

AGENDA

MEETING OF THE **HORSHAM RURAL CITY COUNCIL**

To be held on
28 September 2026

At 5.30pm

In the
Council Reception Room, Civic Centre
18 Roberts Avenue, HORSHAM



**COUNCILLORS are respectfully requested to attend the Council Meeting
of the Horsham Rural City Council to be held on 28 September 2026
in the Council Reception Room, Civic Centre, Horsham at 5.30pm**

Order of Business

PRESENT

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

1. PRAYER

Almighty God, we pledge ourselves to work in harmony for, the social, cultural and economic well-being of our Rural City. Help us to be wise in our deliberations and fair in our actions, so that prosperity and happiness shall be the lot of our people. AMEN

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY STATEMENT

Horsham Rural City Council acknowledges the five Traditional Owner groups of this land; the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk people. We recognise the important and ongoing place that all Indigenous people hold in our community.

We pay our respects to the Elders, both past and present, and commit to working together in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect for the benefit of the broader community and future generations.

3. OPENING AND WELCOME

Chairman, Cr Brian Klowss formally welcomed those in attendance to the meeting. The Mayor advised that the meeting will be recorded to maintain a video archive, which will be available on the Horsham Rural City Council website as soon as practicable.

4. APOLOGIES

5. LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUESTS

6. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Recommendation

That the minutes emanating from the Council Meeting of the Horsham Rural City Council held in the Council Reception Room, Civic Centre, Horsham at 5.30pm on 24 August 2026 be adopted.

7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest

A Councillor who has declared a conflict of interest, must leave the meeting and remain outside the room while the matter is being considered, or any vote is taken.

Members of Staff

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, officers or people engaged under contract to the Council providing a report or advice to Council must disclose any conflicts of interests in the matter, including the type of interest.

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CLOSE



GAIL GATT
Chief Executive Officer

REPORTS FOR COUNCIL DECISION

9. OFFICERS REPORTS

9.1 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE STATEMENT

Director:	Kim Hargreaves
Directorate:	Organisational Performance
File Number:	F18/A14/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Draft Annual Financial Report 2025-26 (**Appendix 9.1A**)

Draft Annual Performance Statement 2025-26 (**Appendix 9.1B**)

Purpose

To seek Council's in-principle approval of the Annual Financial Report and Annual Performance Statement for 2025-26 and authorise their submission to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO).

Summary

- The Financial Report and Performance Statement for 2025-26 have been prepared and presented to the Victorian Auditor General's agent, Crowe Australasia, for review.
- The Financial Report and Performance Statement for 2025-26 were reviewed by Council's Audit and Risk Committee on Thursday 17 September 2026.
- The documents are now presented to Council with a recommendation from the Audit and Risk Committee that Council approve, in-principle, the 2025-26 Financial Report and Performance Statement for Horsham Rural City Council, subject to any changes recommended or agreed by the Auditor in accordance with section 98(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- In accordance with section 99(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council is requested to nominate the Mayor Cr Brian Klowss and Cr Angela Munn to certify and approve the 2025-26 Financial Statements and Performance Statement in their final form.
- The Financial Report and Performance Statement for 2025-26 are presented to Council for in-principle approval in accordance with the requirements of section 99(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Provide in-principle approval of the Financial Report and Performance Statement for 2025-26 and authorise their submission to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO).
2. Authorise Mayor Cr Brian Klowss and Cr Angela Munn to certify the Statements in their final form after any changes recommended or agreed by VAGO or its appointed auditor, Crowe Australasia, have been made pursuant of section 99 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

REPORT

Background

Section 98(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires Councils to prepare an Annual Report in respect of each financial year. The specific elements required to be included in the Annual Report are outlined in section 98(2), and the Annual Report must be presented at a Council meeting within four months of the end of the financial year.

The preparation of an Annual Report also requires that Council prepare a Performance Statement and Financial Report for the financial year as soon as practicable after year end in accordance with section 99 of the Act. In compliance with this requirement, the Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement for the financial year ended 30 June 2026 have been prepared and provided to Council's external auditor, Crowe Australasia.

Discussion

To further progress preparation of the Annual Report, Council must provide in-principle approval to the Financial Report and Performance Statement before the audit can be finalised. This requirement is prescribed by section 99(2) of the Local Government Act 2020.

Any final adjustments identified through completion of the audit process will be considered in consultation with Council's auditor and reflected in the final certified version of the Statements.

The statements were reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee prior to presentation to Council. Under the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, the Committee is responsible for reviewing annual financial reports and performance statements, considering significant accounting and reporting issues, discussing audit findings with the external auditor and recommending adoption of the statements to Council.

Following its review, the Audit and Risk Committee recommended the Financial Report and Performance Statement be adopted in principle and submitted for completion of the audit process.

The final audited versions of the Financial Report and Performance Statement will be incorporated into Council's 2025-26 Annual Report for formal adoption by Council.

Section 99(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires the final statements to be certified by two Councillors authorised by Council and other prescribed officers. It is recommended that the Mayor Cr Brian Klowss and Cr Angela Munn be the authorised Councillors for certification purposes together with the Chief Executive Officer.

It is further recommended that the Chief Financial Officer, as Principal Accounting Officer, be authorised to incorporate any amendments agreed with the auditor and endorsed through the audit process prior to final certification.

Options to Consider

1. Council provides in-principle approval of the Financial and Performance Statements for 2025-26 and authorises their submission to VAGO. **Recommended.**
2. Council does not provide in-principle approval. This would delay completion of the audit process and may result in non-compliance with legislative reporting requirements. **Not recommended.**

Sustainability Implications

Not Applicable

Community Engagement

Not Applicable

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Not Applicable

Collaboration

Not Applicable

Financial Implications

The cost of the audit has been provided for within Council's adopted budget.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Not Applicable

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

2025-2029 Council Plan

Theme 5 – Leadership:

Preparation of the Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement is a statutory requirement under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Risk Implications

Council is required to prepare, approve and publicly report its Financial and Performance Statements in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*. Failure to meet these obligations may result in reputational damage, non-compliance with statutory requirements and reduced stakeholder confidence in Council's governance and financial management.

Conclusion

The Financial Report and Performance Statement for 2025-26 have been prepared in accordance with the relevant legislation and applicable Accounting Standards. They are presented to Council for in-principle approval and submission to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office to enable completion of the annual audit process.

9.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK REVIEW

Director:	Kim Hargreaves
Directorate:	Organisational Performance
File Number:	F19/A10/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Proposed Policy Framework Policy (**Appendix 9.2A**)

Proposed Policy Governance Framework (**Appendix 9.2B**)

Purpose

To present the revised Policy Framework Policy and supporting Policy Governance Framework for Council adoption following consideration and recommendation by the Audit and Risk Committee.

Summary

- The Policy Framework Policy has been comprehensively reviewed to align with legislative requirements and contemporary local government governance practice.
- A new Policy Governance Framework has been developed to establish Council's policy governance architecture, governance controls, accountability arrangements and assurance processes.
- Together, the documents establish Council's policy governance system for the management of Council and Administrative Policies.
- The revised governance suite strengthens governance, accountability, compliance and risk management through enhanced governance controls, policy ownership requirements and risk-based review arrangements.
- At its meeting on 20 August 2026, the Audit and Risk Committee considered the revised documents and resolved to recommend their adoption by Council.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the review undertaken of the Policy Framework Policy.
2. Notes the Audit and Risk Committee recommendation that Council adopt the revised governance suite.
3. Adopts the Policy Framework Policy (Appendix 9.2A).
4. Endorses the Policy Governance Framework (Appendix 9.2B).

REPORT

Background

The Policy Framework Policy establishes Council's overarching requirements for the development, approval, implementation, monitoring, review and revocation of Council and Administrative Policies.

The current Policy Framework Policy was adopted by Council on 27 June 2022 and received a minor administrative amendment in March 2023. The Policy establishes the existing policy classifications, policy ownership requirements, governance oversight arrangements and review requirements.

As part of Council's governance review program, the Policy was reviewed to assess its effectiveness and alignment with legislative requirements, contemporary governance expectations, recognised local government practice and Council's risk management framework.

The review identified that while the existing Policy provides a sound governance foundation, opportunities existed to strengthen governance assurance, policy impact assessment requirements, risk-based review arrangements and accountability provisions.

To address these opportunities, a revised Policy Framework Policy and supporting Policy Governance Framework have been developed. The revised governance suite separates overarching policy requirements from supporting governance arrangements and operational processes, providing greater clarity and consistency across the organisation.

The Audit and Risk Committee considered the revised documents at its meeting on 20 August and resolved as follows:

That the Audit and Risk Committee:

1. Notes the review undertaken of the Policy Framework Policy.
2. Notes the development of the supporting Policy Governance Framework.
3. Notes the revised governance suite strengthens Council's governance, compliance and risk management framework.
4. Recommends that Council adopt the revised Policy Framework Policy and endorse the supporting Policy Governance Framework."

The Committee's recommendation is now presented to Council for consideration.

Discussion

The review identified opportunities to strengthen Council's policy governance arrangements and further align policy governance practices with contemporary governance standards and recognised local government best practice.

The revised Policy Framework Policy adopts a principles-based approach and establishes the mandatory governance requirements applying to Council and Administrative Policies. The supporting Policy Governance Framework documents Council's policy governance architecture, document hierarchy, policy lifecycle, governance controls, accountability arrangements and assurance processes.

Key enhancements introduced through the review include:

- strengthened governance principles;
- clearer policy classifications and approval pathways;

- enhanced legislative compliance requirements;
- mandatory Policy Impact Assessments and Governance Reviews;
- strengthened policy ownership and accountability arrangements;
- documented governance oversight responsibilities;
- risk-based policy review provisions; and
- a documented policy lifecycle from development through to review and revocation.

Collectively, the Policy Framework Policy and Policy Governance Framework establish a more mature governance framework by clearly defining governance responsibilities, accountability mechanisms, assurance activities and lifecycle management requirements. This provides greater assurance that policies remain current, effective and aligned with Council's strategic objectives, risk profile and internal control environment.

