

AGENDA

MEETING OF THE **HORSHAM RURAL CITY COUNCIL**

To be held on
25 August 2025
At 5.30pm

In the
Council Chamber, 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 25 August 2025
in the Council Chamber, 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 Ian Ross 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 Chamber, Civic Centre, Horsham at 5.30pm on 28 July 2025 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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<i>Defined as confidential information in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 - Section 3(1)(f) –Personal Information</i>	

CLOSE



GAIL GATT
Chief Executive Officer

REPORTS FOR COUNCIL DECISION

9. OFFICERS REPORTS

9.1 Q4 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT TO 30 JUNE 2025

Director:	Kim Hargreaves
Directorate:	Corporate Services
File Number:	F18/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

Q4 Quarterly Performance Report to June 2025 (**Appendix 9.1A**)

Purpose

To present Council with the Q4 Quarterly Performance Report to 30 June 2025.

Summary

- The Quarterly Performance Report is a key component of our commitment to continuous improvement, transparency and accountability to Council and the community.
- The format of the report has been expanded since the development of the Quarter 1 2024 Report and is part of Council's continuous improvement.
- The financial figures include the adopted budget, anticipated forecast and year to date actuals on a quarter-by-quarter basis.
- Indicators and Initiatives have also been reported on a progressive quarterly basis.
- It should be noted that this report includes preliminary data and figures to 30 June, however the final figures will be audited and reported in Council's Annual Report for the 2024-2025 financial year.

Recommendation

That Council receive and note the Q4 Quarterly Performance Report to 30 June 2025, acknowledging the Annual Report for 2024-25 will contain the final data.

REPORT

Background

The Quarterly Performance Report encapsulates a quarterly budget report, progress against the 2021-2025 Council Plan, the tracking of any major initiatives, and key data relating to the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework.

The provision of relevant information on a regular basis is an important part of that internal control process and is necessary for the various levels of Council to carry out their responsibilities and obligations to the community in the management of Council business.

Council has undertaken to review Performance Reporting (including financial performance) to the community with the intention of including information which exceeds minimum requirements, increases readability and piques community interest. Information is presented in a clear and transparent manner, with each quarterly report building on the previous quarter's information to provide a "story" of progress rather than a "snapshot" at a point in time.

Discussion

The quarterly report has been prepared with the following sections of information:

1. Chief Executive Officer's Overview
2. Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework
3. Initiatives
4. Performance Indicators
5. Financial Performance by Council Plan Theme
6. Reconciliation of Financial Performance by Council Plan Theme to Comprehensive Income Statement
7. Comprehensive Income Statement
8. Balance Sheet
9. Statement of Capital Works
10. Statement of Human Resources
11. Councillor Allowances and Expenses

The CEO's Overview is a high-level summary of activities since the last Quarterly report.

The Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework section provides the reader with an explanation of the high-level requirements of the Act and Regulations for reporting to the community.

Section 4 & 5 detail the initiatives and indicators for the year – as adopted in the budget. These are reported on in a cumulative way to provide the reader with a building story of the progress so far rather than the traditional "snapshot" view of the current status.

Section 5 demonstrates expenditure and revenue at the service provision level under each of the Council Plan themes. These figures include the adopted budget, the current forecast (projected year end figure) and year to date performance.

Section 6 provides an important translation between reporting to the community by the service groupings they are familiar with compared to how the information is presented in an accounting context.

Sections 7 to 10 are the financial statements (accounting presentation). Data includes the adopted budget, forecast (projected year end figure) and year to date by quarter. Detailed notes are also provided to add value for the reader of the report.

Section 11 satisfies legislative and policy requirements providing information on a quarterly basis around councillor allowances and expenses.

Options to Consider

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework is a mandatory system of performance reporting for all Victorian councils. It ensures that councils are measuring and reporting on their performance in a consistent way to promote transparency and accountability in the local government sector. The framework is made up of measures from a range of service areas, including roads, planning, animal management and waste and is complemented by a Governance and Management checklist.

The *Local Government Act 2020* (s97) also requires that the Chief Executive Officer ensures that a quarterly budget report is presented to the Council at a Council meeting which is open to the public. This quarterly budget report must include a comparison of the actual and budgeted results to date; and an explanation of any material variations; and any other matters prescribed by the regulations.

Council can opt not to receive and note the quarterly report but should note the legislative and other requirements requiring the report to be presented.

Sustainability Implications

Not applicable other than any reporting included in the report on Council's environmental and sustainability goals.

Community Engagement

The Quarterly Performance report is prepared through cross-departmental consultation within Council. Following executive management team's endorsement, it progresses to a Council Briefing before formal endorsement at a Council Meeting. The report is then available to the public via Council's website.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Ongoing refinements are made to ensure the report provides clear and concise reporting on key strategic items.

Collaboration

Not applicable.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications of the report itself however the Quarter 4 Report provides detailed information on the financial position of Council and performance against budgets and various targets. These figures are preliminary with the final audited financial statements being included in the 2024-2025 Annual Report.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Not applicable.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

2021-2025 Council Plan – all aspects

Risk Implications

Provision of good quality, regular reporting of financial and non-financial information to the community mitigates against the risk of poor financial governance and possible financial mismanagement. The Municipal Association of Victoria's Good Governance Guide provides that *the Council is ultimately accountable for the financial management...it should not have a hands-on role... but it needs to ensure that it has sufficient information to be satisfied that finances are in order and that the budgetary and financial planning goals are being met.*

The provision of a Quarter 4 report is seen as good practice due to the length of time it will take to prepare and present the 2024-2025 Annual Report which contains the final financial and performance data (i.e this report represents the provision of information, albeit preliminary information, in a more timely manner.

Conclusion

The Quarterly Performance Report provides a regular and succinct report for Council and the community to assess Council's performance against key measures. It also fulfils Council's legislative and other regulatory responsibilities. The information included in this report will be further updated before inclusion in the 2024-2025 Annual Report.

9.2 COMMUNITY PETITION MARDON DRIVE

Director:	John Martin
Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F14/A09/000001

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

Petition as received – personal details redacted (**Appendix 9.2A**)

Proposed tree planting locations (**Appendix 9.2B**)

Purpose

To provide Council with an update on a meeting held with residents of Mardon Drive concerning a petition received from them regarding planting trees in nature strips, and a detailed response to the concerns raised by them to enable Council to make an informed decision on this matter.

Summary

- As part of the Greening Greater Horsham Strategy, Council has a program of planting trees on vacant nature strips.
- Mardon Drive is one of a number of streets where gaps in nature strip trees have been identified and was planned to be planted this year.
- A petition was received from 50 residents of Mardon Drive dated 12 June 2025. This petition was received by Council at its meeting on 28 July 2025.
- An initial meeting was held with residents on 2 July 2025 to discuss their concerns.
- The residents raised a number of issues which required closer consideration, this report details the outcome of the review of the concerns raised
- Residents were made aware that planting will not proceed until further consideration had been given to the issues raised in the petition.
- The report proposes that planting of 17 street trees proceed in Mardon Drive.

Recommendations

That Council:

1. Approve the planting of 17 street trees along Mardon Drive in the locations identified in **Appendix 9.2B**.
2. Arrange a further meeting with residents to present this decision, and to consult with them to identify a preferred species for these plantings.

REPORT

Background

Council's Parks and Gardens staff undertake street tree planting in winter/spring each year. As a result of the Greening Greater Horsham Strategy, adopted by Council on 28 March 2022, the street tree planting program initially focuses on in-filling vacant nature strips, working towards the objective of no vacant nature strips by 2031.

A petition from residents of Mardon Drive was submitted to Council on 12 June 2025 detailing their objections to the planting of new street trees on vacant nature strips along Mardon Drive. The petition is included as **Appendix 9.2A**.

An initial meeting with the residents was held on 2 July 2025 to enable them to raise their concerns and in an effort to reach an agreement with the residents at that meeting, if possible. An agreement was not reached.

At its ordinary meeting on 28 July 2025 Council formally received the petition from residents of Mardon Drive and requested a further report on the matter for its consideration.

This petition is similar in nature to a previous petition received by Council from residents of Major Mitchell Drive, which resulted in Council deciding not to plant street trees on vacant nature strips, consistent with subdivision plans for the area.

However, this street differs from Major Mitchell Drive in that street trees have already been planted along Mardon Drive in most of the nature strips. Of the 73 house nature strips along Mardon Drive, Council is proposing to plant only 17 vacant nature strips, with the remaining either already having a street tree or infrastructure preventing the planting of a street tree.

Discussion

In the petition received by Council and subsequent discussions, the residents raised a number of concerns (as shown numbered and in bold below). Council staff have reviewed these concerns and provide the following comments for each:

- 1. Existing and ongoing safety concerns with Mardon Drive being a winding road. Many residents struggle to exit their driveways safely. Additional trees will further impact on their safe car access to the road.**

It is acknowledged that roads with bends can make it challenging for residents to exit their properties in some circumstances. Council staff inspected the road view from driveways either side of each proposed street tree along Mardon Drive. **Appendix 9.2B** shows the location of the 17 trees proposed to be planted.

The result of these inspections indicated that the addition of a street tree would not noticeably impact on residents being able to view the street when exiting their property via motor vehicle.

In a number of instances, landscaping from neighbouring properties impacted on the view of the street from driveways with a number of trees, bushes and hedges impeding the line of sight.

The matter of speeding vehicles travelling along Mardon Drive was also raised during discussions with the residents. Council is of the view that all motor vehicle drivers are responsible for their own conduct on a public road and should drive to the conditions, this includes when travelling along Mardon Drive and when

entering and exiting a property. One resident briefly raised the idea of traffic calming at the 2 July 2025 meeting, however that did not seem to be favoured by the group.

2. Due to the established services and structure, planting of trees now will be on an ad hoc basis impacting the streetscape character the Council is trying to achieve.

It is acknowledged that planting of street trees retrospectively means that some sites are unable to be planted due to minimum buffer distances to existing infrastructure.

The perfect time for planning and planting street trees is during the development process when a new residential area is being constructed. However, the same limitations and buffer distances would apply at the development stage and a uniform planting of trees will not always be possible.

An example of this is the Waterlink Estate where street trees were planted during the development stage. The street trees are not uniform, however, this has not impacted on the character of the street.

Council is confident that the planting of street trees in Mardon Drive, whether uniform or not, will enhance the character of the street and achieve the objectives of the Strategy

3. Danger due to the proximity of services.

The planting of street trees is conducted in accordance with the current Tree Management Policy which identifies the need to keep a suitable distance from local infrastructure.

A 'dial before you dig' assessment to locate services in the area is completed prior to street trees being planted.

