meeting.

Respectful behaviour includes:

- Being courteous when addressing Council during public participation time and directing all comments through the Chair
- Being quiet during proceedings
- Being respectful towards others present and respecting their right to their own views

Inappropriate behaviour includes:

- Interjecting or taking part in the debate
- Verbal abuse or harassment of a Councillor, member of staff, ratepayer or member of the public
- Threats of violence

6.1 PETITIONS

No petitions were tabled.

6.2 REQUESTS TO ADDRESS COUNCIL

No requests to address Council were received for this meeting.

6.3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The CEO read questions received in accordance with Council's Governance Rules and the Mayor responded on behalf of Council.

Question 1 – Debra Rauber

Page 20 of the newly adopted Onsite Wastewater Management Plan (OWMP) has three action items with timeframes of December 2024 and February 2025.

[...]

As the OWMP was endorsed by Council in April, these dates of December 2024 and February 2025 imply that these action items have been achieved. Can you please tell me where I can find the following:

'New resident kit for properties not connected to reticulated sewer', 'managing OWMS in your rental property or holiday accommodation', the reporting data from Council to the Water Authorities, and the minutes of the 'biannual OWMS Council and Water Authority meeting(s)'?

Response – Mayor Don Henderson

The achievement of these actions has been delayed. However, the following documents are near completion and will soon be available on Council's website, and distributed to relevant stakeholders:

- Resident Kit – for properties not connected to reticulated sewer
- Managing Onsite Wastewater Management Systems (OWMS) in Rental Properties or Holiday Accommodation

The minutes from the biannual Council and Water Authority meetings are not publicly available.

Question 2 – Debra Rauber

Action item number 1.4 of the OWMP says:

"Explore the possibility of a clause 66 Agreement under the Planning and Environment Act between Council and the Water Authorities."

Please explain what a 'clause 66 Agreement under the Planning and Environment Act' is, and how it will achieve the outcome of "generate efficiencies and priorities [sic] effort based on risk", when Section 66 of the Planning and Environment Act sets out the particulars regarding Notice to Referral Authorities?

Response – Mayor Don Henderson

Section 66 of the Planning and Environment Act (Notice to a referral authority) involves planning applications that have completed the process, and a decision has

been made. The Section sets out a council's obligations in providing referral authorities with a copy of a decision made by Council.

Clause 66 of all planning schemes (Referral and notice provisions) involves active planning applications with a Council. These provisions set out the kinds of applications which must be formally referred by Council to a public authority for their comment. The written response from a public authority could be in the form of an objection to the application, no objection to an application, or no objection subject to conditions. Under Clause 66, there is the ability for a council and a public authority to enter into a written agreement on the kinds of applications and the circumstances which negate the need to refer the application to the public authority. The agreement can also specify the conditions that the council must include in a planning permit

A Memorandum of Common Understanding may be established between Hepburn Shire Council and a water authority on the management of referrals required under Clause 66 of the Hepburn Shire Planning Scheme. Such an agreement containing mutually agreed criteria could potentially cover routine residential works and can result in significant application time reductions for our community's planning applications.

Question 3 – Gerry Rauber

On page 30 of the Onsite Wastewater Management Plan, it says that Council has assessed all localities as 'low' risk (for soil types) except for Clunes, and there is a Risk Factor Bands table 5 that assesses Soil type '4' as low risk. This assessment doesn't seem accurate, as the Land Capability Assessment Framework (Table 4: Risk Assessment of Soil Characteristics) assesses soil type 4b and 4c as 'Medium' Risk factors, and only 4a is 'minor' or 'low'.

Considering the Onsite Wastewater Management Plan information conflicts with the LCA Framework, can Council please explain what is the source of the assessments of the soil types in this table?

Response – Mayor Don Henderson

The purpose of the locality risk assessment is to serve as a practical guide for both officers and the community. Given that soil characteristics can vary significantly over short distances, each application or land assessment will be accompanied by a Land Capability Assessment (LCA). This ensures that the soil type is evaluated in the context of the specific proposal, providing a more accurate and site-specific understanding of land suitability.

Question 4 – Gerry Rauber

Section 10.1.1 is a table of the Onsite Wastewater Management Plan and says that less than 10 onsite wastewater management systems is a low risk, 10-20 is a medium risk, and a high risk is greater than 200.

This is a perplexing statement because it does not account for the size of the area where the Onsite Wastewater Management Plans are. For this table to have meaning, it would be helpful to report on assumptions of the 'average size of a population centre' for example.

In order to understand the table and for it to be helpful to anyone consulting the Onsite Wastewater Management Plan, could the data be more definitive?

Response – Mayor Don Henderson

The number of onsite wastewater management systems within a locality is a key risk factor, primarily due to the cumulative pathogen load they contribute to the catchment. This risk warrants increased scrutiny in areas experiencing significant development, as demonstrated in the example provided in the OWMP.

Council has developed this plan in alignment with guidance from the Environment Protection Authority, and the associated risk bandings are consistent with the EPA's recommendations.

Question 5 – Carolyn Whitehead

The Obligations of Managers of Land or Infrastructure (OMLI), gazetted on 7 May 2024, require under clause 6(1) that a Council in a municipal district with on-site wastewater management systems must develop and publish on its website an On-site Wastewater Management Plan (OWMP).

Ministerial guidelines (Planning permit applications in open, special water supply catchment areas) make clear that an OWMP must (1) satisfy the OMLI and (2) be actively implemented, with evidence, before it can justify any relaxation of the standard 1:40ha wastewater density policy.

It is now more than seven months since this Council's OWMP was implemented as an operational document by being signed by the CEO and Director and over two months since it was endorsed by the full Council. Yet as of the date of this question, it has still not been published on Council's website. This means neither the public nor permit applicants have access to the document. Given the OWMP remains unpublished, and therefore cannot meet the OMLI's legislative requirements, how can Council be approving planning applications with on-site wastewater densities greater than 1 system per 40 hectares?

Response – Mayor Don Henderson

The Ministerial Guidelines for Planning Permit Applications in Special Water Supply Catchment Areas are a key reference for responsible and referral authorities when assessing land use and development proposals within these sensitive areas. The guidelines emphasise that each application should be assessed on a site-by-site basis, taking into account the specific characteristics and risks of the location.

Council's Onsite Wastewater Management Plan (OWMP) is published on Council's website. The time between its approval and being made available on Council's website did not override the requirement for applications to demonstrate compliance with the OWMP, and the relevant legislative requirements aimed at protecting public health and the environment.

Question 6 – Carolyn Whitehead

Section 11 (2nd paragraph) of the newly adopted Onsite Wastewater Management Plan states that:

"Based on the Hepburn Shire Council risk assessment, a locality with a median lot size greater than 0.8 hectares that are mostly used for farming will be considered low risk, irrespective of the other risk factors."

Given that the EPA's Code of Practice for Onsite Wastewater Management requires consideration of site-specific, multi-criteria assessment, such as soil type, slope, groundwater depth, or proximity to waterways, this statement appears to create a loophole for development in environmentally constrained rural and farming areas without proper scrutiny.

Could Council explain:

On what basis has it determined that other risk factors can be disregarded in such areas?

Response – Mayor Don Henderson

Lot size is a significant factor in assessing wastewater risk. Larger properties are more likely to accommodate the required setbacks for onsite wastewater systems, thereby reducing the potential for environmental and public health impacts.

Furthermore, the entire Shire is covered by the Environmental Significance Overlay. The objective of this planning control is *"to ensure all development is undertaken in a manner that protects, restores and enhances natural resources and environmental systems and seeks to eliminate detrimental impacts on the quality and quantity of water in the catchment, to ensure the long term plentiful supply of quality water"*.

Unless specifically exempted by this control, a development is required to obtain planning permission from Council and be comprehensively assessed against the decision guidelines of the Environmental Significance Overlay. These include:

- *The proximity of the development to waterways, drainage lines and water supply reservoirs in the catchment.*
- *The possible impact and effect of the development on the quantity and quality of water in waterways, drainage lines, water supply reservoirs and springs.*
- *The need and measures to:*

- *Provide buffers for or separation from waterways, drainage lines, gullies, property boundaries and any existing disposal areas or systems.*
- *Minimise and reduce nutrient loads, turbidity and siltation in waterways, drainage lines and water supply reservoirs.*
- *Decrease or reduce the velocity of stormwater into waterways, drainage lines and water supply reservoirs.*
- *Prevent erosion of natural features, including banks, streambeds and adjoining land.*
- *Improve filtration and infiltration of water.*
- *Retain and increase native vegetation to prevent or limit adverse effects on waterways, drainage lines and water supply reservoirs.*
- *The means of treatment and disposal of all sewage, sullage, stormwater and other wastes on site which is consistent with a geotechnical report or land capability report having regard to the slope, soil type and other environmental factors including the potential for pollution of waterways and ground water.*

7 OFFICER REPORTS

7.1 1 SARTORI ROAD, FRANKLINFORD (PLN23/0268) USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAND FOR GLAMPING (CAMPING AND CARAVAN PARK)

Go to 00:17:40 in the meeting recording to view this item.