The Audit and Risk Committee has reviewed the proposed Policy Framework Policy and Policy Governance Framework and recommended their adoption and endorsement respectively.

Options to Consider

Option 1 - Adopt the Policy Framework Policy and Policy Governance Framework (Recommended)

This option implements the revised governance arrangements and addresses the improvement opportunities identified through the review.

Option 2 - Retain Existing Arrangements

This option would retain the current Policy Framework Policy and forgo the governance improvements identified through the review. This may reduce Council's ability to achieve consistent policy governance practices and governance assurance outcomes across the organisation.

Sustainability Implications

The proposed governance suite supports sustainable organisational decision-making through improved governance, accountability and policy management practices.

Community Engagement

The review relates to Council's internal governance and policy management framework. No community consultation was required however consultation with the Audit and Risk Committee was undertaken.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The revised governance suite represents a continuous improvement initiative that strengthens Council's policy governance arrangements through improved governance assurance mechanisms, accountability requirements and risk-based review processes.

Collaboration

The review incorporated consideration of contemporary local government governance practices and governance frameworks used across the sector.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with the adoption of the proposed Policy Framework Policy or Policy Governance Framework. The governance suite supports effective governance, legislative compliance, risk management and policy oversight, which contribute to the effectiveness of Council's overall internal control environment.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

The revised governance suite supports Council's obligations under the *Local Government Act 2020* by strengthening governance, accountability, risk management and continuous improvement arrangements across the organisation.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

2025-2029 Council Plan

Theme 4 – Leadership: A trusted and capable Council that leads with integrity and responsibility.

The proposed Policy Framework Policy and Policy Governance Framework support good governance, accountability, risk management and continuous organisational improvement, consistent with Council's leadership and governance objectives.

Risk Implications

The Policy Framework Policy is a key governance control that underpins the management of all Council and Administrative Policies.

Failure to maintain contemporary policy governance arrangements may expose Council to:

- legislative and regulatory non-compliance;
- inconsistent policy development and review practices;
- unclear ownership and accountability;
- governance and audit findings;
- outdated policies remaining in operation; and
- reputational impacts arising from poor governance practices.

The revised governance suite mitigates these risks through strengthened governance controls, accountability requirements, governance assurance processes and risk-based review arrangements.

Conclusion

The Policy Framework Policy and supporting Policy Governance Framework establish Council's overarching policy governance system and strengthen the governance, compliance and risk management arrangements applying to Council and Administrative Policies.

The Audit and Risk Committee has considered the revised governance suite and recommended its adoption. Adoption will provide a contemporary and robust policy governance framework that supports consistent governance practices across the organisation.

9.3 FRAUD AND CORRUPTION CONTROL POLICY

Director:	Kim Hargreaves
Directorate:	Organisational Performance
File Number:	F19/A10/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Fraud and Corruption Control Policy (Revised) (**Appendix 9.3A**)

Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Framework (current for comparison) (**Appendix 9.3B**)

Purpose

To present the revised Fraud and Corruption Control Policy to Council for adoption following recommendation by the Audit and Risk Committee.

Summary

- Council has completed a review of its Fraud and Corruption Control Policy to address identified improvement opportunities.
- The revised Policy (Appendix 9.3A) strengthens governance clarity, training requirements, reporting obligations and alignment with recognised standards and legislative expectations.
- The existing Fraud and Corruption Control Framework (Appendix 9.3B) has also been reviewed and remains current and effective, with no amendments proposed.
- The revised Policy and existing Framework reinforce Council's zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption and strengthen Council's governance and assurance framework.
- The Audit and Risk Committee has reviewed the proposed changes and recommended adoption of the revised Policy by Council.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Audit and Risk Committee recommendation supporting adoption of the revised Fraud and Corruption Control Policy.
2. Adopts the revised Fraud and Corruption Control Policy.
3. Notes that the Fraud and Corruption Control Framework has been reviewed, and no amendments are required at this time.

REPORT

Background

Maintaining effective governance, integrity and risk management systems is a fundamental responsibility of Council under the *Local Government Act 2020*. Fraud and corruption control forms an important component of Council's overall governance framework and contributes to the prevention, detection and management of fraud and corruption risks.

In 2021 Council completed a review of its fraud and corruption control arrangements through the Audit and Risk Committee Work Program. The review assessed the effectiveness of existing controls and identified opportunities to strengthen governance arrangements and align Council's framework with contemporary best practice.

Following the review, Council developed an updated Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and associated Fraud and Corruption Control Framework. These documents were informed by AS 8001:2021 Fraud and Corruption Control and feedback from the Audit and Risk Committee. Council adopted the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Framework at its meeting of 26 June 2023.

As part of Council's ongoing governance review program, the Policy has now been reviewed to ensure it remains current, effective and aligned with evolving governance expectations and better practice guidance.

The Audit and Risk Committee considered the outcome of the review and resolved as follows:

Audit and Risk Committee Resolution

That the Audit and Risk Committee

1. Notes the review of the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy
2. Notes that the revised Policy has been assessed and is aligned with:
 - AS 8001:2021 – Fraud and Corruption Control
 - Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) guidance
 - The governance and integrity obligations of the Local Government Act 2020
3. Recommends to Council that the revised Fraud and Corruption Control Policy be adopted.
4. Confirms no changes are required to the Fraud and Corruption Control Framework

Discussion

The review was undertaken to ensure Council's fraud and corruption governance arrangements remain contemporary, effective and aligned with recognised best practice standards and integrity expectations.

As part of the review, Council benchmarked its existing arrangements against several Victorian local government fraud and corruption policies and considered guidance issued by the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) and the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO), together with the requirements of AS 8001:2021 Fraud and Corruption Control. AS 8001:2021 is the Australian benchmark standard for establishing, implementing and maintaining effective fraud and corruption prevention, detection and response arrangements within organisations.

The review identified several opportunities to strengthen the Policy and further align Council's arrangements with contemporary governance expectations and recognised best practice.

Key changes include:

- strengthened alignment with AS 8001:2021, legislation and IBAC guidance;
- clearer governance, accountability and oversight responsibilities;
- enhanced training, awareness and reporting requirements;
- improved reporting and escalation pathways;
- strengthened integration with the Fraud and Corruption Control Framework; and
- clearer articulation of Council's zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption.

The review also included detailed consideration of the existing Fraud and Corruption Control Framework. This assessment confirmed that the Framework continues to align with recognised best practice, legislative obligations and Council's governance requirements. Consequently, no amendments to the Framework are proposed.

Together, the revised Policy and existing Framework provide a contemporary and integrated governance framework supporting the prevention, detection and response to fraud and corruption across the organisation.

Options to Consider

Option 1 - Adopt the revised Fraud and Corruption Control Policy (Recommended)

This option strengthens Council's governance framework and ensures continued alignment with recognised best practice standards, legislative obligations and integrity expectations.

Option 2 - Retain the existing Policy

This option would retain the current Policy but would not implement the governance improvements identified through the review, potentially reducing Council's ability to demonstrate alignment with contemporary fraud and corruption control practices.

Sustainability Implications

The revised Policy supports the long-term sustainability of Council's governance framework through strengthened accountability, integrity and risk management practices.

Community Engagement

The review relates to Council's internal governance, risk management and integrity framework. Community engagement was not required, however consultation was undertaken with the Audit and Risk Committee as part of Council's governance review process.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The review represents a continuous improvement initiative designed to enhance Council's governance framework and strengthen fraud and corruption control arrangements through clearer accountabilities and improved governance controls.

Collaboration

The review included benchmarking against Victorian local government sector practices and consideration of guidance issued by relevant integrity and oversight agencies.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with the adoption of the revised Policy.

Effective fraud and corruption controls assist Council to minimise financial loss, misuse of resources, investigation costs and reputational impacts arising from fraud or corrupt conduct.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

- **Local Government Act 2020** - The revised Policy supports Council's governance, accountability and integrity obligations under the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- **AS 8001:2021 Fraud and Corruption Control** - The revised Policy has been reviewed against and aligned with the principles contained within AS 8001:2021.
- **IBAC Guidance** - The revised Policy reflects relevant fraud and corruption prevention and integrity guidance published by IBAC.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

2025-2029 Council Plan

Theme 4 – Leadership: A trusted and capable Council that leads with integrity and responsibility.

The revised Policy supports Council's commitment to ethical conduct, integrity, accountability, transparency and effective risk management, consistent with the objectives of the Council Plan.

Risk Implications

Fraud and corruption present significant governance, financial and reputational risks for local government.

The revised Policy strengthens Council's fraud and corruption control environment by:

- strengthening preventative and detective controls;
- clarifying reporting and escalation pathways;
- enhancing governance oversight and accountability;
- supporting compliance with recognised standards and legislative expectations; and
- providing greater assurance to Council, the community and regulators.

The review of the associated Framework confirmed that existing operational controls and governance arrangements remain appropriate and effective.

Conclusion

Council maintains a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption. The revised Fraud and Corruption Control Policy strengthens Council's governance framework and aligns with contemporary best practice, recognised standards and legislative obligations. The Audit and Risk Committee has reviewed the revised Policy and recommended its adoption. The associated Fraud and Corruption Control Framework has also been reviewed and remains current and effective. Adoption of the revised Policy will ensure Council maintains a contemporary and robust framework for preventing, detecting and responding to fraud and corruption risks.

9.4 HORSHAM MUNICIPAL PLAY SPACES STRATEGY

Director:	Justine Kingan
Directorate:	Community Liveability
File Number:	F19/A11/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Horsham Municipal Play Spaces Strategy 2026-2036 (Final) (**Appendix 9.4A**)

Issues and Opportunities Report (**Appendix 9.4B**)

Community Engagement Summary Report (Stage 1) (**Appendix 9.4C**)

Community Engagement Summary Report (Stage 2) (**Appendix 9.4D**)

Purpose

To present the final Horsham Municipal Play Spaces Strategy 2026-2036 (*Play for All*) following completion of community consultation and seek Council endorsement of the Strategy which includes an indicative funding plan.

Summary

The Horsham Municipal Play Spaces Strategy 2026-2036 (*Play for All*) provides Council with a long-term framework to guide the planning, renewal, development and equitable distribution of play spaces across the municipality.