4. Estate was designed and developed 25+ years ago with no footpath planned along north side of Mardon Drive, therefore no need for canopy cover as there is no path

The Greening Greater Horsham Strategy refers to vacant nature strips in Horsham being planted with street trees and aims to reduce the number of vacant nature strips to zero by 2031. The strategy does not limit the planting of trees only to vacant sites adjacent to footpaths and walking paths.

Providing shade and sun protection is not the sole objective of the Strategy which details a variety of benefits of planting street trees, including:

- Providing clean air and filtering pollution
- Reducing stormwater run off
- Carbon sequestration
- Improving amenity and aesthetics
- Reducing the urban heat island effect within the city
- Providing shade and sun protection

Staff also reviewed the two previous zones planted with street trees under the Strategy in 2023 and found that there are a number of street trees have been planted in streets without a footpath (typically on one side), including:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| • Hazel Street | • Wawunna Road |
| • Stewart Street | • Francis Street |
| • Matthews Court | • Alexander Street |
| • Edward Street | • Queen Street |
| • Wavell Street | |
| • Errett Street | |
| • Frederick Street | |

5. Residents have spent thousands of dollars on architectural designed buildings and gardens to capture views. Planting of trees after the event will impact existing landscaping and potentially buildings.

The purpose of a nature strip, historically, has been to create a buffer between the road and private property, to house infrastructure and utilities and to provide an opportunity to improve the aesthetic and character of urban streets.

Council is continually mindful of the impact on residents, particularly when planting street trees. Planting a street tree is only the first step in our street tree program. A team of staff continue to maintain these street trees, watering regularly, and pruning and shaping trees to create a single trunk and uplifting trees at key stages, removing lower branches and creating a higher canopy.

Once appropriately established and maintained, it is not anticipated that the planting of street trees will noticeably impact on views from the properties along Mardon Drive.

The pride and sense of ownership that residents take in maintaining their nature strips is recognised, but these pieces of land are Council owned, and permission is required under Council's Local Law 2021 for any works undertaken by a resident on a nature strip.

Additional Issues

During the onsite meeting on the 2 July 2025, residents raised additional issues, not included in the petition.

Residents raised concerns about additional trees being planted that would contribute to litter at certain times of the year. In particular, the dropping of leaves from ornamental pears, proposed for planting along Mardon Drive.

The species selection for this area was also raised in conjunction with the organic matter and residents requested input into the type of tree species being selected.

Ornamental pears were chosen for consistency with trees already planted along Mardon Drive. While ornamental pears are deciduous and drop their leaves in autumn, native tree species are known for dropping leaves and gum nuts year-round.

Regardless of the tree species, there will be organic matter that results from these trees being planted. Council has a street sweeping program to regularly clean urban streets, approximately once every quarter, to remove the build up of organic matter, dust and mud from urban streets.

Council is open to reviewing the schedule of visits in particular areas to ensure that organic matter is cleaned up more frequently.

Council is also open to discussing the particular species for planting along Mardon Drive providing that it is suitable as a street tree and consistent with the species regularly planted around the Horsham Urban area.

Options to Consider

Options that are available for Council to Consider:

1. Street tree planting with ornamental pears continues as planned.
2. Street Tree planting continues with resident input into type of species being planted

-
3. No street trees are planted in vacant nature strips along Mardon Drive.

A further option is for Councillors to formally review the Tree Management Policy to ensure residents have a stronger say in selection of tree species. This is not a specific recommendation of this report, as the scope of the Policy does provide for community engagement, and this could readily be extended to include selection of a preferred species, without requiring a change in the Policy. The selection of tree species needs to be guided by an understanding of the suitability of different species for nature strips and our climate, and the desired effect within a street, e.g. with respect to uniformity or variability, and proximity to power lines. For these reasons, it is considered appropriate that:

- A stronger emphasis be placed on community engagement when undertaking nature strip planting, and
- Council's Arborist retain the final decision making for species selection, having regard to community preferences.

Risk Implications

Council needs to be mindful of any decision that may set a precedent which could significantly affect the future of the street tree planting program. Four of eight sectors of Horsham identified in the Greening Greater Horsham Strategy are still to have nature strip planting completed.

While staff have made changes to our process to improve consultation prior to planting, the decision on Mardon Drive needs to consider the impact on the entire city and the possibility of future petitions and requests from the community regarding street tree planting.

A decision in this regard also needs to be mindful that the decision is equitable and that certain areas of the city aren't given preferential treatment.

Sustainability Implications

The Greening Greater Horsham Strategy aims to achieve a number of outcomes which include improving character and aesthetics of the city as well as addressing a number of sustainability and climate change issues.

The Strategy discusses the benefits to the immediate environment from planting trees including:

- Providing clean air and filtering pollution
- Carbon sequestration
- Reducing Urban heat within the city
- Providing shade and sun protection
- Providing biodiversity and attracting a variety of wildlife species

It should be considered that planting trees now is an investment in the future, the benefits from these street trees to our local environment will ensure that Council is taking all necessary steps to respond to the effects of climate change and create a sustainable and liveable environment for our community, now and into the future.

Community Engagement

An initial meeting was held on 2 July 2025 with the aim to achieve an early agreement. An agreement was not reached at that meeting. A follow-up meeting is proposed to present and discuss the recommended decision.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Not applicable

Collaboration

Not Applicable

Financial Implications

The trees planned for planting along Mardon Drive have already been purchased. Parks and Gardens staff will need to consider alternate areas for the planting of these trees.

Following consultation with residents on a preferred species, Council may need to purchase additional trees if these differ from ornamental pears originally planned for planting, however given the low number, these additional trees will not have a significant impact on the budget.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

The DELWP (now DEECA) publication “Trees for Cooler and Greener Streetscapes – Guidelines for Streetscape Planning and Design” identifies a series of key policy drivers for cooler and greener streetscapes consistent with the principles developed in Council’s Greening Greater Horsham Strategy.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

As part of the development of the Greening Greater Horsham Strategy, a supporting policy was also prepared which was adopted at the same time as the Strategy.

The Tree Management Policy includes the following principles derived from the Strategy:

4.1 Tree Planting and Establishment

HRCC will proactively carry out annual tree planting in nature strips, parks and reserves and other Council managed land to meet the following objectives:

- To improve shade cover over our townships and contribute to the canopy cover targets set within
- Greening Greater Horsham
- To preserve and enhance the local character of the distinct areas within our townships
- To reinforce plantings along entrance ways and main streets into our townships
- To reinforce habitat links and improve biodiversity outcomes across the Shire
- To ensure that every urban residence has at least one healthy street tree on the nature strip.

This policy indicates that all nature strips should have a tree.

Conclusion

Consideration has been given to the concerns raised by the residents of Mardon Drive.

While it is understandable that the community has concerns about the planting of trees and the safety of their street, this is a program that has been conducted by Council for some time in similar types of streets.

Council’s street tree program provides regular maintenance of street trees and clearly understands its responsibility for the placement of trees in nature strips.

9.3 WESTERN HIGHWAY DUPLICATION – MAV STATE COUNCIL MOTION

Director:	John Martin
Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F15/A01/000001

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

Western Highway Duplication Motion (**Appendix 9.3A**)

Purpose

To propose a motion for the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) State Council meeting in relation to Western Highway duplication.

Summary

- Duplication of the Western Highway, initially to Stawell, has been a priority for the Wimmera Southern Mallee region for many years.
- Unfortunately, further duplication works as part of a contract for the section west of Buangor have stalled since 2018.
- Ongoing advocacy by the Western Highway Action Committee (WHAC), of which Council is one of ten members, has not led to a recommencement of works under this contract.
- The project has received bi-partisan support from both State and Federal Governments, and works had been progressing well west of Beaufort in the 2010s decade.
- The main reasons for the delays sit beyond the direct powers of these Governments.
- A motion is proposed to the MAV State Council, seeking broader support for the efforts of the WHAC members to ensure funding is available for the works, and the Governments do all within their powers to ensure any related administrative processes are expedited.

Recommendation

That Council endorse the submission of a motion to the MAV State Council, as follows:

Understanding that duplication of the Western Highway from Ballarat to Stawell was scheduled to be completed in 2018, **THAT**, the Municipal Association of Victoria support the ten member Councils of the Western Highway Action Committee (WHAC) in calling for the Victorian and Australian Governments to ensure sufficient funding and expedite the required legal and administrative processes, to enable the delayed section of works near Ararat to recommence as soon as possible. This project is imperative, in light of the continuing numbers of serious accidents, including fatalities, on that particularly perilous section of the Western Highway, which affects all western Victorians, as well as interstate travellers (including B-double and road train heavy vehicles) and tourists.

REPORT

Background

The Western Highway is Australia's third busiest interstate freight route. Duplication of the Highway has been occurring in gradual stages, since 1972, and has now progressed to reach Buangor, 155 km from Caroline Springs on Melbourne's western edge, which is only about 38% of the 408 km to the South Australian border.

A contract was awarded for the next stage of construction from Buangor through to just east of Ararat, but works have now been delayed since soon after the commencement of that contract in 2018.

In the period 2020-24, the unduplicated section of the Western Highway from Buangor to Stawell has experienced 5 fatalities and 26 serious injuries as a result of collisions. Four of the five fatalities arose from head-on collisions, which may have been less serious if duplication had been completed.

The collision statistics continue to increase, with a further three fatalities and four serious injuries occurring so far in 2025 (to July). Tragically, the three fatalities were in a single accident.

The protracted delay in continuing the duplication works is a significant safety issue for travellers in Western Victoria, and sends a major risk signal to sponsors of other infrastructure projects across Victoria that warrant this matter becoming an advocacy priority for the MAV.

It is therefore proposed that this matter be considered at the State Council meeting in October, to seek a formal resolution for MAV to include duplication of the Western Highway as one of its advocacy priorities.

Discussion

Appendix 9.3A to this report provides further background to the rationale for raising this motion at the MAV State Council meeting.

It should be noted that there has been ongoing bi-partisan support at both Victorian and Australian Government levels for continuation of the duplication works, with funding commitments announced in successive budgets. This support has been highly appreciated across the region.

Given that the works have stalled for seven years, inflation will have significantly increased the cost of the works. Hence, the first aim of the motion calls on Governments to continue their funding commitments to the project, at the level required when the works resume.

The second aim of the motion is to expedite the required legal and administrative processes to enable the resumption of works. It is recognised that there have been some legal and procedural matters that have been beyond the control of these Governments since the current contract works were halted in 2018. Hence, the motion also calls on the Governments to ensure that all required internal supporting processes are not adding further delays to these external processes.

In accordance with the MAV requirements, a draft of this motion has been forwarded to MAV by the required date of 15 August 2025, foreshadowing that Council would formally consider this matter at its 25 August 2025 meeting.

Information submitted to the MAV included:

- Confirmation of support from other member Councils of the Western Highway Action Committee

- A supporting rationale, demonstrating that the motion has strong links to the MAV's Strategic Priorities.

This information is also included in the Appendix to this report.