DIRECTOR DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY

In providing this advice to Council as Senior Statutory Planner, I Andrew Page have no interests to disclose in this report.

ATTACHMENTS

1. PL N 23 0268 - 1 Sartori Road Franklinford Planning Report - February 2024 [7.1.1 - 20 pages]
2. PL N 23 0268 - 1 Sartori Road Franklinford Plan - February 2024 [7.1.2 - 8 pages]
3. PL N 23 0268 - 1 Sartori Road Franklinford - Farm Management Plan [7.1.3 - 54 pages]
4. PL N 23 0268 - 1 Sartori Road Franklinford - Bushfire Assessment [7.1.4 - 24 pages]
5. PL N 23 0268 - 1 Sartori Road Franklinford - Land Capability Assessment [7.1.5 - 22 pages]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A planning permit application has been received by Council seeking planning approval for the use and development of land for a camping and caravan park for the purpose of glamping. While glamping is not defined in the *Hepburn Planning Scheme* (the Scheme), the nature of the use would fit the definition of a camping and caravan park, being land used to allow accommodation in caravans, cabins, tents, or the like.

The land is within the Farming Zone – Schedule 2 and affected by the Environmental Significance Overlay – Schedule 1. It is within a Bushfire Prone Area but is not within the Bushfire Management Overlay.

The application was referred externally to Goulburn Murray Water and Central Highlands Water as statutory referrals who have granted conditional and unconditional consent respectively to the proposal.

Internally within Council, the application was referred to Strategic Planning, Engineering and Environmental Health who have not raised any concerns with the proposal. A further non-statutory referral was undertaken to the Country Fire Authority which did not object to the proposal.

Public notice of the application was given in accordance with section 52 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act) with 16 objections received.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That Council, having complied with the relevant sections of the Planning and

Environment Act 1987, issue a Notice of Refusal to Grant a Permit for application No.PLN23/0268 for the use and development of the land for a camping and caravan park for the purposes of glamping based upon the following grounds of refusal:

- 1. The application fails to demonstrate how the proposed use and development of the land will meet the objective of Clause 13.02-15 of the Hepburn Planning Scheme. Specifically, the application lacks evidence of how the proposed use and development has prioritised the protection of human life via the implementation of appropriate bushfire mitigation measures;*
- 2. The proposed use and development of the land is not in accordance with Clause 14.01 Agriculture of the Hepburn Planning Scheme. The application proposes a non-agricultural land use within an area currently used for agricultural purposes which will have a negative impact on surrounding land; and,*
- 3. The proposed use and development are inconsistent with the purpose and decision guidelines of Clause 35.07 of the Hepburn Planning Scheme.*

MOTION

That Council, having complied with the relevant sections of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, issue a Notice of Refusal to Grant a Permit for application No.PLN23/0268 for the use and development of the land for a camping and caravan park for the purposes of glamping based upon the following grounds of refusal:

- 1. The application fails to demonstrate how the proposed use and development of the land will meet the objective of Clause 13.02-15 of the Hepburn Planning Scheme. Specifically, the application lacks evidence of how the proposed use and development has prioritised the protection of human life via the implementation of appropriate bushfire mitigation measures;*
- 2. The proposed use and development of the land is not in accordance with Clause 14.01 Agriculture of the Hepburn Planning Scheme. The application proposes a non-agricultural land use within an area currently used for agricultural purposes which will have a negative impact on surrounding land; and,*
- 3. The proposed use and development are inconsistent with the purpose and decision guidelines of Clause 35.07 of the Hepburn Planning Scheme.*

Moved: Cr Pat Hockey

Seconded: Cr Shirley Cornish

Carried

Voted for: Cr Tony Clark, Cr Shirley Cornish, Cr Tim Drylie, Cr Lesley Hewitt, Cr Don Henderson and Cr Pat Hockey
Voted against: Cr Brian Hood
Abstained: Nil

BACKGROUND

Site and Surrounds

The land is known and described as Lot 1 on Plan of Subdivision 623376D being a rectangular site of 20.81 hectares and located on the southern side of Sartori Road. The site has a 305.7m frontage to Sartori Road on its front northern boundary and has a depth of approximately 663.5m to the southern rear boundary which abuts an unmade road reserve.

The site contains an established dwelling and associated outbuildings contained in a cluster at the front of the site, set back approximately 35 metres from the front northern boundary, and approximately 75 metres from the side, eastern boundary. The dwelling and outbuildings occupy a small portion of the site within a fenced area on its front northeastern side totalling approximately 5000 square metres including all weather vehicle access, a wastewater system and water tanks. The balance of the land is cleared pasture with little vegetation present and a natural drainage line running in a southerly direction to the rear of the site in its rear half close to the eastern side boundary. The site slopes down from the frontage on the northeastern side to the rear southwestern corner.

The subject site is located within the small settlement of Franklinford approximately 8.4km north of the Hepburn township via Hepburn Newstead Road.

The surrounding area consists of varying rural land holdings exhibiting a mix of predominately rural residential and agricultural land uses within the Farming Zone. To the north and west of the site is a significant land holding known as 871 Hepburn Newstead Road, consisting of 39 parcels of land in contiguous ownership totalling approximately 145 hectares, the land holding includes unmade road reserves and land on both sides of Larni Barramul Yaluk.

Land to the east of the site includes an established dwelling on a cleared 20-hectare site known as 2 Ligar Street Franklinford and further south abutting the eastern side boundary is the Franklinford Cemetary with in the Public Use Zone 5.

Land to the south includes an established dwelling on a cleared 22-hectare site known as 82 Clarkes Road Franklinford.

Proposal

The application seeks a planning permit for the use and development of the land for a camping and caravan park, specifically for glamping. Glamping is described as

luxury camping in fixed tents that provide short term holiday accommodation for guests.

The area of the proposal is to occupy the front half of the site near the established dwelling and leave the remainder (southern half) of the site for agricultural use, a Farm Management Plan has been provided in support of the application.

The application also includes a waste management plan, biodiversity assessment and bushfire risk assessment in response to clause 13.02-15 of the Scheme.

The proposal is to have two rows of seven glamping tents on each side of the site. A row of seven tents on the eastern side of the site are proposed to have a minimum setback of 8.1 metres from the eastern side boundary and the row of seven on the western side of the site are proposed to have a minimum setback of 23.4 metres from the western side boundary. The tents will be setback to the rear of the dwelling with a minimum front setback of approximately 125 metres from Sartori Road.

Each of the private tents will have a floor area of 7.2 metres by 5.1 metres, and include a living area, bathroom with shower and toilet and a small front deck.

A larger common tent will be in a central area to provide a common cooking and dining area for guests. All tents will be constructed on timber decks raised up on stumps.

The tents are to be accessed by a shared permeable accessway/pathway with a new vehicle access proposed to be created on the northeastern side of the frontage close to the eastern side boundary. It is to extend south adjacent to the eastern boundary to a car parking area providing 14 car spaces, 54 metres from the frontage and 19 metres from the eastern side boundary. The accessway will then extend in south westerly direction to access the tents and common tent.

The proposal will include new onsite wastewater management facilities and potable water supply, with the development plans including landscaping to be completed around the tents and the general development area.

The applicant has provided an FMP in support of the application and proposes to use the southern half of the site for agriculture, specifically for cattle grazing as detailed in the FMP. The FMP states:

'The owners currently plant to run steers to match seasonal feed availability. This is a proven option for this district, land type and climate zone.'

It is noted that the use of the land for agriculture as detailed in the FMP does not require a planning permit in the Farming Zone.

Relevant Planning Ordinance applying to the site and proposal

The relevant planning controls which are to be considered as part of this assessment

are as follows:

- The land is within the Farming Zone, Schedule 2
- The land is covered by the Environmental Significance Overlay, Schedule 1
- The relevant particular provision is clause 52.06 Car Parking.

A planning permit is required under the following clauses of the Scheme:

- Clause 35.07-1 for the use of the land for a camping and caravan park. A camping and caravan park is a section 2 use in the Farming Zone. Any section 2 use requires a planning permit.
- Clause 35.07-4 for buildings and works associated with a section 2 use.
- Clause 42.01-2 for buildings and works that generate wastewater and are not connected to reticulated sewerage.