The Strategy has been informed by a municipal-wide assessment of HRCC owned or managed play spaces, analysis of Council plans, Victorian government strategic directions and policy, emerging awareness of the value of play and public spaces and two stages of community engagement involving more than 760 participants.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Adopts the *Horsham Municipal Play Space Strategy 2026-2036*.
2. Notes that the Strategy provides a long-term framework to guide the equitable planning, renewal, improvement, and development of play spaces across Horsham Rural City.
3. Notes the Issues and Opportunities Report, Stage one and two, Community Engagement Summary Reports, which helped inform the development of the *Horsham Municipal Play Space Strategy 2026-2036*.

-
4. Notes that the Strategy includes funding assumptions and proposed delivery pipeline to support long-term planning, with implementation to occur through Council's annual planning and budget processes. As part of these processes, Council will annually:
 - a. Determine priority play space projects, funding allocations, and delivery timing, having regard to emerging community needs, demographic changes, asset condition, grant funding opportunities, and Council's strategic priorities; and
 - b. consider a progress report on implementation of the Strategy,
 5. Requires that major renewal, neighbourhood, regional and new play space projects include site-specific community engagement to inform design prior to project delivery.

REPORT

Background

Horsham Rural City Council manages a network of more than 28 play spaces across Horsham and surrounding townships, (26 were audited as part of the Strategy. City Oval and Lukin Park were developed post audit).

Prior to commencement of this project, Council did not have a dedicated municipal play spaces strategy to guide investment decisions, renewal priorities, service levels, hierarchy, accessibility outcomes or future development opportunities.

The Strategy was initiated to provide a clear, evidence-based framework for future decision making and to ensure investment is aligned with community need, contemporary play principles and available resources.

The project included:

- Review of relevant Council plans, Victorian Government policy directions and industry best practice;
- Preparation of an Issues and Opportunities Report;
- Detailed audits and condition assessments of municipal play spaces;
- Gender Impact Assessment;
- Community and stakeholder engagement;
- Development of a hierarchy of play spaces;
- Preparation of an Implementation Plan; and
- Development of a Funding Strategy.

Council resolved on 2 March 2026 to release the draft Strategy for public consultation.

Discussion

The Strategy establishes a vision for a connected network of inclusive, welcoming and diverse play spaces that support social connection, physical activity and community wellbeing.

Assessment of 26 municipal play spaces identified several consistent issues, including:

- Limited diversity of play experiences;
- Insufficient opportunities for nature-based and unstructured play;
- Limited provision for older children and young people;
- Inconsistent accessibility outcomes;
- Insufficient shade, seating and supporting amenities; and
- Uneven distribution of play opportunities across the municipality.

Play Space Hierarchy

The Strategy establishes a three-level hierarchy for play spaces: Local, Neighbourhood and Regional. The hierarchy provides a consistent framework for developing the municipal play network, helps avoid

overdevelopment of individual sites, and defines the service levels for play space upgrades and maintenance.

- **Local play spaces**
Intended primarily for residents within a 400-metre walkable catchment and generally provide shorter-stay, targeted play opportunities.
- **Neighbourhood play spaces**
Provide a broader range of play, recreation and social opportunities for different ages and abilities and generally include a higher level of supporting amenity.
- **Regional play spaces**
Destination spaces serving both residents and visitors, providing diverse play opportunities, social gathering spaces and a high level of amenity. The Strategy identifies a need for two Regional play spaces across the municipality.

Overarching framework

In response to public engagement, the final Strategy includes a Funding Strategy that:

- Maintains the priority of upgrading existing Local play spaces;
- Establishes a framework for Council co-contributions toward future externally funded projects;
- Enables investigation of new play spaces in identified gap areas;
- Improves Council's readiness and competitiveness for grant funding opportunities; and
- Provides a balanced and financially responsible pathway for future investment.

The Horsham Municipal Play Spaces Strategy 2026-2036 (*Play for All*) provides Council with a long-term framework. The Implementation Plan, Capital Works Schedule and delivery pipeline in the strategy will help guide investment in play spaces - however Council is not being asked to endorse a fixed year-by-year works program or commit funding to specific projects. Project timing and funding will continue to be determined through Council's annual budget and capital planning processes.

The Strategy includes Development Standards that sets out, at a high level, what should be provided at Local, Neighbourhood and Regional play spaces. It does not prescribe how those elements should be designed, arranged or integrated within individual sites. That level of detail is developed through the concept design stage, having regard to relevant legislation, standards, Council strategies and contemporary design guidance, including:

- current Australian Standards relevant to playground equipment, surfacing, access and mobility, outdoor fitness and skate facilities;
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles;
- Victorian Government open space planning guidance, including the current successor to Planning Practice Note 70;
- *Active Victoria 2022–2026* and any successor framework;
- *Good Play Space Guide – I Can Play Too*;
- *Design for Everyone Guide – A Guide to Sport and Active Recreation Settings*;
- *Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria*;
- *Guidelines for Planning, Installing and Activating Outdoor Fitness Equipment*;

- Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- *Gender Equality Act 2020* and relevant gender impact assessment requirements;
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and Universal Design principles;
- *Greening Greater Horsham 2022*; and
- Council's applicable landscape design guidance.

The 10-year funding plan sets out indicative funding assumptions and a proposed delivery pipeline to guide future planning. It prioritises annual investment in Local play spaces, proposes a Neighbourhood upgrade approximately every three years, and allows for one Regional upgrade over the decade, with larger projects dependent on external funding and Council co-contributions. Councillors will determine actual projects, priorities, timing and funding each year through Council's annual planning and budget process. Investment may therefore vary from the assumptions and pipeline in response to community needs, asset condition, grant opportunities and other strategic priorities.

The hierarchy guides investment by defining each play space's role, catchment and level of provision within the municipal network. The play space hierarchy is intended to operate as a strategic planning and network development tool to guide future Council investment decisions for play spaces across the municipality. It provides a consistent framework for understanding the role, catchment, level of provision and intended function of different play spaces, while recognising that not all parks, facilities and community spaces are intended to provide the same level of infrastructure or service.

It is supported by the Development Standards, which identify required, optional and unsuitable play elements, amenities and accessibility features for Local, Neighbourhood and Regional play spaces. The hierarchy has been informed by the hierarchy levels and provision principles established through Council's Social Infrastructure Plan, adopted in 2020, and the Open Space Strategy, adopted in 2019. Through development of the Play Space Strategy, this framework has been further refined from the original four hierarchy levels to three levels: Local, Neighborhood and Regional to provide a clearer and more practical approach for planning, investment prioritisation and infrastructure service provision.

This keeps development consistent with each site's network role while allowing for local conditions and diversity across the municipality. Classification within the hierarchy does not prevent Council from considering future changes where evidence supports a different outcome. Classifications may be reviewed over time through future audits, Strategy reviews, master planning processes and Council decision-making to respond to changing community needs, population growth, usage patterns, available funding and service demand. This approach is consistent with common practice across councils, where hierarchy frameworks are used to support transparent and evidence-based decisions while recognising that provision levels will vary according to local context, population density, growth pressures, budget capacity and strategic priorities.

Community Engagement

The Strategy has been developed over a multi-year process involving technical investigations, community engagement and Councillor input.

- Stage 1 engagement attracted participation from **666 residents**, community members, stakeholders and students and informed development of the draft Strategy.
- Stage 2 engagement, undertaken following public exhibition of the draft Strategy, **involved 95** participants through online surveys, community pop-ups and direct stakeholder engagement.

Stage 2 engagement demonstrated strong support for the Strategy Vision, Guiding Principles and proposed hierarchy of Local, Neighbourhood and Regional play spaces.

While community feedback strongly supported the priority of improving existing play spaces, respondents also highlighted the importance of addressing gaps in access to play opportunities across parts of the municipality.

Feedback demonstrated strong support for:

- Inclusive and accessible play opportunities;
- Greater diversity of play experiences;
- Nature-based play;
- Improved shade and comfort;
- Safe and well-maintained spaces;
- Investment in existing play spaces; and
- Equitable access to play opportunities.

The most consistent message received was the desire for play spaces that are fair, inclusive, safe, engaging and accessible to all ages and abilities.

Key Themes and Inclusion of a Funding Strategy

A key theme emerging from Stage 2 consultation was community concern regarding gaps in the current distribution of play spaces. While engagement highlighted support for additional play spaces in some locations, technical assessment identified that many existing play spaces require investment to meet contemporary standards.

The final Strategy reflects a balanced approach that:

- Prioritises renewal and improvement of existing Local play spaces;
- Establishes a funding framework to support future Neighbourhood and Regional projects;
- Identifies future investigations into new play spaces where gaps are demonstrated;
- Supports development of business cases and concept plans for major projects; and
- Positions Council to leverage external grant funding opportunities.

This approach allows Council to continue delivering upgrades within existing budget allocations while planning responsibly for future network expansion. It also provides the opportunity for Council to annually review its' priorities, sequencing or commitments based on demand, emerging community needs, demographic changes, asset condition, grant opportunities and other strategic priorities. Council

has the mechanism to amend the indicative Funding Strategy through the annual Council budget cycle and planning process.

Options to Consider

Option 1 (Recommended)

Endorse the final Play Spaces Strategy.

This option:

- Reflects extensive community consultation;
- Provides Council with a clear strategic framework;
- Enables implementation to commence immediately;
- Supports future grant applications and advocacy; and
- Balances affordability, deliverability and community expectations.

That Council:

1. *Adopts the Horsham Municipal Play Space Strategy 2026-2036.*
2. *Notes that the Strategy provides a long-term framework to guide the equitable planning, renewal, improvement, and development of play spaces across Horsham Rural City.*
3. *Notes the Issues and Opportunities Report, Stage one and two Community Engagement Summary Reports which helped inform the development of the Horsham Municipal Play Space Strategy 2026-2036.*
4. *Notes that the Strategy includes funding assumptions and proposed delivery pipeline to support long-term planning, with implementation to occur through Council's annual planning and budget processes. As part of these processes, Council will annually:*
 - a. *Determine priority play space projects, funding allocations, and delivery timing, having regard to emerging community needs, demographic changes, asset condition, grant funding opportunities, and Council's strategic priorities; and*
 - b. *consider a progress report on implementation of the Strategy,*
5. *Requires that major renewal, neighbourhood, regional and new play space projects include site-specific community engagement to inform design prior to project delivery.*

Option 2

Endorse the Strategy with additional implementation directions.

