



HEPBURN SHIRE COUNCIL
ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL
PUBLIC AGENDA

Tuesday 25 March 2025

Council Chamber
24 Vincent Street Daylesford

6:00PM

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

AGENDA

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24 Vincent Street Daylesford

Commencing at 6:00PM

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BRADLEY THOMAS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Tuesday 25 March 2025

CONDUCTING HYBRID COUNCIL MEETINGS

In the spirit of open, transparent and accountable governance, this meeting will be live-streamed on Council's YouTube page. The meeting will also be recorded and made available on Council's website as soon as practicable after the meeting.

Council's meeting will be conducted tonight in accordance with:

- The Local Government Act 2020
- The Minister's Good Practice Guideline MGP-1: Virtual Meetings
- Council's Governance Rules; and
- The Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

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 SAFETY ORIENTATION

Emergency exits and convenience facilities at the venue to be highlighted to members of the public in attendance.

3 OPENING OF MEETING

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

OFFICERS PRESENT:

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”

4 APOLOGIES

5 DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 25 February 2025 (as previously circulated to Councillors) be confirmed.

7 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TIME

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

7.1 PETITIONS

7.2 REQUESTS TO ADDRESS COUNCIL

Members of our community who have submitted a request in accordance with Council's Governance Rules will be heard.

7.3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

8 OFFICER REPORTS

8.1 FUTURE HEPBURN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN DIRECTOR DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY

In providing this advice to Council as the Principal Strategic Planner, I Matt Rogers have no interests to disclose in this report.

ATTACHMENTS

- Nil

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Notes that the preparation of an implementation plan is progressing. However, this body of work has several complex considerations and will require additional time to complete, including further discussions with senior planning advisors at the Department of Transport and Planning; and,*
- 2. Notes that a detailed implementation plan will be presented to Council for endorsement, including an estimated budget for each structure plan and rural strategy, by no later than May 2025.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2024, Council resolved to adopt the Future Hepburn township structure plans and rural land use strategy, marking a significant achievement for Hepburn Shire strategic planning.

The resolution included a requirement that a detailed implementation plan was prepared for Council endorsement by no later than March 2025. This body of work has taken longer than expected, given the several complex considerations involved. Furthermore, the recent State Government release of Plan for Victoria and its accompanying housing targets has required a review of any implications on Council's endorsed strategies. Whilst the Plan for Victoria has been found to be aligned with the Future Hepburn strategies, further discussions are needed with senior planning advisors at the Department of Transport and Planning to ensure that Council's implementation plan has in-principle support.

It is expected that an implementation plan will be presented for endorsement by no later than May 2025.

BACKGROUND

At the 3 September 2024 Special Council Meeting, Council unanimously resolved to adopt the Future Hepburn township structure plans and rural land use strategy. This represented one of the most significant achievements for Hepburn Shire strategic planning over the last twenty years.

The Council resolution included the following item:

“3. Notes that officers will prepare a detailed implementation plan, including an estimated budget, for each structure plan and rural strategy having regard to Council’s financial plan and other relevant considerations. The implementation plans will be prepared and be presented to Council for endorsement by 31 March, 2025.”

Implementation plans provide guidance to Council officers, the community, external agencies, and stakeholders about the timing and means of delivery for adopted Future Hepburn actions. An implementation plan is required to meet State Government requirements in terms of content and format. It will essentially act as an overarching document to the six endorsed strategies, linking them together and listing and prioritising implementation actions and activities.

Since September 2024, the preparation of an implementation plan has been undertaken for the endorsed rural land use strategy and the five township structure plans. Over 200 actions have been identified to deliver these strategies. These integrate Future Hepburn’s strategic directions into operational work. Broadly, these can be grouped into planning scheme changes, strategic planning project work, and advocacy and partnership actions.

KEY ISSUES

The Council resolution of 3 September 2024 requires the preparation and presentation of a detailed implementation plan to Council for endorsement in March 2025. This is still being finalised, and additional time is required to complete this complex body of work and present it to Council for endorsement. It is anticipated that this will be presented to either the April or May Council meeting.