The following provisions planning policy framework are considered relevant:

- Clause 12.01-1S Protection of biodiversity
- Clause 13.02-1S Bushfire planning
- Clause 13.07-1S Land use compatibility
- Clause 14.01-1S Protection of agricultural land
- Clause 14.01-1L Protection of agricultural land
- Clause 14.01-2S Sustainable agricultural land use
- Clause 14.01-2L Sustainable agricultural enterprises
- Clause 14.02-1S Catchment planning and management
- Clause 14.02-1L Catchment and land protection
- Clause 14.02-2S Water quality
- Clause 15.01-6S Design for rural areas
- Clause 15.03-2S Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Clause 15.03-2L Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Clause 17.01-1R Diversified economy - Central Highlands
- Clause 17.04-1S Facilitating tourism

KEY ISSUES

Response to key Policy Planning Policy Framework

Clause 13.07-1S Land use compatibility

The objective of Clause 13.07 is:

To protect community amenity, human health and safety while facilitating appropriate commercial, industrial, infrastructure or other uses with potential adverse off-site impacts.

Given the land is surrounded by agricultural land, in particular a large land holding to the north and west of the site. It is considered there is potential for land use

conflict to occur between the two sites. Whilst this is a perceived risk, the application material does not clearly demonstrate how potential amenity impacts could be appropriately managed given the site is located with an area of agricultural use. It is considered there may also be a risk of 'reverse amenity' impacts if the proposed use and development were to be approved which could see the agricultural use of land unduly impacted by a higher-than-normal amenity expectation from the accommodation facility. Agricultural undertakings in the Farming Zone are generally permitted uses which cannot be regulated by planning controls. These legitimate agricultural activities can sometimes be detrimental to adjacent residential uses.

13.02-1S Bushfire Planning

Clause 13.02-1S relates to Bushfire planning, the policy must be applied to all planning and decision relating to land that is within a designated bushfire prone area.

The objective of Clause 13.02-1S is:

To strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life

Clause 13.02-1S states that when assessing a planning permit application for the use of accommodation the responsible authority should:

- Consider the risk of bushfire to people, property, and community infrastructure.
- Require the implementation of appropriate bushfire protection measures to address the identified bushfire risk.
- Ensure new development can implement bushfire protection measures without unacceptable biodiversity impacts.

As the land is not within a Bushfire Management Overlay, the application was referred to the CFA under Section 52 for advice. The CFA response states that they do not object to the proposal, however, have provided several recommendations for Council to consider.

The first of these recommendations proposed that the minimum BAL rating for the structures used for accommodation be a minimum of BAL 12.5. As glamping tents are not able to achieve a BAL rating the CFA go on to further recommend that a shelter in place building be constructed to allow protection for visitors to the site in the case of a bushfire emergency.

Further to this, the CFA recommend the submission of a Bushfire Emergency Management Plan; it is noted that this was also requested to be provided within a

request for further information to the applicant, however had not been provided to date.

The application documentation submitted is not considered to adequately demonstrate how the objective of Clause 13.02-1S will be met. The Bushfire Assessment which has been provided recommends that BAL 12.5 can be achieved for buildings within the 'tent area.' However, the application material does not provide evidence that the proposed structures (glamping tents) are able to be constructed to achieve this BAL rating.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the CFA response has only been recently received, BAL rating requirements and the potential provision of a shelter-in-place building is common advice which is readily given by the CFA to potential applicants.

Clause 14.01-1 Agriculture

The application proposes a discretionary (permit required) use of the land within the Farming Zone, with an application of this nature needing to demonstrate how it will respond to Clause 14 in relation to agriculture and water that are linked to the permission sought.

The application is supported by an FMP that details the landowner will implement cattle grazing as part of the proposal, however the FMP does not provide a clear link between the proposed glamping use and agriculture.

Farming Zone and agricultural issues

In considering an application for a discretionary use within the farming zone, in this instance glamping, defined as a camping and caravan park, council must consider whether the application produces an acceptable planning outcome. This includes meeting the purpose of the Farming Zone and adequately addressing the relevant decision guidelines of clause 35.07-6 including general, accommodation, agricultural, environmental and design and siting issues.

A discretionary use within the Farming Zone must be consider any potential impacts to the agricultural potential of the site, whether the proposal will remove productive agricultural land and whether the proposal would negatively impact agricultural land uses on adjoining and nearby land.

The application proposes to use only the front half of the site for the glamping use while proposing to use the balance of the land for cattle grazing as detailed in the FMP. The FMP includes operational detail of the agricultural use and how this will complement the glamping use. The written submission also looks to address the provisions of the Farming Zone including discussion of the retention of a large portion of the site for an agricultural use.

Further consideration must also be given to the Rural Hepburn Strategy adopted by Council, but yet to be implemented into the Scheme. The Rural Strategy earmarks

this area for potential rezoning to Rural Activity Zone (RAZ) which would keep agriculture as primary land use and include a diversity of agricultural enterprises including small scale artisan and innovative operations. Rural tourism opportunities that leverage the area's agricultural sector and environmental values will be encouraged.

Overlay Considerations

The land is within the Environmental Significance Overlay, Schedule 1 of which the purpose of the overlay is to ensure all development is undertaken in a manner that protects, restores and enhances natural resources and environmental systems and seeks to eliminate detrimental impacts on the quality and quantity of water in the catchment, to ensure the long term plentiful supply of quality water.

The land and more broadly the majority of the Hepburn Shire is within the Special Water Supply Catchment (SWSC) that is part of a number of catchments that flow to Port Phillip Bay or the Murray River. The majority of these catchments are declared as SWSC's under Schedule 5 of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

The proposal is to use and develop the land with the development generating wastewater without a connection to a reticulated sewerage system. In the absence of reticulated sewerage, the proposal will rely on onsite wastewater management or septic systems. The installation and ongoing maintenance of any septic system will be required to be carried out in accordance with the *Guideline for onsite wastewater management, EPA, May 2024*. When planning permission is sought under the Environmental Significance Overlay, Schedule 1, a statutory referral is required under clause 66.04 of the Scheme to the relevant water authority, in this instance Goulburn Murray Water (GMW). The application was referred to GMW which has granted conditional consent to the proposal.

Particular Provision

When a new use is proposed on a site, the application must provide the required number of car parking spaces in accordance with Clause 52.06 for the specified use. If the use is not listed in the clause, then the amount of car parking spaces is to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority.

Camping and Caravan Park is not listed in clause 52.06. The application provides 14 car spaces effectively being one to each private tent. Council must consider whether this is appropriate under the provisions of clause 52.06.

Policy and Statutory Implications

This application meets Council's obligations as Responsible Authority under the

Planning and Environment Act 1987.

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Any sustainability implications associated with this proposal are contained in the Hepburn Planning Scheme for consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Any application determined by Council or under delegation of Council is subject to appeal rights and may incur costs at VCAT if appealed.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

No risks to Council other than those already identified.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The application has been advertised by sending notification of the proposal to adjoining and adjacent owners and a notice on the land. As a result, 16 objections have been received. The issues raised in the objections are summarised as follows:

- Permanent removal of agricultural land.
- Incompatible land use in a Farming Zone.
- Impacts on neighbouring agricultural use.
- Fragmentation of farmland.
- Site adjoins Cemetery in the Heritage Overlay.
- Negative impacts on livestock on adjoining land.
- Amenity impacts to the Glamping use from farming operations nearby.
- Impact on the established farming culture of the area.
- Impact to a farmer's lived experience.
- Loss of privacy and use of open space.
- Safety and security issues.
- People smoking and bringing pets
- Taking photos of the surrounding area.
- Environmental risks, bushfire, water quality impact to SWSC.
- Increased traffic.
- Unacceptable water runoff downslope to adjoining land
- Noise pollution.
- Trespassing by guests.
- Sartori Road not capable of accommodating increased traffic.

- Limited potable water supply.
- Unsupervised caravan park.
- Excessive light spill.
- Potential for road accidents with increased traffic.
- Use of Bore Water for a Spa.
- Visual impact in a rural setting.
- Impact to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Area.
- Impacts to wildlife.
- Is the business model viable?
- Site not suitable for wastewater management.
- No soil test provided and insufficient information regarding soil type and make up.
- Incorrect LCA calculations.
- Application incorrectly states no springs in the vicinity, Thomas Spring directly south of the subject site.
- No bushfire emergency management plan provided.
- Applicant does not understand the bushfire risk.
- Land use conflict.
- Unacceptable to have glamping near a cemetery.
- Tents are not fireproof.
- CFA have not commented on the proposal.
- No stormwater management plan provided.
- No car parking plan.

7.2 ADOPTION OF THE COUNCIL PLAN 2025-2029

Go to 00:39:35 in the meeting recording to view this item.

Cr Pat Hockey left the meeting at 6:41pm.