Option 2 builds on Option 1 by endorsing the final Play Spaces Strategy and committing Council to:

- review the 10-Year Funding Plan and Delivery Pipeline through the next annual budget process; and
- prepare Play Space Design Guidelines to support future planning, design and delivery standards.

This option:

- Provides further guidance for how play spaces are designed, integrated and delivered, including accessibility, safety, inclusivity, site layout, alignment with other Council strategies and contemporary design guidance.

- Confirms that funding implications will be reviewed through the annual budget process, with Council retaining discretion over project priorities, timing and funding allocations.

Option 3

Abandons the Play Spaces Strategy

This option:

- Impacts Council's ability to seek external funding for upgrades to neighbourhood and regional play spaces;
- Does not respond to the positive community support received during consultation;
- Creates uncertainty regarding future investment priorities for play spaces; and
- May require additional officer resources and expenditure to undertake further review and consultation.

Recommendation: Option 1

Sustainability Implications

The Strategy supports:

Social Sustainability

- Community wellbeing and social connection;
- Inclusive participation; and
- Access to recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities.

Environmental Sustainability

- Nature-based play opportunities;
- Urban greening and shade; and
- Climate-responsive design.

Economic Sustainability

- Strategic asset management;
- Efficient allocation of capital resources; and
- Improved ability to secure external funding.

Community Engagement

Community engagement has directly informed the final Strategy.

Across both engagement phases more than 760 participants contributed feedback regarding:

- Vision and principles;
- Play preferences;
- Accessibility and inclusion;
- Local priorities;
- Future investment opportunities; and
- Implementation priorities.

Feedback has informed both the final Strategy and inclusion of the Funding Strategy.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The Strategy promotes innovation through:

- Contemporary play design principles;
- Nature-based play;
- Network-based planning;
- Co-location of community infrastructure; and
- Ongoing review and monitoring of outcomes.

Collaboration

Implementation of the Strategy will continue to involve collaboration with:

- State Government agencies;
- Funding partners;
- Developers;
- Community groups and stakeholders; and
- Other land managers.

Financial Implications

The Strategy includes a 10-year funding plan that sets out indicative funding assumptions and a proposed delivery pipeline to guide future planning. It prioritises annual investment in Local play spaces, proposes a Neighbourhood upgrade approximately every three years, and allows for one Regional upgrade over the decade, with larger projects dependent on external funding and Council co-contributions.

The indicative figures proposed by the Strategy:

- Local play spaces: \$200,000 per year, with \$15,000–\$20,000 per park for detailed design and costing. The aim is to upgrade as many Local play spaces as the annual budget and scope allow.
- Neighbourhood play spaces: \$335,000 per upgrade, comprising an indicative \$85,000 Council contribution and \$250,000 in external grant funding, plus \$40,000 per park for planning and design. The pipeline proposes one upgrade every three years.
- Regional play space: Up to \$2 million for one upgrade over the 10 years, with \$60,000–\$80,000 for planning and design. Council's contribution is to be determined, depending on design costs and grant funding ratios.
- New play spaces: Costs and Council contributions are to be determined, depending on site conditions, development opportunities, infrastructure requirements and external funding.
- Current approved starting allocation: \$100,000 in 2026–27 to commence implementation.

These are planning assumptions only, not committed expenditure. Councillors will decide the actual funding, projects, priorities and timing annually through the budget process. The Strategy does not commit Council to additional capital expenditure beyond existing approved budgets.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

The Strategy aligns with:

- Active Victoria 2022-2026;
- Victorian public open space and recreation planning principles; and
- Contemporary play and inclusion design standards.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

The Strategy aligns with the:

Horsham Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029

Liveability

- Promote health and wellbeing for people of all ages and abilities.
- Create welcoming places that encourage connection.

Sustainability

- Adapt to minimise climate impacts.

Accessibility

- Improve access to quality public spaces and facilities.

Leadership

- Deliver evidence-based decision making.
- Demonstrate sound financial management.
- Strengthen partnerships and advocacy.

The Strategy also aligns with:

- Horsham Open Space Strategy 2019;
- Community Facilities Strategy 2025;
- Social Infrastructure Plan 2020; and
- Central Activity District Revitalisation Plan 2023.

Risk Implications

Without an endorsed Strategy:

- Future investment decisions may lack strategic direction;
- Opportunities for external funding may be reduced;
- Existing service inequities may remain;
- Renewal priorities may become reactive rather than planned; and
- Community expectations may be difficult to manage consistently.

The endorsed Strategy provides an evidence-based framework to guide future decision making and reduce these risks.

Conclusion

The Horsham Municipal Play Spaces Strategy 2026-2036 provides Council with a comprehensive, evidence-based framework to guide the equitable planning, renewal and development of play spaces across the municipality.

The Strategy has been informed by detailed assessment, extensive community consultation and ongoing Councillor engagement. It responds to strong community support for inclusive, accessible and diverse play opportunities, while recognising the need to improve existing play spaces and address identified gaps over time.

The indicative funding assumptions and proposed delivery pipeline provide a practical basis for long-term planning but do not commit Council to additional expenditure. Actual projects, priorities, timing and funding will continue to be determined annually by Council through its planning and budget processes.

Adoption of the Strategy will establish a clear long-term direction for municipal play spaces, support informed annual investment decisions and strengthen Council's readiness to pursue external funding opportunities.

9.5 FIVE RAISED PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK

Director:	John Martin
Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F02/A08/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Engagement report summary (**Appendix 9.5A**)

Purpose

To provide Council with the community engagement outcomes for the five proposed raised pedestrian crossings, and to seek endorsement to proceed with the works for all five crossings.

Summary

- Council secured \$242,000 of supplementary funding from the Transport Accident Commission under its Safer Local Roads and Streets Program (SLSRP).
- A series of options were workshopped to identify five priority sites that might be delivered with this funding.
- Community engagement was undertaken in relation to the works at these five sites.
- The report presents the outcomes of that engagement and proposes proceeding with those works.

Draft Recommendation

That Council:

1. Acknowledge the community engagement outcomes, including the strong support for three crossings, the mixed but generally safety-supportive feedback for the Horsham College/Federation University crossing, and the assessment of the Wimmera Base Hospital crossing responses;
2. Agree to proceed with the works for all five raised pedestrian crossings in accordance with the authorised designs.

REPORT

Background

Council has secured \$242,000 ex. GST from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) under the Safer Local Roads and Streets Program (SLRSP) for the project “Multiple Roads in Horsham – Raised Priority Crossings and Speed Limit Reduction”. The funding agreement provides for five raised pedestrian crossings and a speed limit reduction associated with the Wimmera Base Hospital treatment.

The project responds to identified pedestrian demand and crossing difficulty at locations used by vulnerable road users, including school students, parents and hospital users. The approved treatments are intended to reduce vehicle speeds, improve pedestrian priority and provide more consistent Safe System infrastructure across the precinct.

Discussion

Council sought online community feedback during August 2026. The survey attracted 111 visitors, with 39 contributors submitting 40 responses. Of the contributors, 11 were registered users and 28 were anonymous. Respondents could provide feedback on one or more crossing locations; therefore, the number of classified responses varies between crossings.

The written responses show strong positive sentiments for the two Horsham West Primary School crossings and positive sentiments for Baillie Street at Hillary Street. Feedback for the Horsham College/Federation University site was close to balanced, although the comments generally recognised the underlying pedestrian-safety issue. The Wimmera Base Hospital site was the only location with an overall negative result, however the negative comments are discussed further below.

Across the five sites, recurring themes included safer routes for children, the need to slow vehicles, the positioning and form of crossings, school-time congestion, parking and drop-off arrangements, and driver behaviour. The location-specific feedback assessments are outlined below.

Crossing 1 – Baillie Street and Hillary Street

The proposal is a raised pedestrian crossing on Baillie Street at Hillary Street, including pavement works, kerb adjustments, drainage modifications, line marking, signage and reinstatement.



Proposed Crossing Location Shown as Yellow Circles

Community sentiment was positive overall, with 8 positive, 4 negative and 3 neutral classified responses.

The principal feedback themes and officer assessments are as follows:

- One resident said, “There are many many children who walk past our house and across the road ... we absolutely need a safe crossing and for the cars to slow down.” Another said, “Students need a safer spot to cross.” The comments demonstrate an identified need for a defined crossing point and lower vehicle speeds for students, families and other pedestrians using Hillary Street.
- Negative and neutral comments questioned likely pedestrian use outside school times, the effect on through traffic and whether school-time speed controls would be preferable. The crossing would provide pedestrian priority and moderate vehicle speeds at all times, including outside supervised school-crossing hours. School-time speed controls, parking and drop-off arrangements are broader matters that can be considered separately.

On balance, the positive feedback and identified pedestrian-safety benefits support proceeding with the proposed treatment.

Crossing 2 – Baillie Street near Horsham College and Federation University

The proposal is a raised pedestrian crossing on Baillie Street near Churchill Road, serving Horsham College and Federation University, including pavement works, kerb adjustments, drainage modifications, line marking, signage and reinstatement.



Proposed Crossing Location Shown as Yellow Circles

Community sentiment was mixed and close to balanced, with 4 positive, 5 negative and 2 neutral classified responses.

The principal feedback themes and officer assessments are as follows:

- One respondent said, “A second crossing is really needed further down Baillie St near Churchill Rd intersection. So many students from the College and West PS cross down there, often in between parked and reversing cars.” Another considered the crossing would “help keep the kids safer.” The comments identify an existing student desire line and the risks associated with students crossing between parked and reversing vehicles. A formal crossing would provide a defined and more visible crossing point.
- Negative and neutral comments questioned the precise location, noted the existing supervised crossing or preferred time-based school speed controls. One respondent suggested moving the crossing further east to better match student movements.
The proposed crossing near Churchill Road serves a separate student desire line from the existing

supervised crossing. Time-based speed controls alone would not establish pedestrian priority or a defined crossing path. The detailed location should continue to be checked against observed pedestrian movements.