Options to Consider

The Western Highway Action Committee, and individual member Councils, have been undertaking separate advocacy seeking to expedite the recommencement of the duplication works.

The option of seeking MAV support via this motion would be a signal to Governments that this is an issue of significance to all Councils in Victoria.

Sustainability Implications

Nil

Community Engagement

Nil

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Nil

Collaboration

The 10 member Councils of WHAC have assisted in supporting this motion. The proposed motion was initially discussed at the WHAC meeting held on 25 July 2025. Emails or letters of support for the motion have subsequently been received from other member Councils of WHAC.

The outcome of the motion, if successful, would be the voice of the 79 Victorian Councils through MAV.

Financial Implications

Part of the motion recognises the need to ensure that the duplication works continue to be funded at the appropriate level by the Australian and Victorian Governments.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Duplication of the Western Highway through to Stawell was a key outcome of the VicRoads Western Highway Corridor Strategy published in 1999.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

Support for duplication of the Western Highway is one of the key priorities from Council's 2024 Advocacy Priorities publication.

Risk Implications

The report identifies recent injury and fatality statistics. The frequency of accidents resulting in injury or death is lessened with higher standard, duplicated roads.

Conclusion

The proposed motion to the MAV State Council seeks to obtain broader Victorian support to advocate for expediting the recommencement of duplication works on the Western Highway.

9.4 PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW - HORSHAM AND NATIMUK HOUSING DIVERSITY AND AFFORDABILITY STRATEGY

Director:	Kevin O'Brien
Directorate:	Communities and Place
File Number:	F06/A13/000001

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 Horsham and Natimuk Housing Diversity and Affordability Strategy, prepared by SGS Economics and Planning, May 2025 (**Appendix 9.4A**)

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- 1) Update Council on the preparation of the municipal-wide Draft Horsham and Natimuk Housing Diversity and Affordability Strategy (the **Draft Housing Strategy**); and
- 2) Seek endorsement of it to be released for the purpose of undertaking public consultation.

Summary

- Council is reviewing the Horsham Planning Scheme. A key input is the preparation of a (draft) Housing Strategy (**Appendix 9.4A**), which will guide growth and ensure a sufficient long-term supply of housing land.
- In April 2025 the State Government released housing targets for all Victorian Councils. Horsham's target is to provide land (capacity) for 3300 dwellings by 2051. The Draft Strategy demonstrates how this target can be met within existing urban areas, avoiding further greenfield expansion.
- The Draft Strategy identifies housing diversity and housing affordability as critical focus areas. 650 new social/ affordable homes are needed.
- Consolidating growth in well-serviced areas supported by targeted infrastructure delivery will deliver more efficient and sustainable long-term growth.
- Regional Victoria needs direct State and Federal intervention to help unlock private market delivery – the draft Strategy outlines clear advocacy priorities to address local challenges for Horsham RC. The Strategy supports innovative approaches to housing delivery.
- A Background Report and Discussion Paper was released for comment From April to June 2024. Community feedback was used to prepare the Draft Housing Strategy.

Recommendation

That Council:

- 1) Note the contents of the draft Horsham and Natimuk Diverse and Affordable Housing Strategy (May 2025) at **Appendix 9.4A**; and
- 2) Endorse its release for public consultation for a period of six (6) weeks commencing from 29 July 2025.

REPORT

Background: Planning for Horsham's Housing Future

State planning policy requires all councils to demonstrate a minimum 15-year supply of residential land. In April 2025, the State Government released the Plan for Victoria, setting housing targets for each council through to 2051, a 26-year planning horizon. Housing supply and affordability remains a key State and national priority.

Horsham's housing target:

- Provide zoned land capacity for 3,300 dwellings by 2051.
- This is a theoretical capacity (land supply) target, not a construction requirement.

Victorian councils must maintain an up-to-date planning scheme that reflects current policies and strategies. A review of the Horsham Planning Scheme is underway. A fundamental part of this is ensuring existing and future residents have access to well-planned safe, comfortable, well-located, diverse and affordable housing in the right locations.

Preparation of the Draft Housing Strategy commenced in early 2024. When complete, it will provide strategic direction and policy justification to guide updates to the Horsham Planning Scheme to manage future growth. **Figure 1** shows the project is currently in Phase 3, progressing toward Phase 4.



FIGURE 1: DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSING STRATEGY – CURRENTLY AT STAGE 3 – PROGRESSING TO STAGE 4.

Preparing the draft Housing Strategy

Council prepared a Background Report (March 2024) and a Discussion Paper (April 2024) that were released for consultation and feedback between April and June 2024. This work detailed the policy context, housing trends, population growth (historic and projected) and key drivers and influences affecting housing demand and supply across the municipality. It was used to obtain feedback to inform the preparation of the draft Housing Strategy.

All background documents can be accessed via this link: <https://haveyoursay.hrcc.vic.gov.au/horsham-and-natimuk-housing-strategy/widgets/429205/documents>

The draft Housing Strategy, included at **Appendix 9.4A**, provides a detailed context and overview of the process for preparing it, including a summary of community and stakeholder feedback at Section 2.4 (*What the community values*).

Discussion

The Draft Housing Strategy

Sections 1-4 of the Draft Housing Strategy provide the context and background. The key strategy component is contained at Section 5 of the document. It sets out a *Vision, Strategic Directions, Objectives, Strategies and Actions*. The 5 *Strategic Directions* are replicated below and set the tone and direction adopted by the rest of the strategy.

Horsham and Natimuk Housing Affordability Strategy - Strategic Directions

Consolidating **housing growth** in a well-planned way that responds to the role of settlements and contributes to creating accessible, inclusive, and liveable urban areas.

Managing the location and design of **rural residential development** to preserve agricultural land and support sustainable settlement patterns.

Supporting more **diverse housing** types such as compact and smaller dwellings for new and ageing households through infill development close to activity centres and responding to neighbourhood character.

Facilitating the development of **social and affordable housing**.

Encouraging a pattern of housing development that enables **development and community infrastructure** to be supplied when and where required to support growth in Horsham.

The draft Housing Strategy identifies capacity for approximately **2,526 dwellings** on currently zoned land, with an additional **3,026 to 4,526 dwellings** possible through infill development and future rezonings in the Horsham South Structure Plan area (all subject to separate future planning scheme amendment). This exceeds the new State Government housing targets and demonstrates adequate long-term capacity.

A key strategic priority is to **manage the number of growth fronts** to ensure infrastructure delivery is timely and cost-effective. Innovative housing options are supported, including in the delivery of **key worker housing**, in main settlements supported by infrastructure. This will help to retain and attract workers and their families and promote more sustainable long-term economic growth.

While overall supply is adequate, the Strategy highlights a **critical shortfall in housing diversity and social/affordable housing**, with a projected need for **650 new social and affordable dwellings by 2041**. The Strategy acknowledges broader national housing challenges driven by economic factors and supports **ongoing advocacy to State and Federal Governments** for policy reform and investment, particularly to facilitate housing renewal and improve rental options for lower income earners and key workers across the municipality.

A **Rural Settlement Strategy** is a recommended action to ensure the future vibrancy of smaller settlements and to maintain social connectivity.

Updating the Planning Scheme

The draft strategy will be used to update strategic policies in the Planning Scheme, including Clause 02.03-1 (Settlement), Clause 02.03-6 (Housing) and Clause 02.04 (Strategic Framework Plans). It will also be used to insert new local planning policy in the Planning Policy Framework (PPF), noting previously outdated policies were removed by the State Government when the planning scheme was translated into

its new format (April 2024). It is important to address this gap to provide clear policy intent and direction to guide development and to facilitate future decision making against robust policy.

Work is also underway to prepare a Commercial and Industrial Land Strategy for the municipality. In combination, these strategies will allow the Planning Scheme to be updated to provide a more comprehensive framework for managing land supply needs.

Options to Consider

New State Government housing targets alongside existing State policy requiring Council to maintain a 15-year housing supply means that a housing strategy is an important piece of work for all Victorian Councils. The State has indicated that it will intervene, through statutory reviews of planning schemes (required 12 months post adoption of a new Council Plan), if Councils cannot demonstrate sufficient land for housing.

For this reason, it is considered that finalising the Housing Strategy is the best option for Council to consider.

Council will have a further opportunity to consider the housing strategy when the final version is presented to Council for adoption, following consideration of community feedback.

Sustainability Implications.

The Draft Housing Strategic identifies housing diversity, including infill and intensification opportunities. Urban consolidation is a critical land use planning approach to creating more sustainable, walkable communities that will make the best and most efficient use of existing infrastructure and will result in significant sustainability benefits.

Community Engagement

Feedback and ideas from the community and key stakeholders is an important part of developing a strategy.

Community engagement will include (but is not limited to):

- 6-week consultation period to allow sufficient opportunities for participation.
- Targeted stakeholder engagement, including Government Agencies and Departments and local development industry and community groups (as appropriate).
- Active engagement via Council's dedicated web-based engagement platform 'Engage Horsham' (including all documents and supporting information).
- Social media campaign to highlight the project and how to participate (including survey).
- Drop-in sessions in Horsham and Natimuk.
- Opportunities to meet with Council officers to ask questions throughout the consultation period.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The Draft Strategy includes an action to investigate a Housing Innovation & Advocacy Officer to target improved housing diversity for the municipality.

Collaboration

Collaboration will be critical to ensuring that the project aligns with government policy and legislation. Key agency stakeholders and housing providers will be identified and consulted with as part of this project.

Financial Implications

The project is included in the 2024/25 Council Budget. No additional resource implications have been identified.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

The following regional, state or national plans or policies are applicable to the project:

- [Australian Government - National Housing Accord 2022](#)
- [Victorian Government - Victoria's Housing Statement: the decade ahead 2024-2034](#)
- [Plan for Victoria \(April 2025\)](#)

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

- Council Plan, 2021-2025, prepared by HRCC, 2021 (to be replaced imminently)
- Destination Horsham Investment Attraction Strategy and Implementation Plan 2022 onwards, prepared by HRCC 2022.
- Open Space Strategy 2019
- Social Infrastructure Framework 2020
- Urban Transport Plan 2020
- Municipal Bicycle and Shared Path Plan 2012 by Driscoll Engineering
- Community Engagement Policy, C04/095

Risk Implications

Not applicable.

Conclusion

The preparation of the draft Horsham and Natimuk Housing Diversity and Affordability Strategy is the next phase of an ongoing project to review and update the planning scheme. Releasing it for public consultation will allow important community feedback to be received and to inform the preparation of a final plan for Council adoption.

9.5 MINING, RENEWABLES AND ENERGY PROJECTS

Director:	Kevin O'Brien
Directorate:	Communities and Place
File Number:	n/a

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 Terms of Reference: Mining and Renewables Working Group (**Appendix 9.5A**)

Purpose

To provide a response to the council resolution in March 2025 to establish a committee as follows:

“That a Mining, Renewables & Energy Committee be formed with a minimum of two Councillors, the CEO, and not more than two resolute staff involved in the process of Mining, Renewables & Energy, to ultimately present recommendations to Council.