Cr Pat Hockey returned to the meeting at 6:42pm.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

In providing this advice to Council as the Chief Executive Officer, I Bradley Thomas have no interests to disclose in this report.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Council Plan 2025-2029 [**7.2.1** - 56 pages]
2. Council Plan 2025-2026 - Key Themes From Community Consultation [**7.2.2** - 3 pages]
3. Council Plan 2025-2029 - Gender Impact Assessment [**7.2.3** - 14 pages]
4. Council Plan 2025-2029 - Integrated Strategic Planning - Participate Hepburn Data Analysis [**7.2.4** - 3 pages]
5. CONFIDENTIAL - Council Plan 2025-2029 - Integrated Strategic Planning - Emailed Submissions [**7.2.5** - 151 pages]
6. CONFIDENTIAL - Council Plan 2025-2029 - Participate Hepburn - Submissions [**7.2.6** - 13 pages]

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. *Adopts the Council Plan 2025-2029, including the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan;*
2. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to undertake minor, administrative changes to the documents to correct errors and improve readability, if required;*
3. *Notes the development of the Council Plan is fully compliant with relevant legislation;*
4. *Thanks the community for their valuable contributions in shaping Council's future strategic direction and priorities and notes the Chief Executive Officer will provide a written response to each submission where contact details have been provided; and*
5. *Notes that regular reporting on the performance of the Council Plan will be provided through Council's Annual Report.*

MOTION

That Council:

- 1. Adopts the Council Plan 2025-2029, including the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan;*
- 2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to undertake minor, administrative changes to the documents to correct errors and improve readability, if required;*
- 3. Notes the development of the Council Plan is fully compliant with relevant legislation;*
- 4. Thanks the community for their valuable contributions in shaping Council's future strategic direction and priorities and notes the Chief Executive Officer will provide a written response to each submission where contact details have been provided; and*
- 5. Notes that regular reporting on the performance of the Council Plan will be provided through Council's Annual Report.*

Moved: Cr Tony Clark

Seconded: Cr Lesley Hewitt

Carried

Voted for: Cr Tony Clark, Cr Shirley Cornish, Cr Tim Drylie, Cr Lesley Hewitt, Cr Don Henderson and Cr Pat Hockey

Voted against: Nil

Abstained: Cr Brian Hood

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present Council with the proposed Council Plan 2025-2029 (the Plan), incorporating the 2021-31 Community Vision and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) for adoption, following community consultation on the draft document.

The development of the Plan, as a key pillar of the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework set the strategic direction of the Council over the next four years.

The draft Council Plan is built around three domains or strategic objectives:

- Hepburn Life – creating a connected, inclusive and thriving community.
- Future Hepburn – protecting our unique towns and landscapes while supporting sustainable development and infrastructure.

- Hepburn Working Together – ensuring strong governance, a skilled workforce, and high-quality service delivery.

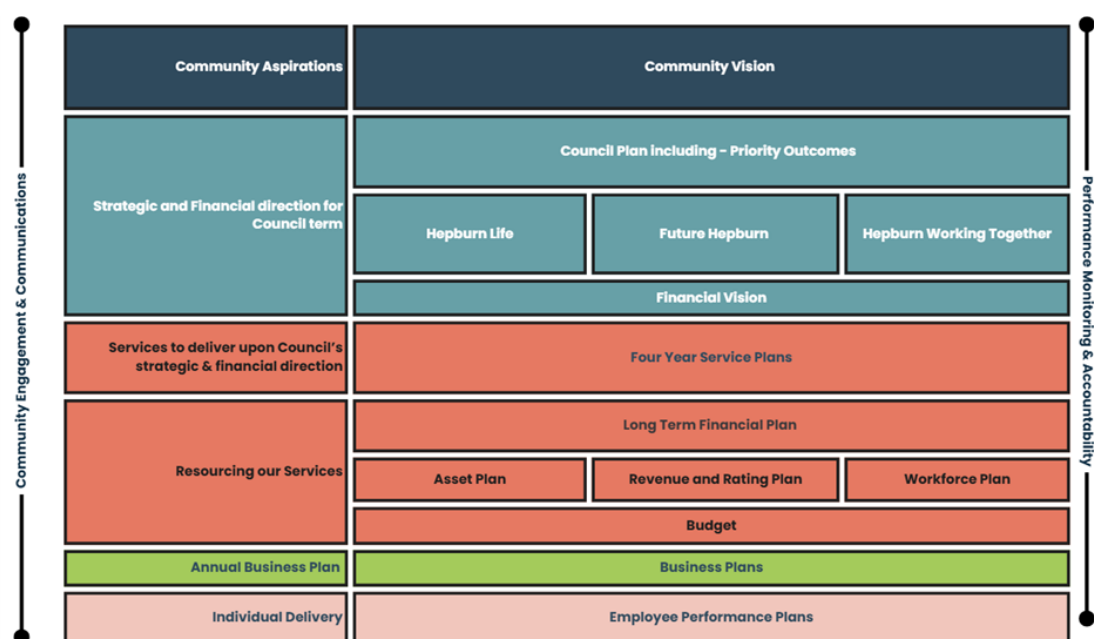
The Plan clearly outlines the outcomes Council aims to achieve throughout the term, focusing on tangible benefits for the community and the organisation.

Council endorsed the draft Plan on the 12 May 2025, and since community have been engaged to consult their views. Community input has been central to shaping the Council Plan. Feedback from initiatives such as the Financial Vision project, Future Hepburn, and the Hepburn Together survey, which received over 400 submissions, has directly informed the priorities. Council also received valuable insights from the Deliberative Engagement Panel, made up of residents from across the Shire, and over 200 submissions in relation to the draft documents.

BACKGROUND

Council endorsed the draft Plan on the 12 May 2025, and since community have been engaged to consult their views.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework sets out the range of strategic documents Council is required to adopt under the *Local Government Act 2020*, following the election of a new Council. The framework (below) sets out Hepburn Shire's integrated approach to planning, monitoring, and performance reporting.



Layer	Description	Documents
Community aspirations	Community aspirations are set out in our Community Vision.	Community Vision

Strategic direction	The strategic and financial direction and priorities across the Council term.	Council Plan and Financial Vision
Council services	Services that will deliver upon Council's strategic and financial priorities.	Service Catalogue and Service Map
Resourcing	How we will resource our services to deliver Council's strategic and financial priorities.	Financial Plan, Asset Plan, Workforce Plan and Annual Budget.
Annual business plan	The projects and initiatives funded through the annual Budget that will deliver on Council's strategic and financial priorities.	Annual Plan
Individual delivery	Individual employee plans that align our Council Officers roles and responsibilities to Council's strategic and financial priorities.	Employee Performance Plans

KEY ISSUES

Council Plan 2025-2029

Our Council Plan 2025–2029 (including the Health and Wellbeing Plan) is focused on getting back to the basics. We are laying the groundwork for a strong future by focusing on maintaining our roads, enhancing our parks, planning for our community's future and delivering customer-centred services.

Our vision is to build a future where services are accessible and connected to the needs of our community. We will focus on three domains (strategic objectives), Hepburn Life, Future Hepburn and Hepburn Working Together:

- Hepburn Life is about building a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive community where every person feels connected, informed, and supported to thrive.
- Future Hepburn strives to honour the distinctive character of our towns and rural landscapes while fostering sustainable growth, infrastructure, and economic vitality.

- Hepburn Working Together is guided by a commitment to delivering high-quality services, ensuring strong governance, and fostering a positive and skilled workforce.

The following details the outcomes of the Council Plan.

Hepburn Life

Outcomes



- 1 Connected communities that are resilient, adaptable, and empowered - able to respond to and recover from climate-related impacts, emergencies, and other community challenges.
- 2 A healthy and inclusive community, where all people regardless of background or life stage have the opportunity to participate and thrive.
- 3 An informed and engaged community.

Future Hepburn

Outcomes



- 1 Preserve the unique character of our towns and communities, plan for future growth and protect our productive rural landscape.
- 2 Responsible management of infrastructure and environment to support wellbeing now and for future generations.
- 3 A dynamic, vibrant and resilient economic environment.

Hepburn working together

Outcomes



- 1 Future-focused services that are easy to use and inclusive.
- 2 Maintain corporate governance to enable good Council decision making and to ensure long-term financial viability.
- 3 An engaged, safe, and skillful workforce.

Hepburn Life	
Outcome 1	Connected communities that are resilient, adaptable, and empowered - able to respond to and recover from climate-related impacts, emergencies, and other community challenges.
Outcome 2	A healthy and inclusive community, where all people regardless of background or stage of life and have the opportunity to participate and thrive.
Outcome 3	An informed and engaged community.
Future Hepburn	
Outcome 1	Preserve the unique character of our towns and communities, plan for future growth and protect our productive rural landscape.
Outcome 2	Responsible management of infrastructure and environment to support wellbeing now and for future generations.
Outcome 3	A dynamic, vibrant, and resilient economic environment.
Hepburn Working Together	
Outcome 1	Future focused services that are easy to use and inclusive.
Outcome 2	Maintain corporate governance to enable good Council decision making and to ensure long-term financial viability.
Outcome 3	An engaged, safe, and skilful workforce.

Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

The *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires all local governments to prepare a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) within 12 months of a council election. The Hepburn Shire Council Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029 has been embedded into the Community Vision and Council Plan 2025-2029, and Council has received notification from the Department of Health that they are satisfied the draft adequately addresses required matters and approve the MPHWP being included within the Council Plan.