Although the classified responses were close to balanced, the comments generally recognised the pedestrian-safety issue. On balance, the feedback supports retaining a crossing in this vicinity, with the precise position confirmed through the design process.

Crossing 3 – Hillary Street and Kirwood Street

The proposal is a raised pedestrian crossing on Kirwood Street at Hillary Street, including pavement works, kerb adjustments, drainage modifications, line marking, signage and reinstatement.



Proposed Crossing Location shown as Yellow Circles

Community sentiment was strongly positive, with 15 positive, 3 negative and 5 neutral classified responses.

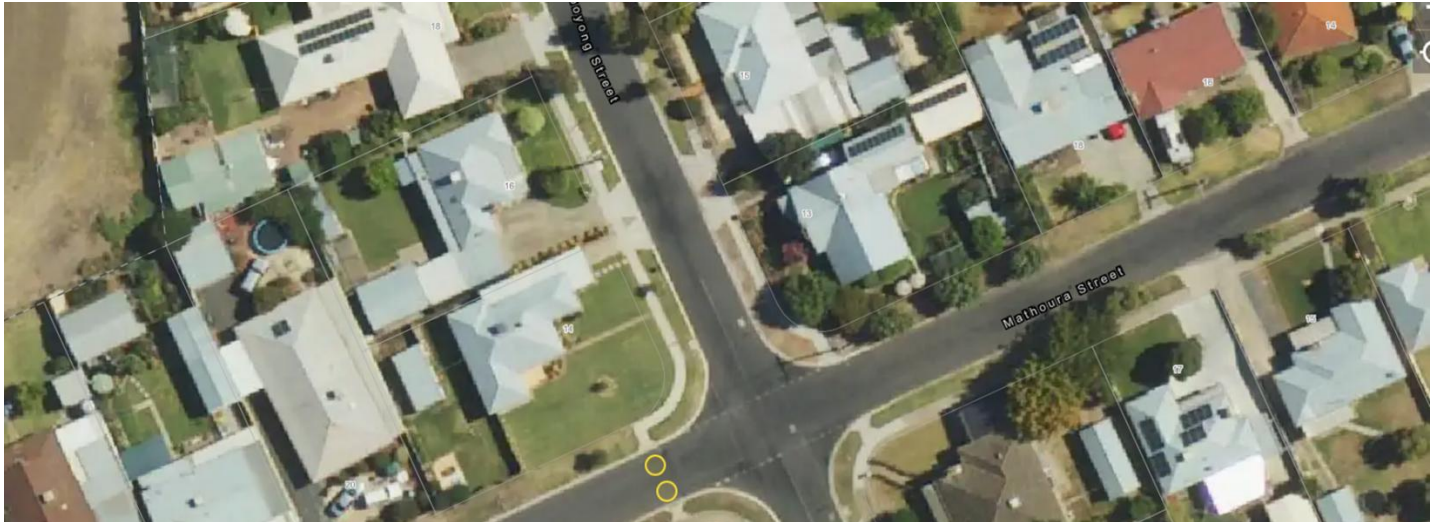
The principal feedback themes and officer assessments are as follows:

- Respondents repeatedly described the intersection as busy and difficult for children to cross. Comments included, “It is currently extremely dangerous for school children to cross,” and “The crossing should enable students to cross this busy intersection safely.” The feedback supports providing a formal crossing at this location to improve pedestrian priority and reduce vehicle speeds in an area used heavily by school children.
- A respondent raised concern that the crossing could affect traffic flow and referred to poor visibility when vehicles turn onto Hillary Street. Several respondents also sought improved parking, pick-up/drop-off arrangements and enforcement around the school. Sight-distance concerns have already been considered, including through “No Stopping” parking controls on Hillary Street at the Hillary/Kirwood intersection. Parking supply, school drop-off arrangements and enforcement are broader precinct matters and have to be considered separately.

On balance, the strong positive response and identified safety benefits support proceeding with the proposed treatment.

Crossing 4 – Mathoura Street and Kooyong Street

The proposal is a raised pedestrian crossing on Mathoura Street at Kooyong Street, including pavement works, kerb adjustments, drainage modifications, line marking, signage and reinstatement.



Proposed Crossing Location shown as Yellow Circles

This location received the strongest positive response, with 16 positive, 3 negative and 5 neutral classified responses.

The principal feedback themes and officer assessments are as follows:

- One respondent described the location as “an excellent point for a crossing,” while a Mathoura Street resident said that slowing traffic would make walking children to Horsham West Primary School safer. Other respondents considered the treatment would help children walk to and from school safely.
The feedback demonstrates clear support for a defined crossing and lower vehicle speeds on an established school walking route.
- One respondent raised concern about traffic redistribution, stating: “I believe there is more traffic using Mathoura Street from Hillary Street than from the Banool Street end... it is more likely to just direct traffic off Mathoura Street onto Derimal Street, doubling traffic on Derimal Street.” The proposed crossing will not close Mathoura Street, restrict vehicle movements or change intersection priority. It will require vehicles to reduce speed when approaching the school precinct but is not expected to cause significant traffic diversion.
- Another respondent stated: “The raised island is in the flow of traffic direction with give way signs for traffic in the opposite direction... This will make the intersection more dangerous and difficult for traffic and pedestrians.” The proposed treatment is a full-width raised pedestrian crossing rather than a traffic island and will not direct vehicles into opposing traffic.

On balance, the strong positive response and identified pedestrian-safety benefits support proceeding with the proposed treatment.

Crossing 5 – Baillie Street near Wimmera Base Hospital

The proposal is to upgrade the existing hospital crossing to a full-width raised pedestrian crossing, with associated pavement, kerb, drainage, line marking, signage and reinstatement works, together with a reduction of the speed limit to 40 km/h in this section.



Proposed Crossing Location

Community sentiment comprised 1 positive, 3 negative and 2 neutral classified responses. The feedback focused less on the need for pedestrian access and more on the effectiveness and location of the existing treatment.

The principal concerns and officer assessments are as follows:

- One respondent said drivers currently dodge the speed cushions: “I do see drivers dodging them.” This observation supports replacing the avoidable cushions with a full-width raised crossing, which requires all vehicles to travel over the treatment and directly responds to the behaviour identified.
- Another respondent argued that the Baillie Street/Trinity Drive/Menadue Street area should be addressed instead, citing roundabout confusion, near misses and school pick-up traffic. Those concerns may warrant separate investigation, but they relate to another location and do not identify a defect in upgrading the established hospital crossing.
- A third respondent stated, “The crossing is not appropriate and is not used by pedestrians regularly; it is more of a hazard and hindrance than being effective.” No specific design hazard or supporting evidence was identified by this respondent. The proposal upgrades an established crossing at a health-service location and provides a more consistent, conspicuous and speed-managed pedestrian facility.

On balance, the comments do not identify a safety or operational issue that would justify removing the hospital crossing from the project. Vehicle comfort and accessibility will be addressed through compliant platform and ramp geometry during detailed design.

Options to Consider

An earlier briefing paper on this subject presented a range of options for consideration leading to these five sites being selected for this project. Councillor feedback was incorporated in the proposal.

Council could decide to proceed with any number of the proposed crossings.

It is not readily possible to consider alternative sites with this funding, as project concepts must first be approved by TAC before they can be progressed.

Sustainability Implications

Nil

Community Engagement

This report provides the outcomes of community engagement undertaken on proposals for the five crossings. A summary report of the feedback is included as Appendix 9.5A.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The crossings proposed in this report are in line with the Safe System principles, aiming at minimising the potential impacts on pedestrians of a collision, should one occur.

Collaboration

The support of the Transport Accident Commission in funding and guiding the scope of the works at each site is appreciated.

Financial Implications

The approved TAC contribution is \$242,000 plus GST, including a contingency amount of \$24,191. This will cover the full cost of the works.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

The funding is part of the Victorian Government's Safer Local Streets and Roads Program.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

The proposed crossings align with the locations identified in the HRCC Bicycle Plan. They support safer, more accessible local streets and active-travel links to schools, education facilities, health services and surrounding residential areas.

Risk Implications

Key risks associated with this project include:

- Reputation risks, if Council does not have due regard to community feedback.
- Delivery risks, should there be issues with delivery of the works.
- Safety risks, which the works aim to address.

Conclusion

It is proposed that, on balance, the negative comments received for works at some of the sites do not outweigh the safety benefits that will arise from these proposed pedestrian crossings.

9.6 DISASTER MANAGEMENT REFORM – PROPOSED ADVOCACY

Director:	John Martin
Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F16/A10/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Disaster Management Reform Discussion Paper (**Appendix 9.6A**)

4-Council CEOs submission to NEMA (**Appendix 9.6B**)

Purpose

To present information to Council about proposed changes to the National Disaster Recovery Funding arrangements, and propose that Council undertake advocacy aiming to avoid adverse impacts of the proposed changes, and create the opportunity to adopt a more resilient approach to recovery measures.

Summary

- The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has released a discussion paper proposing reforms to the funding arrangements for disaster recovery at a national level.
- While much of the reform package is supported, two key concerns have been identified
 - Lifting of the threshold for activating funding support, from \$240,000 to \$2.7 million.
 - Inclusion of an allowance of 15% for additional expenditure beyond like-for-like replacement to facilitate resilience.
- Submissions into this review were sought by 19 August 2026, which gave limited time for seeking formal Council input to the submission.
- With this short timeframe, Council officers responded to a request for contributions from the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) for it to coordinate a response on behalf of Councils.
- It was subsequently assessed that the information provided to MAV provided the basis of a submission from the CEOs of the four Councils in our Wimmera Emergency Management Resource Sharing Partnership, so that our local views on this reform could be presented to NEMA.
- Given the significance of the proposed changes, it is considered that further advocacy should be undertaken, beyond the NEMA submission process, to ensure that the Australian Government is made aware of the potential impact of the changes.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorse the submission made by the four Wimmera Emergency Management Partnership Council CEOs to NEMA regarding the Disaster Recovery Funding Reform proposals as contained in Appendix 9.6B.
2. Undertake further advocacy to highlight to the Australian Government the potential impacts on Local Government relating to the threshold for activating an event, being raised to \$2.7

-
- million, and the limitation on setting an allowance for resilience works at 15% of the replacement value.
3. Undertake similar advocacy to the Victorian Government, in particular to seek to understand how it might respond to the proposed NEMA reforms to address the potential funding impacts on Councils of the new Disaster Recovery Funding Framework.