A range of options are being explored for a Future Hepburn Implementation Plan taking account of:

- short and long-term financial implications;
- community engagement needs;
- the relative policy priorities within Future Hepburn ;
- the strategic planning office resource capacity and the technical and legal expertise required;
- the continuation of the current work program separate to the implementation of the endorsed strategies, such as completing the Integrated Transport Strategy, advocacy and response to renewable energy projects, and interim planning protection for Lalgambook; and
- the implications of the recent release of the State Government’s Plan for Victoria, housing targets, and the review of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

An essential aspect of the preparation of the implementation plan is to obtain in-principle support from State senior planning advisors on the prioritisation and timing of the various implementation actions, particularly those related to planning scheme amendments. These discussions are ongoing, but so far have been positive. It is important to finalise these discussions before presenting the final implementation plan to Council for endorsement.

COUNCIL POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Council Plan 2021-2025

Embracing our past and planning for the future

3.2 Embrace and enhance the existing character of our towns and rural settings through community inclusive strategic planning to strengthen planning controls on growth and development

A dynamic and responsive Council

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

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and Ministerial Guidelines and Practice Notes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In line with the September 2024 Council resolution, financial implications and cost of implementation will be detailed in the final report for endorsement. Various scenarios are being considered by officers, particularly in terms of the staging of planning scheme amendments. For example, by grouping a number of planning scheme amendments together and processing them concurrently, the initial project cost can be high, but cost savings can be achieved through combined planning panel lodgement costs and Council representation at hearings. Progressing individual, smaller amendments can be less costly initially, but this process can extend implementation over several years and potentially be more costly with the number of individual planning panel hearings.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

There are no community or stakeholder engagement implications associated with this report. Community and stakeholder engagement requirements were detailed in Council's Resolution on 2 September 2024, and are also dictated by the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, and Ministerial Guidelines.

RISK AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

Planning scheme amendments are subject to the procedural requirements of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. To be successful however, the Minister for Planning needs to authorise their commencement, and provide final approval. The

decision of the Minister will take into account the recommendations of an independent panel. This means that a planning scheme amendment must have a robust strategic basis, align with State policy, and be evidence based.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no sustainability implications associated with this report.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There are no gender equity implications associated with this report.

9 NOTICES OF MOTION

10 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

11 COUNCILLOR AND CEO REPORTS

11.1 MAYOR'S REPORT

Councillor Don Henderson

11.2 COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Councillor Lesley Hewitt

Councillor Pat Hockey

March has been a busy time in the shire with some major events, including the International Women's Day Awards in Trentham, ChillOut Festival, the Clunes Historic Vehicle Show and a number of community meetings (and no doubt others I have omitted to mention). Chill-Out was great fun, but not without its poignancy when I considered the many years of oppression and closed-minds that folk have had to contend with and still do in many parts.

Significantly in Creswick I attended a meeting with the residents group who have been impacted by the extraordinary success of Djuwang Baring (Creswick Trails). I look forward to supporting this group to ameliorate some of the impacts they are seeking to have addressed.

At the same time, some really significant planning meetings have occupied a significant amount of my time as the Councillors oversee the budgetary planning for some difficult years ahead. At a community level I loved meeting the crew at the Shrove Tuesday event in Clunes at the Masonic Lodge and the raffles in particular were great fun.

In addition to these public events and planning meetings, I have had many interactions with officers on local matters around Clunes and I would like to publicly thank officers for their prompt attention to these matters.

It continues to be the case that it is the ordinary day-to-day matters that most occupy my conversations with the community. As always I urge residents in the shire to reach out by phone or email or just grab me for a chat when you see me out and about.

Councillor Brian Hood

Councillor Tony Clark

Councillor Shirley Cornish

Councillor Tim Drylie

Good evening, everyone. I want to share some key updates from this past month.