The MPHWP identifies the health priorities of the municipality for the next four years, with the two priority areas selected are:

- increasing active living
- increasing mental wellbeing

Amendments made following consultation feedback

Note: The table below outlines the key changes made to the Draft Council Plan in response to community feedback. Minor wording adjustments, improvements to readability, and other refinements intended to strengthen the overall document have been made to the document but not included in the below table.

Section	Current Content	Amendment / Addition
<i>Indicators: Hepburn Life- Council-led Indicators</i>	Not applicable – Addition of new performance indicator	Percentage of actions completed from Council adopted strategies.
<i>Our vision for Reconciliation</i>	Our relationships with Traditional Owners are built on respect, understanding and acknowledgement of Truth-telling in our shared history, and through our Innovate RAP we will build on our commitment to reconciliation, demonstrated in our previous Reflect RAP, to ensure all members of the Hepburn Shire community are united by respect.	Addition of “self-determination” Our relationships with Traditional Owners are built on respect, understanding and acknowledgement of Truth-telling in our shared history, and through our Innovate RAP we will build on our commitment to reconciliation and self-determination , demonstrated in our previous Reflect RAP, to ensure all members of the Hepburn Shire community are united by respect
<i>Hepburn Life / Outcome 3 / Strategy 1</i>	Provide timely accurate information through a variety of platforms, ensuring all residents are informed and have the ability to participate in Council activities and decision making through a variety of accessible platforms.	Addition of “through collaborative efforts” Through collaborative efforts , provide timely accurate information through a variety of platforms, ensuring all residents are informed and

		have the ability to participate in Council activities and decision making through a variety of accessible platforms.
<i>Hepburn Working Together / Outcome 1 / Strategy 3</i>	Integrate principles of climate mitigation, violence prevention, gender equity, and inclusion into Council processes and policies to create a safer and more equitable community.	Addition of “...and adaptation ” Integrate principles of climate mitigation and adaptation , violence prevention, gender equity, and inclusion into Council processes and policies to create a safer and more equitable community
<i>Hepburn Working Together Introduction</i>	Not applicable – Addition of new statement regarding gender equity.	"We will embed gender equity in our recruitment, leadership development and workplace culture, and address barriers faced by women and gender-diverse staff through our Workforce Plan and Gender Equality Action Plan."
<i>Council's approach to health and wellbeing</i>	Not applicable – Addition of new statement regarding gender equity.	"Council will prioritise equitable health and wellbeing outcomes, recognising the gendered and intersectional drivers of poor mental health, social isolation, and family violence."
<i>Community Engagement</i>	Previous engagement activities, especially associated with Future Hepburn (Township Structure Plans and Rural Strategy), previous Council Plan input and the Financial Vision.	Addition of “ including the Cultural Values Assessment ” Previous engagement activities especially associated with Future Hepburn (Township Structure Plans and Rural Strategy, including the Cultural Values

		Assessment), previous Council Plan input and the Financial Vision.'
Welcome	Not applicable – Addition of new paragraph	Councillors and staff are deeply committed to working in partnership with the community and are focused on continually strengthening and enhancing this approach into the future
Community Engagement	Not applicable – Addition of new paragraph	Many of the engagement ideas provided were detailed and specific, reflecting the community's constructive input. These specific suggestions will be carefully reviewed and considered during the development of departmental business plans to ensure that we are responsive to the community's needs and priorities.
Future Hepburn /Outcome 1/ Strategy 4	Protect and enhance productive agricultural land, significant landscapes, biodiversity, natural environment, cultural landscapes and waterways.	Protect and enhance productive agricultural land, significant landscapes, biodiversity, natural environment, cultural landscapes, waterways, mineral water and Mineral Springs.'

COUNCIL POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Council Plan 2021-2025

A dynamic and responsive Council

5.2 Actively communicate, inform and engage with our community about events and decision-making

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework outlines the range of strategic documents that the Council is required to adopt under the *Local Government Act 2020*. The documents and the processes undertaken are fully compliant with, and exceed, the requirements of the Act.

The document, and the process to develop the document is fully compliant with, and in many cases exceeds the required legislative requirements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council Plan has been developed in line with Council's Financial Vision. Specific financial details are included throughout the documents.

With a commitment to safeguarding Council's long-term financial health, a comprehensive review of the ten-year Financial Plan, alongside a broad evaluation of service provisions, has been undertaken and continues on from the previous work associated with the Financial Vision 2024-2027. Striking a balance between financial constraints, community expectations, and statutory obligations remains a formidable task, particularly given the constraints of the State Government rate cap and fluctuations in government grant funding.

Consideration of other key documents associated with the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (Financial Plan, Budget, Revenue and Rating Plan and Asset Plan) will be considered at a separate report before Council.

The Council Plan is achievable within Council's Financial Vision and draft Budget.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A considerable amount of feedback from the community has been collated over the last 12 months through various consultation processes, from the Financial Vision in 2024 to today. The feedback identifies key themes and ideas we've heard from our community.

Engagement to date

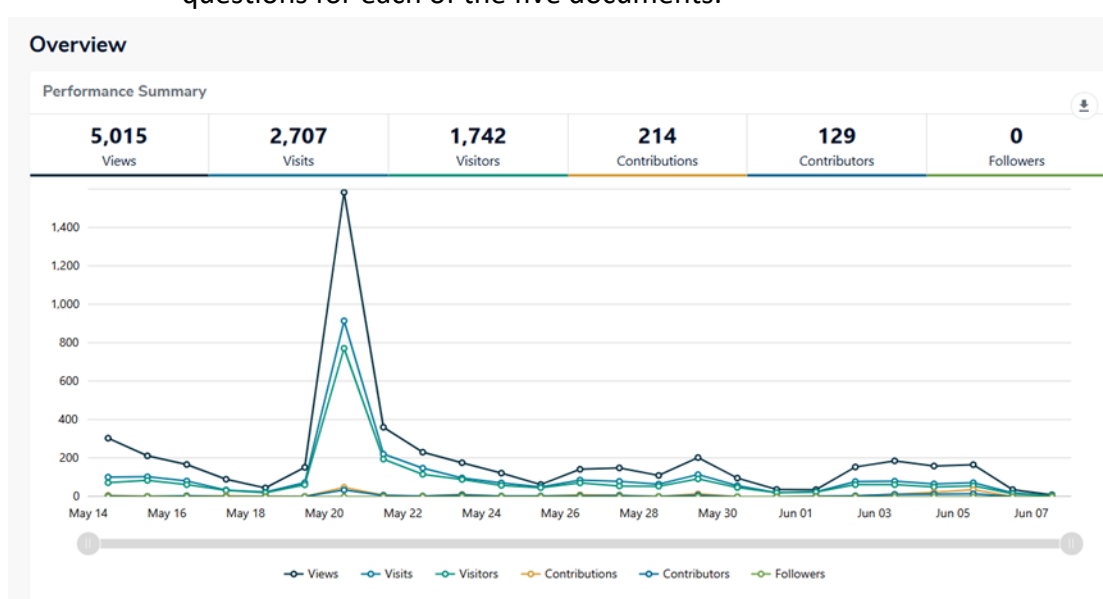
The previous engagement that has been undertaken has included:

- Previous engagement activities, especially associated with Future Hepburn (Township Structure Plans and Rural Strategy), previous Council Plan input and the Financial Vision.
- Councillor and officer insights.
- A community based deliberative engagement panel which included a facilitated closing session
- A shire-wide community survey, with over 400 responses.

In addition to the engagement conducted prior to the Integrated Strategic draft documents being published for the community to consider, further work has been

undertaken to ensure a range of engagement opportunities have been available to our community to provide feedback on the Council Plan and other documents, including:

- **Community Drop-in Sessions**
Nine community drop-in sessions were held throughout the municipality, in Clunes, Creswick, Daylesford, Glenlyon, and Trentham.
- **Participate Hepburn**
The community engagement platform has invited submissions and feedback, with 214 contributions recorded. These contributions consist of a combination of ranking of statements and free text responses to questions for each of the five documents.



In addition to the submissions received on Participate Hepburn, there has been significant traffic to the site, with over 5000 views throughout the period of 14 May through until the 5 June 2025.

- **Email Submissions:** 25 submissions have been received from various parts of the community; individual community members, community advisory groups, project advisory groups, clubs and organisations. This includes feedback from the community drop-in sessions.
- **Social media**
 - o **Hepburn Shire Council Facebook Page:**
Five targeted Facebook posts were created to encourage attendance at the community drop-in sessions.
 - o **Go Local First Hepburn Shire Facebook Page:**
A post was created encouraging feedback on the draft ISP documents during the consultation period, directing people to the Participate Hepburn page.
 - o **Art and Culture at Hepburn Shire Facebook page**

A post was created encouraging feedback on the draft ISP documents during the consultation period, directing people to the Participate Hepburn page.