REPORT

Background

The Commonwealth Government is proposing to replace the existing Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) with a new Disaster Recovery Funding Framework (DRFF). (Appendix 9.6A)

At a high level the intent of the reforms can be supported, including efforts to simplify disaster funding arrangements, reducing administrative burden and place greater emphasis on resilience and betterment. However, there is concern that aspects of the proposed framework may unintentionally disadvantage rural and regional communities and increase financial pressures on local government.

Of particular concern are:

- The proposed \$2.7 million state-based activation threshold
- The proposed 15% resilience (betterment) allowance

These concerns are not unique to Victoria. Local government organisations across Australia have raised similar concerns regarding activation thresholds, cumulative disaster impacts, resilience funding and the potential for increased costs being transferred to local government.

Recent Infrastructure Victoria research (report titled “Warning signs - Climate change risks to Victoria’s infrastructure”, May 2026) found more than \$57 billion of Victorian Government-owned or regulated infrastructure is currently exposed to climate-related hazards, with that exposure projected to increase by almost 25 per cent over the next 40 years. The research identifies bushfire, flood and extreme heat as the greatest risks and highlights the value of investing in infrastructure resilience to reduce future recovery costs.

Discussion

A key concern with the proposed framework is that it largely assesses disasters individually. In reality, rural councils are increasingly managing a continuous cycle of emergency response, relief and recovery activities. While individual events may not meet funding thresholds, their cumulative impacts place substantial pressure on local government finances, staff resources, infrastructure programs and community wellbeing.

While each event is treated separately under funding frameworks, the reality for local government is quite different. Staff, contractors, recovery personnel, plant, facilities and financial resources are repeatedly deployed across consecutive disasters, with recovery efforts often overlapping.

The cumulative burden on council capacity, finances and community recovery cannot be measured solely by the cost of an individual event.

The MAV has identified that 35 disaster events activated in Victoria over the past five years would have fallen below the proposed \$2.7 million threshold. These events included floods, storms, bushfires, earthquakes and tornadoes that nevertheless generated substantial recovery expenditure and community impacts. Nearly 90% of DRFA claims in Victoria have been made by rural and regional councils.

This report proposes that the final Disaster Recovery Funding Framework should:

- Recognise cumulative disaster impacts.
- Support small and medium-sized disasters.
- Consider local government financial capacity.

- Recognise local significance and community impact, not solely statewide expenditure.
- Protect against cost shifting to local government.

It is suggested that support should be given to the proposed Resilient Infrastructure Scheme and the recognition that recovery funding should help reduce future disaster risk.

However, there is concern that a betterment allowance of up to 15% will not be sufficient to deliver meaningful resilience upgrades for many rural infrastructure assets.

Infrastructure Victoria recently highlighted that resilient infrastructure and adaptation investments can significantly reduce future recovery costs and service disruptions. Research referenced by Infrastructure Victoria indicates that resilience investments can generate returns of up to \$10 for every \$1 invested through avoided damage and reduced disruption.

Information sourced from the Municipal Association of Victoria identifies numerous examples where resilience upgrades required between 25% and 47% additional investment above like-for-like reconstruction costs.

For many road, bridge, culvert and drainage projects, a 15% allowance may only enable minor improvements such as:

- Pavement strengthening through alternative surfacing.
- Minor drainage upgrades.
- Limited shoulder protection works.

However, meaningful resilience improvements often require:

- Raising road levels above flood height.
- Upsizing culverts and drainage structures.
- Increasing bridge flow capacity.
- Relocating vulnerable infrastructure.
- Strengthening infrastructure to contemporary climate and engineering standards.

In many cases, these improvements are more consistent with a betterment allowance of 35% or greater.

If funding levels are insufficient to support genuine resilience improvements, councils may be forced to repeatedly rebuild the same assets following future disaster events.

This creates an ongoing recovery liability for all levels of government.

It is proposed that Council should adopt an advocacy approach to this proposed reform that considers the following:

- Provide greater flexibility for resilience funding.
- Allow resilience funding of at least 35-40% for high-risk and repeat-damage assets.
- Recognise future climate risk in infrastructure rebuilding decisions.
- Support rebuilding above contemporary standards where resilience benefits can be demonstrated
- Support rebuilding that reduces future recovery costs.

While the deadline for submissions to NEMA has closed (on 19 August 2026), it is proposed that Council should advocate to the Australian Government to reinforce these key messages.

Options to Consider

In addition to advocacy to the Australian Government, Council could consider presenting a submission on this position to the Victorian Government, NEMA and Emergency Management Victoria.

Should the new framework be adopted as proposed, it will be important to understand the Victorian Government's response to this, and how that addresses the funding impacts on Councils.

Sustainability Implications

The proposed reforms could have a significant impact on the financial sustainability of rural and regional Councils.

Community Engagement

No specific community engagement is proposed with this submission.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Nil

Collaboration

An initial submission was made by the four Councils in our Wimmera Emergency Management Resource Sharing Partnership, with our partners, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack Shire Councils.

Financial Implications

As outlined in the report.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

This report addresses concerns about the proposed changes to the National Disaster Recovery Funding framework.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

The Municipal Emergency Management Plan is recognised as a supporting plan to the Council Plan 2025-29.

Risk Implications

Disaster recovery funding is an essential component of supporting communities after emergency events.

Conclusion

This report proposes advocacy to address the risk of changed funding arrangements relating to disaster recovery which could impact on Council's finances.

9.7 NATIMUK ROAD SHARED PATH – PROPOSED RELOCATION BENEATH TREES

Director:	John Martin
Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F02/A05/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Residents Group Response To Proposals (Appendix 9.7A)

Purpose

To seek Council approval to accept the outcome of the resident consultation and proceed with relocating the Natimuk Road shared path in the treed median between the service road and Natimuk Road.

Summary

- Council installed a shared path along the Natimuk Road service road using flexible bollards as a barrier between cars and pedestrians/cyclists.
- Following concerns raised by residents, Council developed four alternative treatment options.
- The resident-led consultation received 19 responses, with all respondents supporting relocation of the path beneath the trees.
- Relocation would retain an off-road shared path while removing the flexible-bollard treatment from the service road.
- Risks associated with the presence of trees would be managed by pruning potentially risky limbs.
- The works are estimated to cost \$93,357.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Note that all 19 responses received through the resident-led consultation supported relocating the Natimuk Road shared path beneath the existing trees.
2. Approve relocation of the shared path beneath the existing trees and removal of the flexible-bollard treatment as the preferred rectification solution.
3. Approve delivery of the works at an estimated cost of \$93,357 excluding GST, funded by a transfer of this amount from the bridge renewals budget for this financial year.

REPORT

Background

Council installed a shared path along the Natimuk Road service road using flexible bollards to separate pedestrians and cyclists from vehicle traffic, in accordance with the Safe System principles aiming to reduce the risk and consequences of a collision.

Following installation, residents raised concerns regarding the bollard treatment and requested that Council consider an alternative solution.

In response, Council developed four alternative options for the path, being:

- modification of the existing shared path,
- relocation of the path beneath the trees,
- provision of on-road bicycle lanes,
- or a sharrow treatment.

Council then invited the affected residents to indicate their preferred option.

The residents' representative group distributed Council's information, conducted an online poll and completed a letterbox drop along the affected sections of Natimuk Road. The group subsequently provided the consultation results to Council, as included in Appendix 9.7A.

Discussion

The consultation demonstrated a clear preference for relocating the shared path beneath the trees. This option would remove the flexible bollards from the service road while retaining a dedicated off-road route for pedestrians and cyclists.

The proposed works comprise an approximately 420 metre long and 3.0 metre wide sealed path, including pavement preparation, crushed-rock pavement, spray/emulsion sealing, drainage, tree pruning, kerb and intersection modifications, tie-ins and reinstatement. The works are proposed to be undertaken using Council's internal works crew, with specialist services used where required.

Detailed design and set-out will consider the additional matters raised by residents, including the Bennett Road kerb arrangement, traffic control at Churchill Road, the service-road speed environment and reinstatement of the centre line. Each request will remain subject to technical assessment and applicable road-safety and engineering requirements.

The final plans will be shared with the residents group for review prior to construction.

A key issue that initially precluded a path in the treed median related to the standards associated with works near trees. As part of the review of options, it has been assessed that the risks associated with the trees can be managed by pruning limbs that have the potential to fall on the bike path, and ongoing monitoring, to ensure a safe outcome.

Options to Consider

A set of four options was developed to address the residents' concerns, as outlined in the background above.

Sustainability Implications

The proposed relocation supports active transport and provides a separated route for pedestrians and cyclists. Locating the path beneath the established trees may improve shade and user comfort. Detailed design and construction will seek to minimise impacts on tree roots and manage drainage appropriately.

Community Engagement

The residents' representative group distributed Council's four options, conducted an online poll and completed a letterbox drop on both sides of Natimuk Road between Bennett Road and Hillary Street and between Bennett Road and Kalimna Avenue.

Sixteen online poll responses, one letterbox response and two responses received solely by email supported Option 2, relocation beneath the trees. All 19 responses therefore supported the same option. Respondents also supported the representative group continuing to liaise with Council.

Further comments regarding intersections, line marking and the service-road speed environment will be incorporated during the detailed design for the works.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The proposal demonstrates continuous improvement by responding to concerns about the installed treatment and considering an alternative that retains the original active-transport objective.

Collaboration

Not applicable. The works are proposed on a Council-managed road corridor and will be delivered primarily using Council's internal works crew. Relevant authorities and utility owners will be consulted as required.