I attended the International Women's Day Honour Roll Event at The Mechanics Trentham and was particularly impressed by the speeches from Daylesford College

students. Their reflections on the theme of *For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.* were insightful and inspiring, and it was fantastic to see young people engaging in these important conversations. Congratulations to all involved on a successful evening and to the award recipients. Heather Mutimer's ongoing contributions to the community and her speech on the night were inspiring. A special mention to Mary-Faeth Chenery for her significant work in affordable and community housing as president of Safe Place Homes and WINC. These awards are important in recognising and amplifying the work of women in our community.

I also attended the ChillOut Festival Parade with fellow councillors and staff. The atmosphere was incredible, and the turnout was fantastic. It was a privilege to be part of the celebration and highlight the Djuwang Baring Creswick Trails on our council float. This event is a cornerstone for the LGBTIQA+ community, local businesses, and the broader community, especially in the face of growing conservative pressures that threaten diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. I am deeply concerned about the erosion of democratic rights when fiscal constraints are used as a justification for decisions that diminish essential services and community support. It is critical that financial challenges do not come at the expense of inclusion, equity, and the well-being of our diverse communities and environment.

At the Eastern Hill Residents Group Meeting, we heard from community members about their experiences with the Djuwang Baring Trails rollout. While the project has been very successful, some residents have raised concerns, and I appreciate the ongoing dialogue to ensure a fair and responsive approach. Community feedback remains essential in refining how we manage and implement projects.

The rise of vigilante threats on local online groups in response to recent criminal activity is deeply troubling, as is the increase in hate speech and harassment directed at vulnerable groups, including First Nations people, the LGBTIQA+ community, and even councillors and staff. This behaviour has no place in our community. I encourage residents to report such incidents to social media platforms and, where necessary, to the police. Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected, and we are committed to fostering a community that upholds these values.

Finally, I want to briefly address the unauthorised release of the Local Government Inspectorate's draft report into The Rex development. As the Mayor has stated, this has understandably caused concern. Council has made significant governance improvements since 2018, including stronger financial oversight, the establishment of a Major Projects Unit, and increased scrutiny through the Audit and Risk Committee. These measures ensure greater accountability and transparency in project management and financial decision-making. My focus has always been on acting in the best interests of the community, and I remain committed to responsible governance.

Looking ahead, I want to highlight the upcoming deliberative engagement panel sessions now that community members are in place for our Council Plan work. I look

forward to hearing feedback and ensuring that community voices continue to shape the direction of our Shire.

RECOMMENDATION

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

11.3 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

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

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATE

Over the past few weeks, our beautiful begonias have been on full display at the Wombat Hill Botanic gardens, and they look absolutely stunning. Mel, our wonderful head Gardener, has been taking such great care of them, especially since they can be a bit fussy with the weather. You can see how proud Mel is of her beautiful work below. If you haven't had a chance to visit, it's definitely worth a visit before they finish for the season.

Gardening Australia also recently aired a feature segment which focuses on our amazing plant profiles and significant trees in the gardens. If you missed the show, you can also find the episode on iView (series 36, episode 2).



Still up in the Wombat Hill precinct, the Day Basin project is progressing well. Recent works include the plumbing trenching, and the concrete footing for the stone rill has been poured where possible, and the stone rill has been delivered to site. The RFQ for the tower works will be released shortly, and we hope to have a preferred contractor selected in the near future.

Filming of The Block kicked off earlier this month in Daylesford, and we're excited about the opportunities this will bring to our Shire. It will serve to highlight the

unique offerings of our communities to a national audience. Hosting The Block presents a significant opportunity for our Shire, promising tangible economic benefits while showcasing our stunning landscape. The Block Executive Producer Julian Cress was quoted saying "It's a very exciting place for us to bring The Block to Daylesford, it's been a destination for Australian and international tourists for a century now, and it has really cemented itself as one of the top weekend destinations in the country." Councillors and the Executive Leadership Team are looking forward to a tour of this site in late March.