- **Hepburn Life:** A Special Edition of Hepburn Life was circulated to further promote engagement opportunities available to the community
- **Business eNewsletter:**
The draft ISP documents and consultation periods was included in the Hepburn Shire Business eNewsletter, ensuring that all business operators were aware of these.
- **Text Messages:** 8376 SMS messages were delivered to Shire ratepayers providing another method to inform community that the draft documents were available for feedback.

KEY THEMES

It is acknowledged that raw results (attached) of the community survey where questions such as 'does the Council Plan reflect the community and direction we want to head in' and 'the Council Plan outcomes and strategies are clear and relevant' are not positive towards the draft. These results have been significantly influenced by the rate cap variation (higher rates) and reduction to services – both of which Council acknowledges is not a preference, but rather a necessary requirement to improve our financial position and medium-long term financial sustainability.

Key themes that have been identified from the most recent feedback are provided in below, with a corresponding response to each area, is included as part of the attachments to this report.

- Lack of detail and transparency
- Financial Mismanagement
- Rate increases
- Cuts to community services
- Need for better community engagement
- Focus on essential services
- Support for Arts, Culture and Environmental concerns
- Housing and development
- Need for fiscal responsibility

RISK AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

The document and their inclusions fully comply with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Council has identified several strategic risks as part of its Risk Management Framework. Developing quality documents within the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework will serve as a crucial control to mitigate or eliminate these risks.

Regular performance reporting on these documents will occur throughout the financial years and will be made available to the public.

The documents and process were presented to Councils Audit and Risk Committee, who were supportive and acknowledged the hard work and efforts in developing the documents in difficult financial circumstances.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental sustainability implications are a key consideration for the Council and have been incorporated. Specifically, several outcomes and strategies in the Council plan directly address the protection and enhancement of our environment.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A comprehensive Gender Impact Assessment has been conducted on the Council Plan 2025-2029 (attached). Amendments have been made to the Council Plan 2025-2029 document to incorporate recommendations taking into account resourcing and capacity to achieve these, while strengthening language note and respond to gender bias.

7.3 ADOPTION OF INTEGRATED STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS - BUDGET, FINANCIAL PLAN, REVENUE AND RATING PLAN, AND THE ASSET PLAN

Go to 01:19:30 in the meeting recording to view this item.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

In providing this advice to Council as the Chief Executive Officer, I Bradley Thomas have no interests to disclose in this report.

ATTACHMENTS

1. ISP - Key Themes From Community Consultation [7.3.1 - 3 pages]
2. ISP - Participate Hepburn Data Analysis [7.3.2 - 8 pages]
3. Budget 2025-2026 [7.3.3 - 64 pages]
4. Fees and Charges Schedule 2025-2026 [7.3.4 - 28 pages]
5. Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 [7.3.5 - 44 pages]
6. HSC Financial Plan 2025-2035 [7.3.6 - 42 pages]
7. Asset Plan 2025-2035 [7.3.7 - 42 pages]

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. *Adopts the following documents, noting the final versions will be published on Council's website:*
 - a. *Financial Plan;*
 - b. *Budget 2025/2026;*
 - c. *Revenue and Rating Plan; and,*
 - d. *Asset Plan.*
2. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to undertake minor, administrative changes to the documents to correct errors and improve readability, if required;*
3. *Notes that the development of documents is compliant with relevant legislation;*
4. *Thanks the community for their valuable contributions in shaping Council's future strategic direction and priorities and notes the Chief Executive Officer will provide a written response to each submission where contact details have been provided;*
5. *Notes that Council will undertake a formal mid-year budget review for 2025/2026;*

6. *Notes its 10 September 2024 resolution to acknowledge the serious financial constraints facing Victorian Local Governments and commits to continued collaboration and advocacy with State and Federal governments to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the sector and Hepburn Shire Council; and*
7. *Notes that regular reporting on the performance of the documents will be provided through Council's Annual Report, as well as Council's quarterly finance reporting.*

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Adopts the following documents, noting the final versions will be published on Council's website:*
 - a. *Financial Plan;*
 - b. *Budget 2025/2026;*
 - c. *Revenue and Rating Plan; and,*
 - d. *Asset Plan.*
2. *Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to undertake minor, administrative changes to the documents to correct errors and improve readability, if required;*
3. *Notes that the development of documents is compliant with relevant legislation;*
4. *Thanks the community for their valuable contributions in shaping Council's future strategic direction and priorities and notes the Chief Executive Officer will provide a written response to each submission where contact details have been provided;*
5. *Notes that Council will undertake a formal mid-year budget review for 2025/2026;*
6. *Notes its 10 September 2024 resolution to acknowledge the serious financial constraints facing Victorian Local Governments and commits to continued collaboration and advocacy with State and Federal governments to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the sector and Hepburn Shire Council; and*

7. *Notes that regular reporting on the performance of the documents will be provided through Council's Annual Report, as well as Council's quarterly finance reporting.*

Moved: Cr Pat Hockey

Seconded: Cr Tony Clark

Carried

Voted for: Cr Tony Clark, Cr Shirley Cornish, Cr Lesley Hewitt, Cr Don Henderson and Cr Pat Hockey

Voted against: Cr Tim Drylie and Cr Brian Hood

Abstained: Nil

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present Council with the proposed Financial Plan, Budget, Revenue and Rating Plan and Asset Plan for adoption, following community consultation on the draft document.

The development of these plans will form the mechanics to deliver on the Council Plan 2025-2029, and set the strategic direction of the Council over the next four to ten years.

Financial sustainability is at the core of our plans for the future. Challenging finances is not something unique to Hepburn Shire, it is an outlook being repeated across many of the 79 councils in Victoria. We need strong economic foundations to allow us to meet the challenges ahead. By making the difficult but important decisions today, we will be protecting our ability to deliver for our community tomorrow.

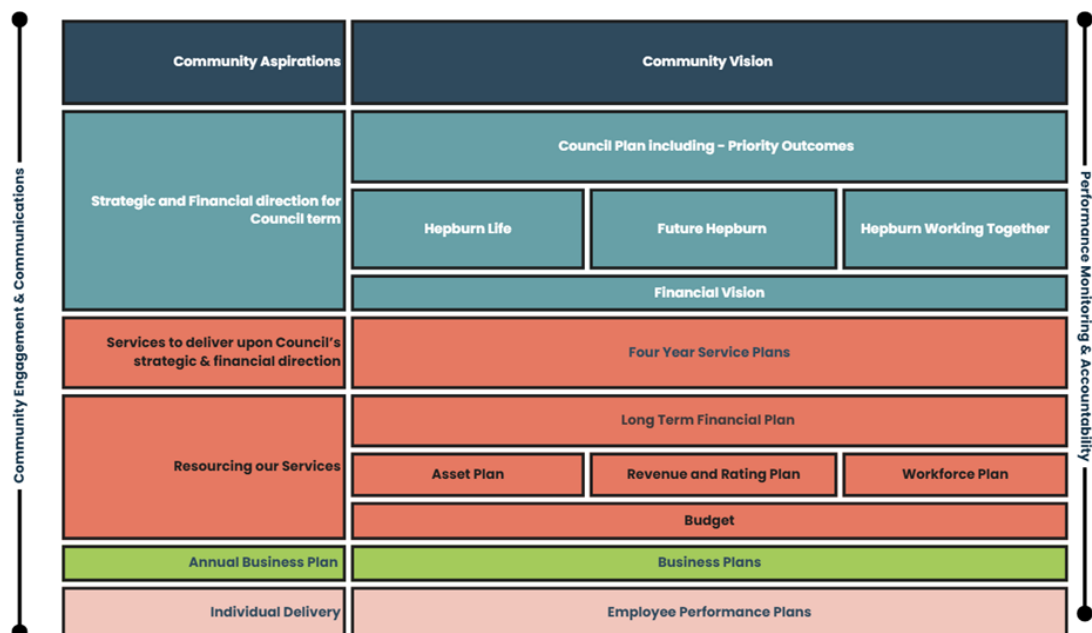
The plans are outcomes focused – we have detailed the outcomes Council is seeking to achieve across the Council term, reflecting the change or benefit to community, environment or organisation.

Our plans are a shared vision. Council endorsed the draft Plans on the 12 May 2025, and since community have been engaged to consult their views. Plans that incorporate the voices of residents and ratepayers collected through community feedback and a Deliberative Engagement Panel made up of community representatives. Working together has helped us shape the various plans that reflects the hopes and needs of those who call our Shire home, in a financially sustainable manner.

BACKGROUND

Council endorsed the draft Plans on the 12 May 2025, and since community have been engaged to consult their views.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework sets out the range of strategic documents Council is required to adopt under the *Local Government Act 2020*, following the election of a new Council. The framework (below) sets out Hepburn Shire's integrated approach to planning, monitoring, and performance reporting.