Financial Implications

The proposed works have an estimated lump-sum cost of \$93,357 excluding GST. The estimate is preliminary and is based on delivery using Council's internal works crew, with specialist services engaged where required. The final cost will be confirmed following detailed design and programming of the works.

It is proposed to fund this works by re-assigning the estimated cost of the works from the bridges renewal program. That program, with a budget of \$300,000 this financial year, is awaiting the outcomes of a major design and modelling program, based on the work successfully undertaken at Gross' Bridge. It is planned that grant applications later in this financial year will be informed by the outcomes of this design work, leading to construction activity in 2027-28, utilising the \$760,000 budgeted in that year for this program. If approved, this change would be reflected in budget forecast revisions.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

The proposed works support Victorian transport objectives relating to safe and connected walking and cycling networks. Detailed design and construction will have regard to applicable road-management, traffic-control, accessibility and active-transport requirements.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

These works address Commitment 9 of the 2025–29 Council Plan.

Accessibility – Commitment 9: Improve transport networks within our community and beyond.

The proposal maintains an active-transport connection and responds to community concerns regarding the existing treatment. It is also consistent with the Horsham Urban Transport Plan objective of supporting more active transport.

Risk Implications

Key risks include impacts on established trees, inadequate drainage, conflict at path and road interfaces, cost escalation and construction disruption. These risks will be managed through detailed design, arboricultural input where required, service-location checks, traffic and pedestrian management, quality controls and appropriate construction staging.

Conclusion

The resident consultation showed unanimous support for relocating the shared path beneath the trees. Accepting this feedback will allow Council to remove the flexible-bollard treatment while retaining an off-road active-transport facility, at an estimated lump-sum cost of \$93,357 excluding GST.

9.8 ACTIVE TRANSPORT FUND – PROPOSED GRANT APPLICATION – BAILLIE ST SHARED PATH

Director:	John Martin
Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F20/A10/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Nil

Purpose

To propose that Council apply to the Australian Government's Active Transport Fund for a grant to upgrade the footpath in Baillie St near Federation University to be a shared bike path.

Summary

- The Australian Government has launched a further round of the Active Transport Fund, which aims to improve road safety outcomes, especially for cyclists and pedestrians, while supporting reduced emissions and community liveability.
- The current funding round is open until 30 September 2026.
- A series of project options were considered to determine which project was most suitable for this funding application, leading to the proposal to upgrade the section of Baillie St footpath from Bennett Rd to Churchill Road to a 2.0 m wide shared bicycle/pedestrian path.
- The estimated cost of the works is \$400,000.
- In principle support has been expressed by the Transport Accident Commission to use some under-expenditure in other TAC funded safety projects as part matching funding for this project.
- A Council contribution of \$40,000 is proposed along with the TAC funding to support this application.

Draft Recommendation

That Council approve the submission of a grant application to the Australian Government's Active Transport Fund to upgrade the section of footpath from Bennett Road to Churchill Road (south side) to a 2.0 m wide shared path.

REPORT

Background

The Active Transport Fund is part of the Australian Government's commitment, under the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30, to improve road safety outcomes, including for vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians.

Council was successful in gaining funding under this program for the O'Callaghans Parade / Urquhart St works which are in progress.

Initial consideration of projects that may be suitable and eligible for this program were sourced from the Horsham Bicycle and Shared Paths Infrastructure Plan 2024-34, which identifies 10 priority projects. A review of these priorities led to the identification of the section of Baillie St, between Bennett Road and Churchill Road as the preferred project for this funding application.

Discussion

The section of path proposed to be upgraded is as shown as orange in the diagram below.



This section of bike path was selected as the preferred option for a range of reasons, in particular

- It builds on recent works to upgrade the Bennett Rd section of bike path, to utilise the Bennett Rd underpass to connect to these networks.
- It is expected to attract high usage, particularly from Horsham College and Federation University students.
- Limited stakeholder engagement is required. Direct consultation would include Federation University, Horsham College and one adjoining resident.
- It would cause minimal disruption to existing infrastructure.

Options to Consider

The leading options considered as alternatives to this section included the following:

- A connection between Pioneer Court and Lyons Court.
- Along Trinity Drive in the vicinity of the Lutheran school and retirement village.
- A path along a section of Three Bridges Rd.
- The section of Baillie St from Central Park to Darlot St.

A review of the relative merit of these options led to the preference being established for the proposed option. The other options will continue to be pursued through separate funding opportunities should they arise.

Initially, the Baillie St path was proposed as a 2.5 m wide path, however, as the design was being progressed it was identified that this width would lead to some driveways being too steep. The reduced width of 2.0 m is within the standard for shared path, still comfortably allowing two gophers to pass each other without veering off the path.

Sustainability Implications

It is a goal of the Australian Government to use this fund to support projects that assist with reducing transport emissions. Shared paths align with this goal.

Community Engagement

Engagement with adjoining property holders has commenced. Feedback from Federation University has been that it supports the work, providing that access is maintained to its campus during the works – this will be a requirement of the contract for the works.

The project was identified in the Horsham Bicycle and Shared Paths Infrastructure Plan 2024-34 which underwent a significant community engagement process.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Nil

Collaboration

Nil

Financial Implications

The cost of the proposed works is \$400,000, proposed to be funded as follows:

- Council funds \$40,000
- TAC funds \$160,000
- ATF Grant \$200,000

The Council funds are identified in the capex budget as the line item “Extend Bike Tracks from the Bike Plan”, for which a Council funding component of \$45,000 has been assigned.

The Transport Accident Commission has supported our request for approval to use their funding as a contribution to this project.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

The Active Transport Fund is part of the Australian Government's commitment to its National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

The project identified in this report is sourced from the Horsham Bicycle and Shared Paths Infrastructure Plan 2024-34.

The extension of bike paths supports one of the priorities in the Health and Wellbeing Plan incorporated in the Council Plan 2025-29, i.e. Increasing Active Living.

Risk Implications

Standard construction risks are considered to apply to this project. These will be effectively managed during the delivery phase of the project.

Conclusion

It is proposed that an application be submitted to widen the footpath in the section of Baillie St between Bennett Rd and Churchill Rd to make it a shared path.

9.9 GARBAGE TRUCK REPLACEMENT – TENDER EVALUATION

Director:	John Martin
Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F33-A05

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Nil

Purpose

To award contract VP517816 for the supply and delivery of a new dual control garbage collection truck.

Summary

- Council currently operates an Iveco Acco truck with Superior Pak body for garbage collection. This machine was purchased in April 2014 and is due for replacement.
- The tender for a new machine was advertised on the MAV Vendor Panel Procurement website, with three companies providing responses.
- The tender evaluation process identified the submission of a new Iveco Acco E6 AD 6x4 truck with a Superior Pak medium profile body as the most appropriate replacement machine.
- The replacement cost is funded from the Plant Reserve within the 2026-27 Budget.
- Commercially sensitive details including tenderers names and pricing are included in the confidential attachment previously provided to Councillors.

Recommendation

That Council

1. Accept the tender from [REDACTED] for supply and delivery of one new Iveco Acco E6 AD 6x4 truck with a Superior Pak medium profile body for garbage collection at the tendered value, less trade-in value of Council's existing garbage collection truck, plant number 1396.

**Note: The name of the successful tenderer will be redacted until the night of the meeting*

REPORT

Background

Council is currently operating an Iveco Acco truck with Superior Pak body for garbage collection, purchased in April 2014, with over 17,270 operating hours logged. This machine is beyond the end of its economic life and is due for replacement.

Garbage trucks undergo significant wear and tear due to the frequent stop-start nature of operation, their high duty level, and the mechanisms associated with bin lifting and waste compaction. This truck was originally planned to be replaced at an age of 10 years, but experience with the fleet of garbage trucks show that their maintenance costs become excessive after about 8 years of age. This truck has the second highest recorded number of job cards for maintenance works within the HRCC fleet.

In this case, the garbage truck was retained when Council opted to resource collection of recycled materials, FOGO and glass in-house, commencing from April 2023. This change to full in-house garbage collection increased the fleet requirement from five to seven garbage trucks to service these extra collections. Two older trucks (this being one of them) were retained as an interim measure to enable this extra servicing to be achieved, but with an increase in costs due to the age of the machines.

Replacement of this machine was subsequently scheduled in the 2026-27 plant replacement program. Delaying replacement of this plant any further could result in major component failure and potential inability to service Council's garbage collection program.

Discussion

A detailed tender evaluation report has previously been provided to Councillors. Key aspects of the report include:

- The tender was advertised through the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) Vendor Panel Procurement website
- Three companies submitted responses, for six different machine configurations
- The evaluation of tenders was based on the criteria presented in the tender specification
- Tenders were assessed on the basis of:
 - Price, including Whole of Life Cost
 - Operational Assessment
 - Mechanical Assessment
 - Warranty, Service and Parts Availability
 - Environmental Impact

All configurations submitted by the three suppliers conformed with the specified requirements.

The tender for an Iveco Acco E6 AD 6x4 truck with Superior Pak medium profile body has been assessed as the best value to Council due to its conformance with the tender specification and evaluation against the assessment criteria.

Options to Consider

Council decided to take collection of recycled materials when the services were expanded to 4-bins in 2023. This decision was taken on the basis of cost. An updated detailed analysis has not been undertaken, but costs have been within expectations since then, except with regard to fuel costs. Fuel cost increases would have impacted similarly whether the service was provided in-house or under contract.

Consideration is being given to deferring some minor plant purchases should fuel costs remain high throughout this financial year, however, given that garbage collection is an essential service, it is not proposed to defer replacement of this truck. As indicated above, the truck is well past its optimum replacement life and the risk of major failure is increasing.

Forthcoming changes in kerbside collection services, e.g. the current government's proposed service standards, which could make green waste opt-out, or the Liberal Party's proposed weekly garbage collection service, will not change the need for this truck.

Sustainability Implications

The evaluation process considers whole-of-life costs of the vehicles, however, there are no material differences in these for the offered vehicles beyond the purchase price.