Council marked International Women's Day this evening with a free community event at the Mechanics at Trentham, celebrating the remarkable achievements of local women and marking the 20th anniversary of the Heather Mutimer Honour Roll. The Honour Roll, which celebrates the exceptional contributions of women in our community, inducted five new members this year: Mary Harvey, Jessie Leggatt (Posthumous), Donna Kelly, Mary-Faeth Chenery and Lynda Poke.

Over the long weekend in March, Daylesford hosted the ChillOut Festival, Australia's favourite regional LGBTQIA+ celebration. For many years, the ChillOut Festival has lit up the streets of Daylesford, creating a fun-filled atmosphere for everyone to enjoy.



Designs and artistic renders have been developed for the Daylesford Community Facilities project, and Council is seeking the community's feedback on the initial design. A community engagement period will run from Monday 10 March to Sunday

13 April. During this time, the community can access engagement materials on the [Participate Hepburn website](#), or from Council's libraries and customer experience hubs. Community members can discuss the project in-person with Council officers or members of the PAG at any of the three scheduled drop-in sessions.

Council is applying for a total rate cap of 10% for 2025/2026 which includes a 7% increase to the existing 3% rate cap that was announced on 23 December 2024 by the Minister for Local Government. This move is being made to ensure the financial viability and long-term sustainability of Council, and Council formally submitted to the Essential Services Commission this [month](#).

Council was proud to announce that we have been successful in securing [grant](#) funding of \$400,000 for a battery storage and solar PV installation at The Mechanics Trentham.

Our latest round of Biodiversity Grants Program and Sustainable Hepburn Grants Programs applications just closed, with assessment outcomes being announced shortly. We wish the applicants all the best with their submissions, and we look forward to seeing the results of the successful recipient's community initiatives.

Council issued a [media release](#) in relation to the unauthorised release of the Local Government Inspectorate (LGI) draft report on the Hepburn Hub at The Rex project, and detailed significant improvements that had been made to governance and transparency measures on the past six years.

Some of the meetings I have attended include:

- Joint State/Local Government Monthly CEO Forum
- Governance and Integrity Steering Committee meeting
- MAV CEO Connect weekly meetings
- Executive Leadership Team weekly meetings
- Meeting with the EPA
- Greater Ballarat Alliance of Councils CEOs meeting
- Council Plan workshop with Councillors
- Loddon Campaspe Group of Council's Regional Forum
- Meeting with clubs at Doug Lindsay Recreation Reserve
- Councillor Briefing
- Meeting with MAV to review the Grants Commission allocation methods
- Tourism Midwest Victoria Board meeting
- Central Highlands Regional Priorities meeting
- Meeting with Wombat Post representatives to discuss the Rex project
- Meeting with RDV and Hepburn Shire Council Executive teams

- Meeting with Wombat Post representatives to discuss the Rex project
- VLGA Connect interview
- Meetings with direct reports

RECOMMENDATION

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

12 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

12.1 CLOSURE OF MEETING TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Pursuant to section 66(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) Council or delegated committee must keep a meeting open to the public unless the Council or delegated committee considers it necessary to close the meeting to the public because a circumstance specified in subsection (2) applies.

The circumstances detailed in section 66(2) of the Act are:

- a) the meeting is to consider confidential information; or
- b) security reasons; or
- c) it is necessary to do so to enable the meeting to proceed in an orderly manner.

RECOMMENDATION

That in accordance with sections 66(1) and 66(2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020, the meeting to be closed to members of the public for the consideration of the following confidential items:

1.1. GLENLYON RECREATION RESERVE PAVILION REDEVELOPMENT – APPOINTMENT OF PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

Because it is personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs;

The ground applies because the report contains the assessment of individual applicants and would, if released, unfairly identify unsuccessful applicants and the scoring allocated to each applicant.

1.2. VCAT PROCEEDINGS – ENDEAVOUR GROUP

Because it is legal privileged information, being information to which legal professional privilege or client legal privilege applies.

The ground applies because the agenda item concerns legal advice regarding Council's attendance at an upcoming VCAT hearing.

13 CLOSE OF MEETING