Layer	Description	Documents
Community aspirations	Community aspirations are set out in our Community Vision.	Community Vision
Strategic direction	The strategic and financial direction and priorities across the Council term.	Council Plan and Financial Vision
Council services	Services that will deliver upon Council's strategic and financial priorities.	Service Catalogue and Service Map
Resourcing	How we will resource our services to deliver Council's strategic and financial priorities.	Financial Plan, Asset Plan, Workforce Plan and Annual Budget.
Annual business plan	The projects and initiatives funded through the annual Budget that will deliver on Council's strategic and financial priorities.	Annual Plan

Individual delivery	Individual employee plans that align our Council Officers roles and responsibilities to Council's strategic and financial priorities.	Employee Performance Plans
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KEY ISSUES

Summary details of each document within the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework being considered for adoption are provided below, with specific details included in each of the draft documents.

Financial Plan

In September 2024, Council adopted its Financial Vision, which was proactively developed to support its commitment to financial sustainability. This vision, created in collaboration with Council and the community, serves as a strategic guide for providing services, setting priorities, and executing projects that meet community needs while ensuring financial stability over the next decade.

In creating the Financial Plan, key financial principles underpin Council's projected financial performance and position over a ten-year period, fulfilling our statutory requirements. The financial forecasts within this plan outline Council's future direction and financial capacity, serving as a guide for future actions or opportunities. This allows Council to assess the future impacts of its current decisions and review the Plan annually following the adoption of the Annual Budget.

This Financial Plan ensures that the objectives outlined within the Financial Vision are achieved:

- Ensure that cash reserves are sufficient to sustain service delivery for the community and to fulfill our obligations;
- Strive to have an amount of unallocated cash to provide a buffer so that we can adequately respond to any unforeseen emergencies;
- In the long-term, establish a reserve that can provide matching funds for grants received from other tiers of government to deliver for our future generations.

Budget 2025/2026

The 2025/2026 budget has been developed within the objectives of the Financial Vision and the new Council Plan 2025-2029 acknowledging operational savings are required to ensure unrestricted cash remains positive.

Council has budgeted both a surplus, and an adjusted underlying surplus for the 2025/2026 year, and while a positive unrestricted cash position – these are positive trends and improvements on prior financial years.

The projected total revenue from rates and charges is \$28.9M, which includes an average rate increase of 10.0%. This increase consists of a rate cap variation for a permanent uplift of 7% to ensure the financial viability and long-term sustainability of the Council, and a 3% rate cap in accordance with the Fair Go Rates System (FGRS), which limits rate increases for Victorian councils as determined by the Minister for Local Government.

It is important to note, the actual rate increases experienced by individual ratepayers may differ from the 10.0% increase due to revaluations. Rate increases are impacted by the average rate increase (10.0%) and the property valuation increases (or decreases) of individual properties relative to the average across the municipality. If your property increased in value by more than the average for the Shire, your rates may increase by more than 10.0%. If your property value increased by less than the average, your rates may increase by less than 10.0% and may in fact reduce from the previous year.

Council has weekly kerbside collections across the Shire and a review of the standard annual fees for 2025/2026 has retained these annual fees at the 2024/2025 rates with the except of food and organics (FOGO) for township residents which has reduced by \$40 per annum.

Council will continue to work with the community in the coming years to ensure that community priorities and expectations are aligned with the Council's service delivery model. This alignment must be achieved within a financially sustainable framework.

Updates proposed to the advertised draft budget and financial plan

Two non-material adjustments to the financial result are proposed in the Budget 2025/2026 since it was endorsed for community consultation.

As a result of the finalisation of shire-wide independent revaluations the total rates raised will be \$28.951 million (\$69k increase). Also, as a result of Council taking a loan out at a lower interest rate (3.975% compared to forecast 5.0%) there is a reduction in the interest payment which will now be \$555k in 2025/2026 (a \$83k decrease). It should be noted that the rates increase reflects changes to property types and valuation and is not an increase on the 10% rate rise.

These changes are positive for Council's surplus and unrestricted cash, and the budget and Financial Plan document are updated accordingly.

Revenue and Rating Plan

The Revenue and Rating Plan aims to identify the most suitable revenue and rating strategy for the Hepburn Shire Council. This strategy will ensure adequate funding for the objectives outlined in the Council Plan.

The Council Plan includes a strategy to - *Actively pursue alternative revenue opportunities*, and this Revenue and Rating Plan has been created with that in mind. The Plan includes a number of recommendations/findings, with no material changes proposed to the draft recommendations.

Asset Plan 2025-2035

The Asset Plan is a strategic document that covers the next ten-year period, outlines Council's management approach for community assets and demonstrates its commitment to accountability, transparency and financial responsibility in decision making.

The Asset Plan ensures that infrastructure and facilities are maintained, renewed, and developed in a manner that aligns with community needs and expectations. The Plan integrates asset management practices with the broader objectives of the Council Plan and Community Vision, providing a structured approach to asset lifecycle management, including acquisition, maintenance/operations, renewal, and disposal. This alignment ensures that asset management decisions contribute to the achievement of the Council's strategic goals and respond effectively to community priorities.

There are no material changes proposed to the draft plan.

COUNCIL POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework outlines the range of strategic documents that the Council is required to adopt under the *Local Government Act 2020*. The documents and the processes undertaken are fully compliant with, and exceed, the requirements of the Act.

The document, and the process to develop the document is fully compliant with, and in many cases exceeds the required legislative requirements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The documents have been developed in line with Council's Financial Vision. Specific financial details are included throughout the documents.

With a commitment to safeguarding Council's long-term financial health, a comprehensive review of the ten-year Financial Plan, alongside a broad evaluation of service provisions, has been undertaken and continues on from the previous work associated with the Financial Vision 2024-2027. Striking a balance between financial constraints, community expectations, and statutory obligations remains a formidable

task, particularly given the constraints of the State Government rate cap and fluctuations in government grant funding.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A considerable amount of feedback from the community has been collated over the last 12 months through various consultation processes, from the Financial Vision in 2024 to today. The feedback identifies key themes and ideas we've heard from our community.

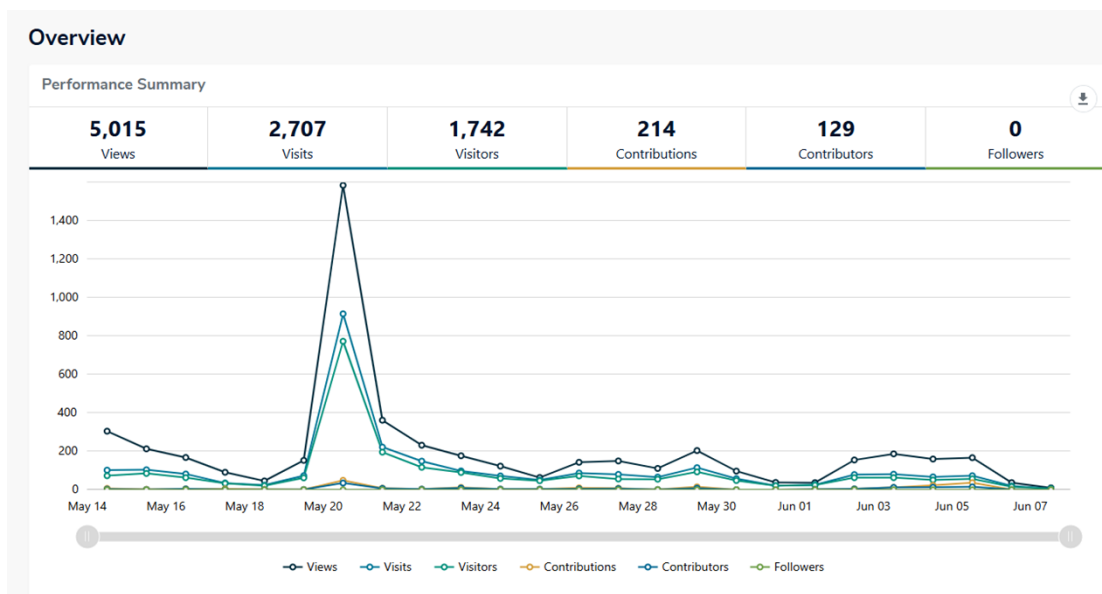
Engagement to date

The previous engagement that has been undertaken has included:

- Previous engagement activities, especially associated with Future Hepburn (Township Structure Plans and Rural Strategy), previous Council Plan input and the Financial Vision.
- Councillor and officer insights.
- A community based deliberative engagement panel which included a facilitated closing session
- A shire-wide community survey, with over 400 responses.