Community Engagement

Nil

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Nil

Collaboration

Not Applicable

Financial Implications

The allocation from the plant renewal program for this replacement was set at \$520,000 ex GST in the 2026-27 budget. The tender for an Iveco Acco E6 AD 6x4 truck with Superior Pak medium profile body comes in within budget.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Not Applicable

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

The 2025-29 Council Plan establishes the measure of "kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill" as a measure to our commitment 6 – Adapt to minimise climate change impacts. Garbage trucks are essential elements to deliver the service for this purpose.

Risk Implications

There is low risk with this procurement. Council has a history of transactions with this company, and payment is not made until the vehicle is delivered. Note that there can be a long delivery time on garbage trucks.

Conclusion

The tender evaluation process identified the Iveco Acco E6 AD 6x4 truck with a Superior Pak medium profile body as the preferred replacement dual control garbage collection truck.

The proposed purchase, including the trade-in of Council's existing garbage collection truck, plant number 1396, is within the approved budget allocation.

REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

9.10 HORSHAM BYPASS PLANNING PROJECT – PROGRESS REPORT

Director:	John Martin
Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F24/A05/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Progress Summary Report (**Appendix 9.10A**)

Purpose

- To present a progress report to Council on the Horsham Bypass Planning Project

Summary

- Council appointed 11 community representatives and welcomed two nominations from Barengi Gadjin Land Council to form a Community Reference Group (CRG) to advise Council on the Horsham Bypass Planning project.
- The CRG has now met five times working towards its objective of making recommendations to Council about a preferred bypass corridor for Horsham.
- The initial focus of the CRG was the preparation of a community survey, the results of which were initially considered at the CRG meeting on 14 July.
- Subsequently, the CRG's focus has been using the information from the survey results to develop a series of objective criteria that will be used to assess the merits of alternative bypass corridors.
- The CRG is currently working on finalising those criteria, and is aiming to present these for adoption at Council's October 2026 meeting.
- Concurrently, the CRG will commence developing some corridor route options that will then be assessed using those criteria.
- Minutes of CRG meetings and media releases discussing the progress at each meeting have been regularly published on Council's website.

Recommendation

That Council note the progress on the Horsham Bypass Planning Project

REPORT

Background

This report presents an update on progress since the report presented to the 22 June 2026 Council meeting.

The CRG for the Horsham Bypass Planning Project has now met five times, with its latest meetings being held on 21 August 2026 and 1 September 2026. The key activity at the two latest meetings has been working on developing the criteria that will be used to evaluate a range of route options that the CRG will develop for a potential bypass of Horsham.

Information gained from the community survey undertaken during May-June 2026 is being used as the basis for the development of these criteria.

This report presents an overview of the process being used to ensure that meaningful and objective criteria are established.

Discussion

The process for developing the evaluation criteria has been facilitated by Proud Mary Consulting.

Key elements of this process have been:

- The CRG has developed a broad agreement on the remit of their task, gaining an alignment on the problem, that is, what the bypass needs to achieve.
- Understanding lessons the community has observed from previous processes that have attempted to identify a solution for a Horsham bypass.
- Then, developing the criteria in a stepped manner, starting with setting some broad parameters for the evaluation process.
- A further step has been identifying some hard constraints that define where a corridor can or cannot go.
- Then the criteria can start to be firmed up.

The CRG has also given consideration to what constitutes a good evaluation criterion, including:

- It distinguishes between routes; if every option scores the same, it cannot help us choose.
- It can be measured; it is necessary to be able to show why one route scored differently from another.
- Its relevance is supported by evidence; for example based on what the community has told us.

The CRG members undertook a series of activities at the last meeting relating to these points. It is planned that at the CRG meeting of 22 September 2026 the consultants will present back the output of their deliberations as draft criteria for refinement by the CRG members. This is then planned to lead to presentation of these criteria to Council during October aiming for formal adoption of these for the subsequent evaluation task.

Options to Consider

A key focus of the CRG's next tasks will be to develop a series of route corridor options that will be evaluated against the set of community-based criteria it has been developing.

Note that at this stage neither Council nor the CRG have identified any route options that might be considered for a Bypass.

Sustainability Implications

Nil

Community Engagement

The Community Reference Group has identified that it is important to keep the community well informed about progress with its work.

In this regard, there have been regular media releases after CRG meetings, and the minutes are also published on Council's website after they are confirmed at the subsequent CRG meeting.

The CRG has also requested that a progress report be prepared for the community to ensure that it is kept fully aware of where the project is up to. The progress report is included as Appendix 9.10A to this report. The report also provides some general background to the project, including some of the earlier history of previous bypass planning activities.

A subsequent stage of engagement, due at the end of 2026, will be seeking the community's feedback on the evaluation process conducted by the CRG.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Nil

Collaboration

The Consultants have conducted meetings with the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, Department of Transport and Planning and Victorian Transport Association to gain relevant information to feed into the CRG's deliberations.

Financial Implications

Funding for this project \$55,000 has been included in the 2026-27 Council budget that was adopted on 15 June 2026.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

A bypass of Horsham has featured as a priority in regional transport plans for a considerable period.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

Major initiative 9.1 of the 2025-29 Council Plan is "Confirm a preferred route for the Horsham bypass"

The need for a Horsham Bypass is also identified in the recent advocacy prospectus developed by the Western Highway Action Committee, of which Council is a member.

Risk Implications

Key aspects to manage risks with the identification of a preferred Bypass alignment include:

- Strong community participation
- A transparent approach, i.e. availability of all relevant documents
- An objective evaluation process, developed with the community
- Not pre-empting the outcome.

Conclusion

The report provides an update to Council and the community on progress with the Horsham Bypass Planning Project.

10. COUNCILLOR REPORTS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cr Brian Klowss (Mayor)

Committee Representation	
Date	Description
01/09/2026	Horsham Bypass CRG Meeting
02/09/2026	Natimuk Economic and Social Plan Advisory Committee
17/09/2026	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting
Other Council Activities	
01/09/2026	Horsham Bypass CRG Meeting
02/09/2026	Meeting with Lane Crockett, SEC
02/09/2026	Across Victoria Alliance Group Meeting
09/09/2026	Dyurrite Community Working Group Meeting
09/09/2026	Dyurrite Community Working Group Meeting
09/09/2026	Across Victoria Alliance Group Meeting
10/09/2026	WSMCA Mayor & CEO Meeting
10/09/2026	West Wimmera Action Group AGM
15/09/2026	Grower Leadership Roundtable - Building momentum towards the Grainstone Biorefinery
16/09/2026	Wimmera CMA Board Meeting
16/09/2026	Victoria Alliance Group Meeting
18/09/2026	Christian Emergency Food Centre AGM

Cr Rebecca Sluggett (Deputy Mayor)

Committee Representation	
Date	Description
Other Council Activities	
31/08/2026	Council Briefing
03/09/2026	VLGA Mary Rogers Award Afternoon Tea – Parliament House. I was nominated for the Emerging Woman Leader Award. Congratulations to the recipient Cr Rayane Hawli from Hobsons Bay, and the dozen of other local government leader nominees.
07/09/2026	Council Briefing
09/09/2026	Collaborate for Change: Advancing Housing Justice in Regional, Remote and Rural Victoria (Workshop 2) This workshop was led by the HOME Research Centre of Deakin University, in collaboration with a number of Community legal service providers, including Allied Justice. The objective of the workshop was to develop collaborative actions that

	support improved advocacy, support and outcomes for people facing housing insecurity and housing injustice in Regional Victoria. Overall I felt it was a worthwhile event with many community service groups coming together to share knowledge and ideas for improvements.
10/09/2026	Meeting with Justine Kingan re Play Space Strategy
10/09/2026	West Wimmera Action Group AGM
17/09/2026	Mayors Institute Annual Oration with Ms Patricia Karvelas
18/09/2026	Horsham Youth: Music @ May Congratulations to the Horsham Youth Council and the Youth Team for the Music @ May event. I waited for my daughter to finish work and therefore arrived shortly after 6.30pm. The people I spoke to were having a great time and thought it would be great to have a repeat performance of the event. The young artists that took the stage should be very proud of having the courage and talent to do so.
21/09/2026	Council Briefing

Cr Cam McDonald

Committee Representation	
Date	Description
Other Council Activities	
03/08/2026	Council Briefing
04/08/2026	Council Mandatory Training Warracknabeal Council Office
05/08/2026	Council Mandatory Training Warracknabeal Council Office
10/08/2026	Meeting with Natimuk Rd Residents re Bollards 4.30pm Council Briefing
13/08/2026	CEO ERC meeting Chambers
17/08/2026	Gail Gatt meeting Council Briefing
24/08/2026	Council Meeting
26/05/2026	4.30pm - Meeting with Brian Hedt re water drainage issues behind depot. 5.30pm - 7.00pm - Yarning Circle at Goolum Goolum
31/08/2026	Council Briefing

Cr Dean O'Loughlin

Committee Representation	
Date	Description
01/9/2026	Bypass Planning CRG meeting
22/9/2026	Bypass Planning CRG meeting
Other Council Activities	
26/8/2026	Council & Aboriginal Community Yarning Circle
31/8/2026	Council Briefing

Councillor Reports and Acknowledgements

01/9/2026	The Outback Mind Foundation – Glenn Manton Father's Day Men's Support night @ The Station
07/9/2026	Council Briefing
14/9/2026	Council Briefing
16/9/2026	An invitation to join The Nutbush
18/9/2026	Horsham Youth Event: Music @ May
21/9/2026	Council Briefing
25/9/2026	Volleyball Victoria Junior Country Championships West Opening Ceremony
28/9/2026	Council Meeting

11. URGENT BUSINESS

12. PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS

Nil

13. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

13.1 INFORMAL MEETINGS OF COUNCILLORS – RECORD OF MEETINGS

- Council Briefing Meeting held on 31 August, 7, 14 and 21 September 2026.
- Mining and Renewables Working Group held on 7 September 2026.

Refer to **Appendix 13.1A**

13.2 COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Nil

Recommendation

That Council receive and note agenda items:

13.1 Informal Meetings of Councillors – Record of Meetings

14. NOTICE OF MOTION

Nil