Summary

- Horsham Rural City currently has a number of Mining, Renewable and Energy projects proposed, under construction or completed across the municipality.
- Mining, Renewables and Energy is subject to a range of Federal and State legislation and involves complex approval processes and regulation.
- Council has an obligation to ensure the municipality has the strategic policy required to respond to opportunities provided by Mining Renewables and Energy Projects and the Council Plan and Planning Scheme Review provide a strategic framework for this policy development.
- Councillors have indicated a need for more information and advice on Mining, Renewables and Energy policies and projects at this critical time when projects are being developed and started in the region.
- A governance model around the following roles Horsham Rural City have in Mining, Renewables and Energy in our region is required.

Advocacy – to ensure the best outcome for our community in regard to workforce, housing, economic impacts, health and social impacts

Strategic – to ensure the development of clear and long-term strategic position for Council

Operational -to keep informed of operational and legislative processes

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Establish a working group and endorse the Mining and Renewables Working Group Terms of Reference (**Appendix 9.5A**), to consider the impacts of Mining, Renewables and Energy in our region and how to best respond to the social, economic, and environmental risks, losses and potential benefits these industries will bring to the region.

2. Note that the working group does not have any decision-making power and that any recommendations made by the working group (where relevant) will be considered by Council at a Council Meeting.

REPORT

Background

Horsham Rural City currently has a number of Mining, Renewable and Energy projects proposed, under construction or completed across the municipality. The region has been identified in the Victorian Critical Minerals Roadmap, due to the abundant resources and as a Renewable Energy Zone within the Victorian Transmission Plan due to its wind and solar resources and access to infrastructure.

Mining Projects

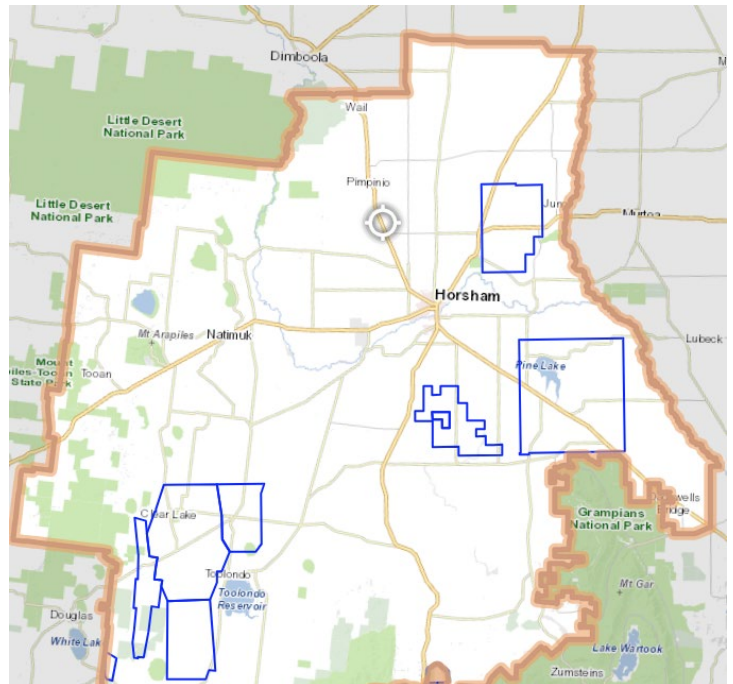
Avonbank – Wim Resource
3200ha Mining Footprint
Work Plan submitted
EES completed 2023

Wim 100 - Iluka
3396ha Mining Footprint
EES started 2019. Completion Q2 2026

Wim 150 - Australian Zircon NL/ Murray Zircon PI
12,850 ha Mining Footprint
EES referral 2012
On Hold

Bungalally – Wim Resource
3900ha Mining Footprint
Retention Licence (Exploration)

Douglas Mineral Sands Mine – Iluka
Mining Licence
Rehabilitation



Mining is primarily regulated through the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act (MRSDA) and has a three-step process

1. Exploration Licence – preliminary investigation.
2. Retention Licence – detailed investigation, development, and feasibility.
3. Mining Licence – development start and operation.

The projects within the municipality are at various stages including from exploration to rehabilitation.

Wind and Solar Projects

Murra Warra – RES

61 Turbines

Ministerial Permit Issued 2019

Operational 2024

Wimmera Plains – BayWa r.e

53 Turbines

Ministerial Permit Issued 2021

Riffle Butts

13 Turbines

Ministerial Permit Issued 2018

Natimuk Solar Facility

1.2 Mw

Ministerial Permit Issued 2023

Horsham Solar Farm OX2/SEC

119 Mw

Horsham RCC Permit issued 2018

Under Construction

Murra Warra Solar Facility

235 Mw

Horsham RCC Permit issued 2018

Renewable Projects are primarily regulated through the Planning and Environment Act 1987

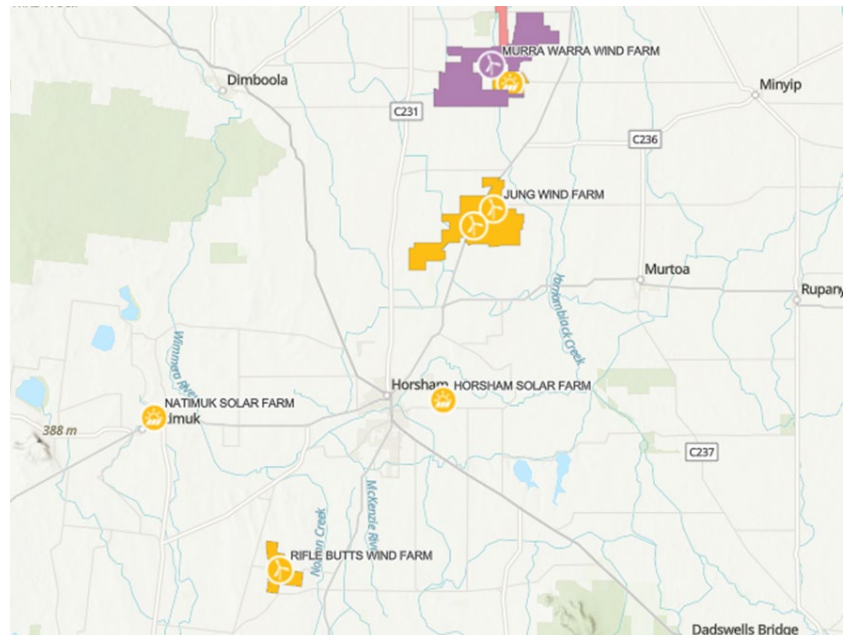
Energy Projects

Horsham Energy Hub – ETS

60 MW Dual Fuel Power Station

20 MW Hydrogen Generation Plant

Ministerial Planning Application required



Energy projects require approval through the Planning and Environment Act 1987

Regulation

Mining, Renewables and Energy are subject to a range of Federal and State legislation and involves complex approval processes and regulation.

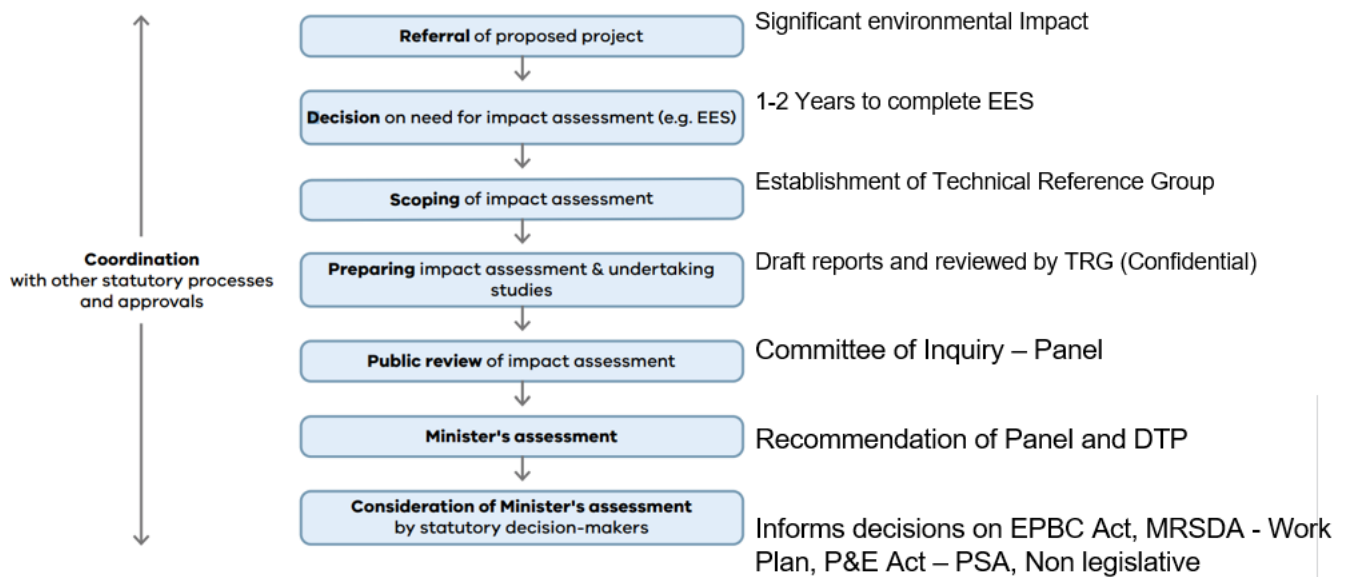
In Victoria the decision-making process for Mining and Renewables involves a range legislative and regulatory frameworks including the Environment Effects Act 1978, Planning and Environment Act 1987, Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990, Road Management Act, Environmental Protection Act, Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, Radiation Act and other relevant legislation.

EES

The Environment Effects Statement is Victoria's highest environmental assessment process for uses with potential for significant impact and many mining and renewable projects are required to be assessed under this legislation.

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environmental-assessments/environmental-assessment-guides/environment-effects-statements-in-victoria>

An EES provides advice to the Minister and a framework for decision making by various authorities under the relevant legislation and is the main avenue for the community and council to have their say on a project through submission to an independent panel.



Horsham Rural City's role is not a decision making one in the EES and is confined to making a submission as part of the public consultation process and the provision of technical advice to a Technical Reference Group.

Planning and Environment Act

The Planning and Environment Act has a role in the approval of Mining and Renewables projects through the Horsham Planning Scheme. Clause 52.28 Earth and Energy Resources Industry requires a permit to use and develop land for this purpose. However it includes an exemption for Extraction, Exploration or Mining where it complies with the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 - <https://planning-schemes.app.planning.vic.gov.au/Horsham/ordinance/52.08>.