In addition to the engagement conducted prior to the Integrated Strategic draft documents being published for the community to consider, further work has been undertaken to ensure a range of engagement opportunities have been available to our community to provide feedback on the Council Plan and other documents, including:

- **Community Drop-in Sessions**
Nine community drop-in sessions were held throughout the municipality, in Clunes, Creswick, Daylesford, Glenlyon, and Trentham.
- **Participate Hepburn**
The community engagement platform has invited submissions and feedback, with 214 contributions recorded. These contributions consist of a combination of ranking of statements and free text responses to questions for each of the five documents.
In addition to the submissions received on Participate Hepburn, there has been significant traffic to the site, with over 5000 views from the period of 14 May through until 5 June 2025.



- **Email Submissions:** 25 submissions have been received from various parts of the community; individual community members, community advisory groups, project advisory groups, clubs and organisations. This includes feedback from the community drop-in sessions.
- **Social media**
 - **Hepburn Shire Council Facebook page:**
Five targeted Facebook posts were created to encourage attendance at the community drop-in sessions.
 - **Go Local First Hepburn Shire Facebook page:**
A post was created encouraging feedback on the draft ISP documents during the consultation period, directing people to the Participate Hepburn page.
 - **Art and Culture at Hepburn Shire Facebook page**
A post was created encouraging feedback on the draft ISP documents during the consultation period, directing people to the Participate Hepburn page.
- **Hepburn Life:** A Special Edition of Hepburn Life was circulated to further promote engagement opportunities available to the community
- **Business eNewsletter:**
The draft ISP documents and consultation periods was included in the Hepburn Shire Business eNewsletter, ensuring that all business operators were aware of these.
- **Text Messages:** 8376 SMS messages were delivered to Shire ratepayers providing another method to inform community that the draft documents were available for feedback.

KEY THEMES

It is acknowledged that raw results (attached) of the community survey where questions such as 'does the Council Plan reflect the community and direction we want to head in' and 'the Council Plan outcomes and strategies are clear and relevant' are not positive towards the draft. These results have been significantly influenced by the rate cap variation (higher rates) and reduction to services – both of which Council acknowledges is not a preference, but rather a necessary requirement to improve our financial position and medium-long term financial sustainability.

Key themes that have been identified from the most recent feedback are provided in below, with a corresponding response to each area, is included as part of the attachments to this report.

- Lack of detail and transparency
- Financial Mismanagement
- Rate increases
- Cuts to community services
- Need for better community engagement
- Focus on essential services
- Support for Arts, Culture and Environmental concerns
- Housing and development
- Need for fiscal responsibility

RISK AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

The documents and their inclusions fully comply with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Council has identified several strategic risks as part of its Risk Management Framework. Developing quality documents within the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework will serve as a crucial control to mitigate or eliminate these risks.

Regular performance reporting on these documents will occur throughout the financial years and will be made available to the public.

The documents and process were presented to Councils Audit and Risk Committee, who were supportive and acknowledged the hard work and efforts in developing the documents in difficult financial circumstances.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental sustainability implications are a key consideration for the Council and have been incorporated into the various documents. Specifically, several outcomes and strategies in the Council plan directly address the protection and enhancement of our environment.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A comprehensive Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) has been conducted on the Council Plan 2025-2029. Amendments have been made to the Council Plan 2025-2029 document to incorporate recommendations taking into account resourcing and capacity to achieve these, while strengthening language note and respond to gender bias.

The GIA for the Council Plan will provide a guiding framework for work through other integrated strategic planning documents; these assessments will influence future decision making and priorities into the future.

8 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

Nil

9 COUNCILLOR AND CEO REPORTS

9.1 MAYOR'S REPORT

Go to 02:13:00 in the meeting recording to view this item.

Councillor Don Henderson

Presented a verbal report.

9.2 COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Councillor Tony Clark

Presented a verbal report.

Councillor Shirley Cornish

Presented a verbal report.

Councillor Tim Drylie

This month has held a troubling sense of contradiction—between the devastation playing out on the world stage, and the quiet diligent work of community here at home.

Internationally, the situation is deeply alarming. We have seen illegal and escalating military actions - Donald Trump's bombing of Iran and the Israeli governments continued assault on Gaza and escalation in Iran. These actions are being justified in the name of security, but they are fuelling the fire of global conflict. And the Australian Government's response? A shameful endorsement of these strikes, paired with little more than a polite nod to diplomacy. It is not good enough.

They threaten to tip us into a much larger war. And the human cost - especially to civilians, families, and children - is unbearable – as we are witnessing with the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

Meanwhile, here in our Shire, I've been reading through the many positive community submissions to our Draft Council Plan, Budget and other documents - and listening carefully.

I want to acknowledge the staff, community members and groups who have shared their perspectives. In particular, I want to note the Sustainable Hepburn Advisory Committee's feedback session on the Council Plan. They rightly raised alarm about the dilution of environmental protections with the diminishing emphasis on climate

action and biodiversity. They also spoke powerfully to the need for greater actions to inclusive, diverse housing options - especially affordable housing - so that people of all ages, incomes and background can live and thrive here.

This feedback deserves to be taken seriously. While I respect the intentions behind a "back to basics" approach, I remain opposed to a vision of budgeting that strips away equity, creativity, and care. While our council plan aims to be a blueprint for future generations - our budget retreats from this responsibility.

Finally, I was pleased to walk in solidarity with many others on one of the final legs of the Yoorrook Justice Commission's Walk for Truth - 21 kilometres, from Werribee to Yarraville. The Yoorrook Commission is Victoria's first formal truth-telling process, bringing to light the historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples.

Here in Hepburn, I also joined the Reconciliation Week flag-raising ceremony in Creswick, standing with primary school students whose voices reminded me that the future can be more honest, more inclusive, and more compassionate - if we choose to make it so.

These are not separate conversations - global injustice and local governance are deeply connected. Our choices, our silence, and our courage all matter. What we walk past here, we legitimise elsewhere.

Councillor Lesley Hewitt

Presented a verbal report.

Councillor Pat Hockey

During the month I had meetings with both the Clunes and Creswick Museums and attended a Listening Post at Glenlyon in addition to briefings in chambers and in recent days the Mineral Springs Advisory Committee.

Councillors I wanted to use my report to take a brief moment to acknowledge the work of officers and all staff at the shire in the first half of the year. I frequently find staff attending functions and meetings in support of councillors and the organisation after hours and on the weekend, which so often seems to be over and above the call of duty.

While as councillors we expect and accept that we are upholders of democracy, it frequently seems to me that the officers and all staff frequently find themselves also at the front line defending this form of government. To my mind it is a huge ask of employees and at times verges on the heroic.

With respect to tonight's work I would like to personally thank all those who incurred sleepless hours and even nights in the preparation of the budget and plans

presented tonight. In my view an individual's work should not impact on their personal health and if this has occurred, as it inevitably does these days, I consider it to be deeply regrettable and a reflection of the intensity that many in the community bring to this space and also another product of the shortfall in funding for what is a complex operation.

Thank you again to staff for their support for both myself and the organisation during this term.

Councillor Brian Hood

Presented a verbal report.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Mayor's and Councillors' reports.

MOTION

That Council receives and notes the Mayor's and Councillors' Reports.

Moved: Cr Lesley Hewitt

Seconded: Cr Shirley Cornish

Carried

Voted for: Cr Tony Clark, Cr Shirley Cornish, Cr Tim Drylie, Cr Lesley Hewitt, Cr Don Henderson, Cr Pat Hockey and Cr Brian Hood

Voted against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

9.3 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Go to 02:28:40 in the meeting recording to view this item.

Cr Brian Hood left the meeting at 8:30pm and did not return.

The Chief Executive Officer Report informs Council and the community of current issues, initiatives and projects undertaken across Council.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATE

- Tonight, Councillors will deliberate on the adoption of various documents that constitute the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework, including the Council Plan and our budget. This marks the culmination of significant efforts over the past eight months since the Council elections. I extend my gratitude to our community for your involvement, reflections, and submissions. I also wish to thank the Councillors for their dedication during numerous workshops, hours spent reading, and for your valuable input. To our staff, thank you! Despite the challenges, we can take pride in the support provided to develop these key documents that will guide our future.
- Djuwang Baring was named winner of two LGPro Awards - these two awards are a testament to the collaboration between Council, community members, Traditional Owners, and land managers. [Djuwang Baring named winner of two LGPro Awards Hepburn Shire Council](#)
- We have released a draft Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) for community feedback. The strategy forms part of Council's Future Hepburn strategic planning initiative. Consultation is open from Monday 16 June to Friday 11 July 2025, with feedback on the draft ITS able to be provided at <https://participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au/future-hepburn>

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Chief Executive Officer's Report for June 2025.

MOTION

That Council receives and notes the Chief Executive Officer's Report for June 2025.

Moved: Cr Shirley Cornish

Seconded: Cr Lesley Hewitt

Carried

Voted for: Cr Tony Clark, Cr Shirley Cornish, Cr Tim Drylie, Cr Lesley Hewitt, Cr Don Henderson and Cr Pat Hockey

Voted against: Nil

Abstained: Nil

10 CLOSE OF MEETING

The Meeting closed at 8:32pm.