A planning permit is also required for Renewable and Wind Energy Facilities under Clause 53.13 and 52.13, however the Minister is responsible for all matters for an Energy generation facility with an installed capacity of 1 megawatt or greater under clause 72.01 <https://planning-schemes.app.planning.vic.gov.au/Horsham/ordinance/72.01>

There is exemption for permits issued prior to VC192 (March 2025) this means council has ongoing responsibility for the Horsham and Murra Warra Solar Farms, but it is worth noting the following renewable energy facilities have been issued by the Minister for Planning:

- Murra Warra Wind Facility
- Wimmera Plains Wind and Solar Facility
- Natimuk Solar Farm
- Riffle Butts Wind Farm

Council's role regarding these renewable energy projects has been to make submission on the Social, Economic and Environmental merits of the project and as an authority under the Road Management Act, Drainage Act, Planning and Environment Act or other relevant legislation.

In some circumstances a Special Control Overlay (SCO) is used to regulate major projects and effectively remove the need for planning approval. An incorporated document sits within the planning scheme which provides for the use and development to proceed once the submission of various plans are approved that may deal with Air Quality, Access, Native Vegetation Removal, Drainage, etc.

An SCO is proposed for the Avonbank mine and will effectively cover the processing plant and pipeline route that sit outside the Mining Licence Area and will require a Planning Scheme Amendment with the approval of the Minister for Planning.

Strategies and Policies

Mining, Renewables and Energy projects are guided by federal, state, and local government policy as outlined in various strategies, policies and legislation including:

Victorian Critical Minerals Roadmap
Draft Victorian Transmission Plan
Plan for Victoria
Horsham Planning Scheme



Enabling...

Climate-resilient urban planning: You'll live more sustainably and with a reduced carbon footprint as more homes are built closer to public transport, there are more pedestrian and cycling options, more trees are planted, urban sprawl is limited and natural habitats are protected. Homes and buildings are designed and built to be more energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable, making them more comfortable to live and work in and cheaper to run.

Renewable energy transition: Regional Victorian communities will attract and benefit from investment in renewable energy - wind, solar and battery storage - projects.

Conservation of natural values: We'll conserve the natural values of our regional and rural areas by setting clear directions for the careful use of our renewable energy and natural resources.

Sustainable agriculture: We'll prioritise food security and the agricultural sector by protecting our agricultural land.

Waste reduction and recycling: We'll minimise our waste and pollution by supporting businesses to invest in Victoria's circular economy.

These strategies and policies are integrated into planning schemes at a state, regional and local level.

The Horsham Planning Scheme currently includes the following strategies:

Earth and energy resources

Mineral sand resources are in abundance in various locations in Horsham. Mining of the sands provides employment opportunities and significant economic benefits for the municipality.

Transport and energy infrastructure is critical to enable earth resources projects to proceed as they can place significant demands on infrastructure.

The introduction of sensitive land uses can constrain opportunities for the future extraction of resources.

Council's strategic directions for earth and energy resources are to:

- Encourage the use and development of land in areas of abundant mineral sand deposits for the earth and energy resources industry and associated activity.
- Direct urban growth and rural residential development away from areas where it would limit the ability to mine and extract earth resources.
- Support infrastructure and services associated with mining and extractive industry.

The planning scheme also includes a range of agricultural, environmental, and economic strategies that requires decision makers to balance these objectives for net community benefit.

Natural resource management

Agriculture

Horsham's combination of soils, landform and climate provide a rural environment that is inherently suitable to broad acre agricultural production.

Protection of land and water resources and support for agricultural productivity improvements will enhance the region's economic base and help meet growing export demands. Agricultural diversification and value adding to primary production is taking place in the region, which will lead to a further strengthening of the local economy. Investment in infrastructure, including road and rail transport and interchange, and the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline project have been facilitated to improve the productivity of agriculture. These investments should not be undermined by the encroachment of non-farming related land uses. There is also significant risk to Horsham's agricultural activities by ad hoc land use change that can compromise the viability and growth of the sector.

The municipality is particularly well suited for further expansion of the agricultural sector due to its established infrastructure. The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline is upgrading water supply to towns and rural areas, providing improved water security. Horsham has sufficient land and infrastructure to cater for related transport, logistics and industry functions associated with growth of the agricultural sector. Niche agricultural uses in the municipality include horticulture, viticulture, and animal production. Intensifying agricultural land uses has the potential to increase detrimental impacts on the environment and surrounding areas to much higher levels.

Fragmentation of rural land by inappropriate subdivision can detrimentally affect the productive capacity of the land. The subdivision of land to less than the minimum lot size is of particular concern in the Wartook area adjacent to the Grampians National Park.

The Council Plan also provides strategic direction for mining stating the following:

Advocate for mining in our region to meet world's best practice

The Investment Attraction and Strategy and Implementation Plan 2022 further identifies Renewable Energy and Sustainability as a key theme stating:

Renewable energy is a forward thinking and trending industry that can help Horsham achieve economic diversification in collaboration with its strong agriculture industry.

<https://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/5/document-resources/our-council/publications/2022-investment-attraction-strategy.pdf>

Council has an obligation to ensure the municipality has the strategic policy required to respond to impacts including risks losses and benefits provided by Mining Renewables and Energy and the Council Plan and Municipal Planning Strategy provide a strategic framework for this policy development.

Advocacy

Mining, Renewable and Energy projects are significant for the region and state and have social, economic and environmental impacts and benefits beyond the planning frameworks that require advocacy and engagement.

The key social and economic impacts that sit within Councils role of advocacy and include:

Workforce capacity

Housing

Rail Transport

Community Services

Economic diversification

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Health

Best Practice Environmental Management

Management of Community Benefit funds

Horsham Rural City has played a significant role in advocacy to ensure the community benefits from these projects and that any social and environmental impacts are appropriately managed.

The economic impact of mining alone is significant for the region with potential employment of 232 employees as a result of Avonbank Mine and direct and indirect economic impact of \$335 million per annum into the region that will require growth of housing, industry, businesses, and community services.

Stakeholders are also key part of managing change associated with Mining, Renewables and Energy projects and requires advocacy and liaison with many agencies and organisations including:

Resources Victoria

Department Transport and Planning

Regional Development Victoria

Environmental Protection Authority

Iluka

Wim Resource

Astron Corporation

Wimmera Catchment Management Authority

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water

Heritage Victoria

Victoria Farmers Federation

Landowners

Businesses

Community

BGLC

WSM Development

Engagement has required the development of working relationships across a diverse broad range of stakeholders to allow for effective advocacy.

Governance

The resolution of council, proposes a committee 'be formed with a minimum of two Councillors, the CEO, and not more than two dedicated staff involved in the process of Mining, Renewables & Energy, to ultimately present recommendations to Council.'

The Local Government Act 2020 guides the governance for council meetings and specific committees.

The council resolution is unclear on the governance structure proposed and it is noted a delegated committee under the Local Government Act is usually tasked with exercising specific powers, duties, or functions that the Council has delegated to them. Given the council resolution contains no powers or duties, a delegated committee is not required. A working group would be considered to be an appropriate structure to provide specialised advice and assistance on Mining, Renewables and Energy policy and projects.

The HRCC Committee Framework Policy 2024 provides the principles for the establishment of a separate committee of council. It would need to have a Strategic Policy focus, a Terms of Reference, regular reports to Council and would have no operational responsibility.

As per the policy, it is important to ensure the working group provides a clear strategic direction for Mining, Renewables and Energy projects to Council and the working group have clear aims and responsibility.

Discussion

Councillors have indicated a need for more information and advice on Mining, Renewables and Energy policies and projects at this critical time when projects are being developed and started in the region.

A governance model around the following roles Horsham Rural City have in Mining, Renewables and Energy in our region is required.

Advocacy – to respond to change associated with Workforce, Housing, Economic Impacts
Strategic – to ensure the development of clear and long-term strategic position
Operational -to keep informed of operational and legislative processes

Councils generally focus on the Strategic and Advocacy involved in policy development, submissions, community engagement and economic development and the organisation and the CEO typically deals with Operational roles of statutory planning, referrals, and technical assessment to ensure the legislative compliance is timely, efficient, and transparent process.

The establishment of a working group would provide a governance framework to receive advice and respond to the issues raised by Mining, Renewables and Energy projects with a focus on the following aims and objectives:

Purpose: The purpose of this working group is to consider the social environmental and economic impacts including risks, losses and potential benefits of Mining Renewables and Energy policy and projects

Objectives

1. To review the Victorian Critical Minerals Road Map, Draft 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan, and other sector strategic plans to support advocacy and liaison with key stakeholders.
2. To develop an engagement plan to guide communications, submissions and negotiations with Mining, Renewables and Energy Projects, including consideration of community concerns.
3. Develop a strategic position to respond to the Social and Economic impacts and benefits of Mining, Renewables and Energy investments and projects.
4. Review the legislative, approval and delegations Horsham Rural City Council have related to Mining Renewables and Energy, while maintaining our strategic oversight and agency.
5. Understand the rating, payments and community benefits which apply to Mining, Renewables and Energy Projects and advocate for a fair and equitable outcome for the community, noting that many infrastructure costs are at ratepayer expense.
6. To make recommendations to Council on Mining, Renewables and Energy Policies and Projects

Options to Consider

1. Establish a Working Group of all Councillors managed through the regular Council Briefing schedule to lead the advocacy, strategic and operational roles identified above, guided by the working group terms of reference.
2. Not support the establishment of the working group.

Option 1 is recommended, as it allows all Councillors to participate in discussions and make recommendations regarding projects that are of significance to the local community that relate to Mining and Renewables.

Sustainability Implications

A clear strategic position on Mining, Renewables and Energy will allow a coordinated approach to sustainability issues.

Community Engagement

The establishment of a Mining, Renewables and Energy working group will allow for the consideration of the best community engagement methods for the community and stakeholders.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

A strategic focus on Mining and Renewables and Energy projects and policies.

Collaboration

Consideration of the Council decision has occurred through engagement with Councillors, CEO, Directors, and planning staff.

Financial Implications

The prioritising of briefings on Mining, Renewables and Energy will require staff time but will not have any specific financial implications.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Mining Renewables and Energy are subject to a range of legislation as discussed in the report and Councillor meetings and committees are subject to the Local Government Act.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

2021-2025 Council Plan

Theme 2 – Liveability
Theme 3 – Sustainability

Risk Implications

The establishment of a Mining, Renewables and Energy committee without appropriate governance oversight and understanding of legislative requirements presents a significant risk to the organisation.

Conclusion

A governance model is required around the roles Horsham Rural City has in Mining, Renewables and Energy projects in our region so as to respond to the social, economic, and environmental risks losses and potential benefits these industries will bring to the municipality.

The establishment of a working group as part of a regular briefing schedule would provide a governance framework to receive advice and respond to issues raised by Mining, Renewable and Energy projects.

9.6 NATIMUK ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PLAN TERMS OF REFERENCE

Director:	Kevin O'Brien
Directorate:	Communities and Place
File Number:	F15/A09/000009

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

Natimuk Economic and Social Plan Terms of Reference (proposed update) (**Appendix 9.6A**)

Purpose

To adopt the updated Terms of Reference for the Natimuk Economic and Social Plan (NESP) Advisory Committee.

Summary

After reviewing the current operations of the committee, it is recommended that a Councillor is appointed to this committee as the Chair.

Recommendation

That Council adopt the updated Terms of Reference for the Natimuk Economic and Social Plan Advisory Committee (**Appendix 9.6A**).

REPORT

Background

The Terms of Reference for the Natimuk Economic and Social Plan Advisory Committee was developed with advice from the Natimuk Economic and Social Plan Community Reference Group who participated in the development of the Natimuk Economic and Social Plan. Following the establishment of the Committee there was a change made to the Terms of Reference which was adopted by Council on 27 May 2024.

Discussion

After reviewing the functioning of this committee and the role of Councillors at advisory committee meetings, which has been to attend in an ex officio capacity, it is recommended that Council formally resolves a Councillor to attend and chair these meetings. This would be reflected in an updated Terms of Reference.

A review of all Council committee frameworks will occur later in year proposing changes to Councillor representation on committees. The proposed changes to the Natimuk Economic and Social Plan Project Advisory Committee terms of reference will function as a pilot to evaluate the efficiency of this change.

Options to Consider

1. Council adopts the updated Terms of Reference and a Councillor will be appointed as Chairperson.
2. Council does not adopt the updated Terms of Reference and the Committee will continue to function with a member of the Advisory Committee chairing the meetings.

Option 1 is recommended to ensure proper oversight of the committee.

Sustainability Implications

Nil

Community Engagement

The Committee will be informed of any proposed changes to the meeting functions at their next meeting in September.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Not applicable

Collaboration

Not applicable

Financial Implications

Not applicable

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Not applicable

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

Natimuk Economic and Social Plan

Risk Implications

The proposed changes to the Terms of Reference have been discussed with the NESP Project Advisory Committee with no issues identified apart from wanting to add an additional member to the committee.

Conclusion

The Natimuk Economic and Social Plan Project Advisory Committee would gain value from having a Councillor present and chairing the monthly meetings. It is recommended that a Councillor is appointed Chairperson and the ToR is updated accordingly to reflect this.

9.7 COMMUNITY VISION, COUNCIL PLAN, FINANCIAL PLAN, AND ASSET PLAN

Director:	Gail Gatt
Directorate:	Chief Executive Officer
File Number:	F06/A09/000001

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 approve the release of the draft Community Vision 2041, Council Plan (including Health & Wellbeing Plan) 2025-2029, and 10-year Asset Plan and Financial Plan for a period of community engagement in September 2025.

Summary

- The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Council to adopt
 - a Community Vision for at least the next 10 financial years (s88)
 - a Council Plan for at least the next 4 financial years (s90)
 - a Financial Plan for at least the next 10 financial years (s91)
 - an Asset Plan for at least the next 10 financial years (s92)
 - Council must develop or review these documents in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices and adopt by 31 October in the year following a general election
- Councils are also required to prepare a municipal public health and wellbeing plan within the period of 12 months after each general election of the Council (*Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*) but can apply to have the plan incorporated into their Council Plan as is intended for the HRCC plan.
- Extensive engagement has occurred to inform the development of these draft documents and the proposed engagement in September is the final stage of community input before the documents are presented to Council for adoption in October.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Approve the release of the draft Community Vision for a period of community engagement of three weeks in September 2025.
2. Approve the release of the draft Council Plan for a period of community engagement of three weeks in September 2025 and submit a copy of that document to the Secretary for an exemption from complying with section 26 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.
3. Approve the release of the draft Financial Plan for a period of community engagement of two weeks in September 2025.
4. Approve the release of the draft Asset Plan for a period of community engagement of two weeks in September 2025.

REPORT

Background

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Council to undertake a process of development or review of key strategic documents following a Council election. Specifically, Council is required to:

- Develop or review the Community Vision in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices and adopt the Community Vision by 31 October in the year following a general election (s88(4)).

The Community Vision must describe the municipal community's aspirations for the future of the municipality (s88(3)).

- Develop or review the Council Plan in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices and adopt the Council Plan by 31 October in the year following a general election (s90 (3)).

A Council Plan must include the following (s90 (2))

- a) the strategic direction of the Council;
- b) strategic objectives for achieving the strategic direction;
- c) strategies for achieving the objectives for a period of at least the next 4 financial years;
- d) strategic indicators for monitoring the achievement of the objectives;
- e) a description of the Council's initiatives and priorities for services, infrastructure and amenity;
- f) any other matters prescribed by the regulations

- Develop or review the Financial Plan in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices and adopt the Financial Plan by 31 October in the year following a general election (s91(4))

A Financial Plan must include the following in the manner and form prescribed by the regulations (s91(3))

- a) statements describing the financial resources required to give effect to the Council Plan and other strategic plans of the Council;
- b) information about the decisions and assumptions that underpin the forecasts in the statements specified in paragraph (a);
- c) statements describing any other resource requirements that the Council considers appropriate to include in the Financial Plan;
- d) any other matters prescribed by the regulations

- Develop or review the Asset Plan in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices and adopt the Asset Plan by 31 October in the year following a general election (s92(4))

An Asset Plan must include the following (s92(3))

- a) information about maintenance, renewal, acquisition, expansion, upgrade, disposal and decommissioning in relation to each class of infrastructure asset under the control of the Council;
- b) any other matters prescribed by the regulations.

Discussion

To inform the development of the draft documents Council engaged a consultant to facilitate deliberative community engagement in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy (Stage 1 engagement).

To date 409 people have participated in the Stage 1 engagement to inform the development of these draft documents through survey responses (n=283), workshop participation (n=102), stakeholder meetings (n=21) or individual submissions (n=2).

Stage 1 engagement focused on specific community interest topics. Topics discussed in detail were:

- Economic development
- Cultural and creative
- Public space and recreation
- Community services
- Rural communities
- Infrastructure, environment and waste
- Roads
- Social issues

The Stage 1 engagement also collected information about the community's opinions on utilisation and satisfaction indicators for Council services; Council's level of service (more, less or same); condition of and investment in assets. Information was also collected to inform the Health and Wellbeing Plan as part of this process and was supplemented by further targeted engagement to inform the content of that plan in line with legislative requirements. This included key local stakeholders including Uniting Wimmera, West Wimmera Health Service, Grampians Public Health Unit, Headspace, Women's Health Grampians, Salvation Army Homelessness, YMCA, Wimmera Southern Mallee Development, Wimmera Homelessness Alliance, Horsham Neighbourhood House, Federation University, Centre for Participation, Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly and Wimmera Emergency Management

Stage 2 engagement will involve Council presenting the draft versions of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan to the broader community for feedback. This stage will test the draft plans with the community to confirm alignment with local values and priorities. The focus for this stage will be to test the documents with those who provided input to inform their development as well as attempt to encourage participation from those members of the community not well represented in Stage 1 (young people aged under 35 and males). Feedback from Stage 2 will inform the refinement of the draft plans before they are finalised for adoption in late 2025.

Councillors are asked to provide approval for these documents to be released for Stage 2 as per the timeframes for engagement outlined in the recommendation. Each document will have a specific engagement approach that is yet to be finalised in consultation with Councillors so it is proposed the documents will be released once the specific engagement approach for each is confirmed noting Councillors key role in that engagement.

Options to Consider

1. That Council endorse the release of the draft documents as per the timeframes for engagement outlined in the recommendation and approve the submission of a copy of the Council Plan document to the Secretary for an exemption from complying with section 26 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.
2. Council request further changes or work be undertaken prior to the release of the draft documents.

Option 1 is recommended noting Council have a legislated requirement to have adopted the respective documents by 31 October 2025.

Sustainability Implications

Sustainability is a key theme in both the draft Community Vision and the Council Plan, addressing economic, social, environmental and climate change implications. Once adopted the Community Vision and its impact on the Council Plan will set the key direction for our community going forward noting

climate change and how Council responds to climate challenges is a requirement of the *Local Government Act 2020* and must also be addressed in the Health & Wellbeing Plan.

Community Engagement

A summary of the Community engagement for Stage 1 has been outlined in this report. Stage 2 will now include the release of the draft documents for a final round of community consultation and feedback prior to finalisation for adoption by the legislated timeframes.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The consultant engaged for the Stage 1 engagement brought some innovative approaches to engagement to get the municipality talking about the future of Horsham through community conversations and online engagement. This was supported by Council officers who led with the stakeholder meetings and direct engagement of key stakeholders to inform specific elements of the documents.

The review and revision of the respective documents in accordance with legislation also provides Council with the opportunity to refine, revise and continuously improve.

Collaboration

The development of the draft documents has been a collaboration between all sectors of the Community, Councillors and Council Officers.

Financial Implications

Council allocated funds to assist in the facilitation and development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Health & Wellbeing Plan, Asset Plan and Financial Plan in the 2024-25 operational budget.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

The Community Vision is the most important strategic document that informs the direction of the Council Plan which in turn is key to the integrated planning framework for all that Council does. The process undertaken to date has been to develop or review these key strategic documents.

Risk Implications

Council is legislatively required to develop or review these key strategic documents before 31 October in the year following a general election. It is now the priority to have the draft documents considered by community with any feedback incorporated into the documents before adoption in October in order to avoid the risk of a legislative breach.

Risk to date has been mitigated regarding the requirement for the process to be undertaken in accordance with Council's deliberative engagement practices as outlined in Council's Community Engagement Policy. The process undertaken for Stage 1 community consultation has met these requirements.

Conclusion

The draft documents have been informed by consultation with the community. Although not required, it is recommended that Council release the draft documents for the respective periods of engagement outlined in the recommendation. Noting the specific engagement options are yet to be confirmed it is requested that Council pre-approve the documents release once the engagement methods are confirmed noting Councillors key role in that engagement.

9.8 WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE DEVELOPMENT MEMBERSHIP

Director:	Gail Gatt
Directorate:	Chief Executive Officer
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

Nil

Purpose

To seek approval to give notice of its resignation as a municipal member of Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (WSMD) and allocate the 2025/2026 member contribution towards economic development activities.

Summary

- Horsham Rural City Council reviewed its membership of WSMD in June 2025 and resolved to decrease its contribution with a further review by June 2026.
- In recent times West Wimmera Shire have also indicated an intention to exit, no later than 30 June 2026 and this follows Northern Grampians departure in July 2024.
- The withdrawal of a number of Councils has prompted WSMD to review their current structure.
- The review has proposed that WSMD move in a direction that no longer requires Council membership.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Gives notice to resign from its membership of Wimmera Southern Mallee Development, effective immediately.
2. Notifies Wimmera Southern Mallee Development of the resignation through a letter signed by the member representative Councillor Cameron McDonald.
3. Authorises the member representative, Councillor Cameron McDonald, to sign the Deed Poll which authorises termination of the Memorandum of Understanding dated 1 December 2021 between Wimmera Southern Mallee Development and each of the member Councils.
4. Authorises the CEO to utilise the budget allocation for Wimmera Southern Mallee Development in 2025/2026 of \$ \$238,656 (excl GST) for economic development activities.

REPORT

Background

WSM Development was previously known as the Wimmera Development Association, underwent a transformation in 2021-2022 to become an independent not-for-profit company limited by guarantee.

This structural evolution indicated a strategic move towards a more formalised and professional governance model, designed to strengthen the organisation's capacity to deliver on its strategic plan and enhance regional prosperity.

The WSMD Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) December 2021 – 30 June 2026) describes the organisation as:

a company limited by guarantee formed with the purpose of fostering and undertaking actions that support sustainable growth and development of the Region within the municipal districts of Member Councils.

Recently there has been a growing disconnect between WSMD and member Councils leading to a lack of engagement with project delivery. This has stemmed from WSMD and Councils not being aligned with strategic priorities and a diluted focus by WSMD on direct economic development.

Discussion

At its Council meeting on 23 June 2025 Council resolved the following:

That Council:

- 1. Decreases its contribution to Wimmera Southern Mallee Development to \$100,000, for 2025/2026 financial year.*
- 2. Gives notice to Wimmera Southern Mallee Development that its strategic priorities no longer align with Council's strategic priorities and Council consequently intends to withdraw its membership in total on 30 June 2026.*

Northern Grampians Shire Council withdrew their membership from WSMD in July 2024 and West Wimmera Shire Council also resolved to withdraw no later than 30 June 2026. It is understood that Hindmarsh and Yarriambiack Shire Councils are also considering their position.

The withdrawal and signalled withdrawal of a number of Council's has prompted a review by WSMD of their constitution and membership structure. WSMD have proposed to move in a direction that no longer requires Councils to form part of their membership.

A Special General meeting of WSMD, has been called to consider a new constitution and board membership, which will require each Council to resign from their membership and sign a Deed Poll terminating the MOU dated 1 December 2021.

A reinvestment of funds into other economic development activities will involve the consideration of engaging suitable resources to facilitate and implement investment attraction projects consistent with the Council Plan currently in the process of being finalised through a final range of community engagement.

Options to Consider

1. Council withdraw their membership through the administrative processes described in the recommendation above and reinvest the funds into other economic development activities.
2. Council withdraw their membership through the administrative processes described in the recommendation above and reinvest the funds into other priority projects identified in the Council Plan.

The first option is recommended as Council's strategic priorities are not aligned with WSMD's priorities and therefore the entities should go their separate ways. There is however a need for investment attraction activities (including planning) to be undertaken to help boost the regional economy and ensure Horsham remains a strong regional centre. There is continuing work required to attract people to live, work and invest in the Horsham municipality and to ensure the region is future ready for any growth that may occur in the future. It is particularly important to ensure the municipality and region is future ready to accommodate the impacts of a range of proposed projects.

Sustainability Implications

Reinvesting funds to economic development activities lead by Horsham Rural City Council will have a positive impact on economic and social factors affecting Horsham and the region.

Community Engagement

Not applicable

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The current MOU with WSM Development has been in place since 2022 and no previous evaluation has occurred. Council needs to continue to evaluate budget allocations to ensure we are funding external organisations that provide value to HRCC and the community.

Collaboration

Council has consulted other Wimmera Southern Mallee Councils on this matter who have indicated they will be taking similar steps to those indicated in this report, subject to Council resolution.

Financial Implications

The budget allocation for Wimmera Southern Mallee Development in 2025/2026 of \$ \$238,656 (excl GST) would be reallocated for economic development activities, led by Horsham Rural City Council.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Economic Development Strategy 2022

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

Draft Horsham Community Vision 2041

Draft Council Plan 2025-2029

Investment Attraction Strategy 2022

Risk Implications

Given the priorities of Councils and WSMD are no longer aligned, there is a risk for Councillors appointed as Directors on the WSMD board. It is no longer tenable for them to operate as effective Directors under the current constitution and therefore the best outcome is to withdraw membership from the organisation.

Conclusion

Council acknowledges WSMD for their service over many years and thanks them for coordinating a change in governance structure to best suit the future direction of all parties.

REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

9.9 INVESTMENT ATTRACTION AND GROWTH DEPARTMENT REPORT

Director:	Kevin O'Brien
Directorate:	Communities and Place
File Number:	F15/A06/000001

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

Spending Insights June 2025 (**Appendix 9.9A**)

Quarterly Economic Snapshot Apr-June (**Appendix 9.9B**)

End of Financial Year Review 2024-2025 (**Appendix 9.9C**)

Purpose

To receive and note the Investment Attraction and Growth Department Quarterly Report for the period: May – June 2025.

Summary

The Investment Attraction and Growth Department Quarterly Report provides the progress and outcomes achieved through the delivery of the Investment Attraction Strategy and Implementation Plan during the reporting period.

Recommendation

That Council receive and note the Investment Attraction and Growth Department Quarterly Report for the period: May – June 2025.

REPORT

Background

An Investment Attraction and Growth Department Report is tabled Quarterly at an Ordinary Meeting of Council.

Discussion

The work undertaken across Investment Attraction and Growth Department includes Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, Building Services, Business Development and Tourism.

The Investment Attraction Strategy and Implementation Plan progress and key achievements for the months of May and June 2025 are articulated in the information and tables, as follow.

Actions are measured by goals and set timelines. The timelines are indicated by years which relate to financial years.

Year 1 - 2022-2023
Year 2 - 2023-2024
Year 3 - 2024-2025
Year 4 - 2025-2026
Year 5+ 2026+
Ongoing – life of plan

The teams will focus on delivering actions within the current financial year whilst carrying out the necessary planning to ensure targets are meet in sequential years.

INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

Council Priorities	Action	Goal Measured by	May - June 25
2.10 (Ongoing)	Support Wimmera Southern Mallee Development to facilitate improved telecommunications, housing and workforce outcomes	- Government fund provided to improved telecommunication - Industry not reporting lack of housing availability for new employees to the region	The Investment Attraction team attended a developers forum organised by WSM Development in collaboration with RDV. This forum had a focus on the construction of accommodation facilities and housing required for workers of up and coming major projects slated for development in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region
2.10 (Ongoing)	Undertake regular meetings between Wimmera Southern Mallee Development and Investment Attraction Department to inform and discuss economic development opportunities	10 forums held per year	Meetings are held monthly. Outcomes relate to business development opportunities that benefit the region overall. 6/10 meetings held to date in 2025.

Officers Reports

3.2.2 (2 years)	Implement the infrastructure works required for the next stage of development at the WAL Hub and both Burnt Creek and Enterprise Industrial Estates to ensure sites are market ready	Next stage developed for each of the industrial areas and ready for sale	A road name has been decided upon for Burnt Creek Industrial Estate which will enable the next stage of detailed design. A sign showcasing business owners at the WAL Hub has been installed at the entrance to the precinct.
3.5 (2 years)	Advocate for mining in our region to meet world's best practice	MOU developed between Council and WIM Resource	MOU rescinded.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Council Priorities	Action	Goal Measured by	May - June 25
2.6.1	Promote recreational activities in our natural environment to increase destination tourism and visitation	Activities reported on in the Investment Attraction and Growth monthly Council Report	A regional marketing campaign has been undertaken with a focus on Visiting Family & Relatives (VFR). The campaign was led by Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism (GWMT) and involved all the LGA's that are affiliated with GWMT. This campaign was funded as part of a Bushfire Recovery plan.
2.8.1 (ongoing)	Support the delivery of tourism opportunities on the Wimmera River, Mt Arapiles and lakes in our region	Tourism opportunities reported on in the Investment Attraction and Growth monthly Council Report	Our first 'Winter Warmer' event was held at the riverfront in June with a great turn out of people excited to be able to warm themselves at the fire pits. Food trucks and music were also part of the event.
3.1.3 (2 years)	Develop and implement the Natimuk Social and Economic Plan and Dadswell's Bridge Community Action Plan	Plan Developed & Progress report to Council	Planning is underway for the relocation of the proposed footbridge in Natimuk which received funding from TAC.
3.2.1 (ongoing)	Host seasonal workshop sessions with Grampians Tourism and Wimmera Mallee Tourism to organise and update our businesses and tourism operators about relevant information for the region	Four industry workshops have been hosted	The Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism industry forum was held in Halls Gap during May and had a focus on tourism marketing. Members of the Business and Tourism team attended and gained insights into how we can market tourism in our region more effectively.
3.2.1 (ongoing)	Ensure constant communication through e-mails and business newsletters with tourism operators and local businesses regarding what is happening in the region	A minimum of 10 business newsletters distributed annually 4 business forums are held annually	Two newsletters were sent over the May/June period. They were sent to 1008 recipients and had a total of 837 opens and 68 clicks

3.4.2 (ongoing)	Encourage homebased and start-up businesses to expand through the Wimmera Business Centre	Having two start-up businesses per year gain support through the WBC.	The Wimmera Business Centre provided support to two mobile food traders to expand their businesses into a shop front. They were previously trading at the pop-up riverfront site which has acted as an incubator and allowed them to test their business model with relatively low risk before embarking on a hospitality business in a permanent location in the CBD.
3.4.2 (ongoing)	Attract businesses to lease vacant shops in the Horsham city centre through the Wimmera Business Centre	Vacant shops reduced from 24 shops to 20 in the first year and maintained at or below 18 shops for the succeeding years	See below table

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM NEWS



The Business and Tourism team attended the Ballarat Outdoor Living and Camping Expo to represent Horsham and the region. Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism (GWMT) invited the GWMT Shires to have a presence on their stand in order to promote our regional attractions. The big draw card was the Grampians Touring Map and the Silo Art Trail. Over the course of the week the event had a strong presence from representatives across the Grampians and Wimmera Mallee.

An invitation was received from Business Events Victoria to attend their Regional Victoria Showcase Event in Melbourne. Our attendance was a collaborative approach between GWMT and the Horsham Business Team giving us the opportunity to promote conferencing in our part of Western Victoria. Overall, there were 50 venue business operators along with 113 event buyer's all seeking information about their next possible conference location. The outcome from our presentation is to now form a GWMT Regional Focus Group around conferencing in the region.



SPENDMAPP

Refer to Appendices 9.8A, B and C.

- Spending Insights June 2025
- Quarterly Economic Snapshot Apr-June
- End of Financial Year Review 2024-2025

Occupied Businesses:

Street and Number of Businesses	April 2025 Businesses Occupied	June 2025 Businesses Occupied	June 2025 Businesses Vacant	June 2025 Percentage Businesses Occupied
Darlot St – 43 car wash and businesses operating from a house included	41	41	2	95%
Firebrace St - 97	88	89	8	91%
Hamilton St - 17	16	16	1	94%
Wilson St – 34	29	29	5	85%
Pynsent St – 28 Cinema included	27	27	1	96%
Roberts Ave – 27 Coles included	24	24	3	88%
McLachlan St – 24 CFA & GWM included	23	23	1	96%
Total 270 Post February 2022 there were 262 shops identified in the study area	248/272	249/270	21	92%

(Businesses are determined by whether they are 1. A premises, 2. Have customers 3. Exchange money: i.e. Centre Link and the Cinema are included, and the Public Library is excluded). There are four known shops that are not suitable for occupancy as they require major renovations or are being used as a secondary business not requiring a retail front. These shops are reflected in the vacant shop numbers and unfortunately reduce the percentage of occupied businesses.

STATUTORY PLANNING

Planning Applications Determined

Below are the number of Planning Permits issued for the months of **May to June 2025** and a comparison with the same period last year.

Type	MAY TO JUN 2025		MAY TO JUN 2024	
	No.	*Value \$	No.	*Value \$
Miscellaneous Domestic	6	2,310,000	1	40,000
Industrial/Commercial	9	5,722,342	3	2,027,000
Subdivisions	4 (8 lots)	600,000	3 (8 Lots)	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total	19	8,632,342	7	2,067,000

(*Please note: Not all applications have a \$ figure)

Total number of planning permits issued in the Horsham Rural City Council area from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 is 82 compared to 75 in the same period in 23/24.

Planning permits issued for subdivision have permitted 108 new lots from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 compared to 87 in the same period in 23/24.

Building Services

Below are the number of building permits issued for the months of **May to June 2025** and a comparison with the same period last year.

Permits issued by Horsham Rural City Council for this Municipality

	MAY TO JUN 2025		MAY TO JUN 2024	
Type	No.	Value \$	No.	Value \$
Dwellings	-	-	1	650,000
Alterations to Dwellings	-	-	-	-
Dwelling resittings	-	-	-	-
Misc Domestic (Carports, Garages etc)	3	73,650	4	79,175
Removal/Demolish	2	45,000	-	-
Industrial/Commercial	-	-	2	14,7047
Signs	-	-	-	-
Sub Total	5	118,650	7	876,222

Permits issued by other Private Building Surveyors for this Municipality or by Government Departments:

	2025		2024	
Type	No.	Value \$	No.	Value \$
Dwellings	9	3,846,518	7	3,492,490
Alterations to Dwellings	8	596698	7	1,695,655
Dwelling resittings	-	-	1	71,830
Misc Domestic (Carports, Garages etc)	11	415,316	12	417,272
Removal/Demolish	2	64,868	0	-
Industrial/Commercial	14	8,050,359	6	1,635,062
Signs				-
_Sub Total	44	12,973,759	33	7,312,309

A total of **40** Building Permits have been issued by the Horsham Rural City Council at a total value of **\$1,189,612** from **1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025** compared to **32** Building Permits at a total value of **\$4,857,010** in 2024.

Private Building Surveyors have issued **214** Building Permits at a total value of **\$57,344,448** from **1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025** compared to **212** at a total value of **\$93,606,147** in 2023/2024.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Council Priorities	Action	Goal Measured by	May - June 25
1.3.4	Develop an open space contribution rate(s) and a new local Public Open Space Contribution Policy.	Policy adopted by Council and Horsham Planning Scheme amended.	Review of Open Space Strategy completed by SGS Economics. Public Open Space policy to form part of Landscape Design Guidelines
1.6.4 (2 years)	Implement the Horsham Heritage Study to protect buildings and places of historic cultural heritage to reinforce a 'sense of place' and celebrate Horsham's character and distinctiveness	Horsham Planning Scheme amended	Awaiting Authorisation from Department Transport and Planning
1.6.4 (4 years)	Prepare a Conservation Management Plan for the Horsham Cinema	Management plan endorsed by Council	Amended plan completed and ready for stakeholder engagement.
2.10.2 (2 to 3 years)	Develop and implement a Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy and complete an amendment to the planning scheme	Strategy developed and implemented through a planning scheme amendment	Community Consultation planned for September 2025.
2.10.3 (2 years)	Prepare and implement the Horsham South Structure Plan (Stage 2)	Plan adopted by Council	Draft Strategy finalised for community consultation.
3.1.1 (2 to 4 years)	Prepare and implement a Commercial & Industrial Land Supply Strategy and include in the Planning Scheme	Plan developed & Strategy adopted by Council	Draft Strategy in preparation and to be considered in context of Planning Scheme Review.
(2 years)	Complete a Planning Scheme Review as a vehicle for specifying desired outcomes across the municipality	Planning Scheme Review Completed and suggested changes implemented	Planning Scheme Review 2022 under review as part of Strategic Planning Program.

Options to Consider

Not applicable – no decision required.

Sustainability Implications

Report provides overview of the development and business activity across the region with no direct sustainability implications.

Community Engagement

The report has been prepared in consultation with a range of agencies and will be made publicly available to Wimmera Southern Mallee Development (WSM), West Vic Business, and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism and on Council's website.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Report provides overview of activity and assists with continuous improvement.

Collaboration

Report has been prepared in collaboration with Council officers across Planning, Building and Business Development and Tourism Support.

Financial Implications

NIL

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Not applicable – no direct relationship or requirements

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

Theme Three - Sustainability - Horsham Rural City Council will actively lead in sustainable growth and development of the community and the economy.

Strategy 2: A sustainable economy where local business, agriculture, tourism and other diverse industries thrive.

Destination Horsham Investment Attraction Strategy and Implementation Plan 2022 onwards

Risk Implications

Not applicable – no decision required

Conclusion

The Quarterly Investment Attraction and Growth Department report provides the opportunity to give Council and the community an insight into the projects being undertaken to grow our municipality and Horsham as a regional city.

10. COUNCILLOR REPORTS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cr Ian Ross, Mayor

Committee Representation	
Date	Description
4/08/25	Aboriginal Community Round Table
14/08/25	CEO Employment & Remuneration Committee Meeting
Other Council Activities	
28/07/25	ABC Radio Interview
29/07/25	Federation TAFE/Uni
1/08/25	HHH Radio Interview
4/08/25	EY Sweeney Stakeholder Research for Parks Victoria
6/08/25	Disaster Information and Preparedness Session
13/08/25	RCV Annual Forum and Networking Function
20/08/25	MAV Housing Webinar
20/08/25	SEC Horsham Renewable Energy Farm
21/08/25	HRLE meeting

Cr Cam McDonald

Committee Representation	
Date	Description
	Nil
Other Council Activities	
7/07/25	Meeting with Gail Gatt Council Briefing
14/07/25	Meeting with Firebrace St trader Re. Trading tables issue. Council Briefing
21/07/25	Addressed pavement issue in Wotonga Drive Council Briefing
23/07/25	Meeting with Gail Gatt re WSMDA.
28/07/25	Council Meeting

Cr Bec Sluggett

Committee Representation	
Date	Description
12/08/25	Wimmera Regional CEO & Mayor Forum
12/08/25	CEO Employment & Remuneration Committee Meeting
Other Council Activities	
23/07/25	Horsham Information Forum – Mining & Renewables What’s the Future?
28/07/25	July Council Meeting
30/07/25	Land Access Rights Rally - Parliament House Melbourne
04/08/25	Council Briefing
11/08/25	Council Briefing
18/08/25	Council Briefing

11. URGENT BUSINESS

12. PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS

12.1 COMMUNITY PETITION WILLIAMS ROAD FOOTPATH

Director:	John Martin
Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F14/A09/000001

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

Petition as received (**Appendix 12.1A**)

Purpose

To present the community petition received by Council requesting a footpath along the eastern end of Williams Road, Horsham.

Summary

- A petition has been received from 16 residents, primarily from Weldon Power Court, but also some nearby addresses, requesting a footpath extension along Williams Road through to Cameron Rd.
- The petition as attached in **Appendix 12.1A** shows the extent of the footpath requested, commencing at Burnt Creek Bridge No.2.
- A meeting will be arranged as soon as practicable to hear more details from the residents about their concerns, to inform a subsequent report to Council on this request.
- This initial report presents the petition to Council, in accordance with the Governance Rules.

Recommendation

That Council receive and note the Petition by residents of Weldon Power Court and nearby addresses requesting a footpath along a section of Williams Rd from Burnt Ck No 2 Bridge to Cameron Rd.

REPORT

Background

On 29 July 2025 a petition was received from 16 community members generally in the Weldon Power Court area of Horsham, requesting a footpath on the south side of Williams Rd, from Burnt Creek No 2 Bridge to Cameron Rd. The details of their request are presented in the petition as follows:

Issue:

Currently there are no pedestrian or bicycle provisions along Williams Rd to connect Weldon Power Court and Cameron Rd to Horsham's existing walking tracks and footpaths. Williams Rd is a VicRoads Class C rated road, meaning it carries a substantial amount of traffic, including heavy vehicles. There is also no shoulder to the road for pedestrians or cyclists to utilise in conjunction with road traffic. This poses a huge safety risk to anyone wanting to walk or ride along this section of the road, especially young children.

Proposal:

For the establishment/extension of a footpath along Williams Rd, to connect Weldon Power Court and Cameron Rd to the towns existing walking tracks and footpaths, as illustrated by the red line on the image below.

A number of the petitioners have also raised some related issues in comments added to their signed petition forms.

Discussion

Council's Governance Rules state the following regarding petitions:

57. Petitions and Joint Letters

- 57.1 Unless *Council* determines to consider it as an item of urgent business, no motion (other than a motion to receive the same) may be made on any petition, joint letter, memorial or other like application until the next fixed *Council meeting* after that at which it has been presented.

A preliminary meeting is proposed to occur with residents to hear more from them about their concerns. This meeting has not yet been arranged.

A further report on this matter will be presented following the preliminary meeting to advise on the outcome of the meeting consideration of the matters raised in the petition and at the meeting.

Options to Consider

A subsequent report to Council will be prepared to present the outcome of the preliminary meeting, consideration of the concerns raised and options that may address these issues.

Risk Implications

A key issue raised in the petition is the safety risk of pedestrians walking along Williams Road.

Sustainability Implications

Nil

Community Engagement

A preliminary meeting is proposed to occur, but has not yet been scheduled.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Not applicable

Collaboration

Not Applicable

Financial Implications

To be determined depending on the options identified.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Nil

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

Council's Governance Rules outline the procedure for handling petitions.

Conclusion

Following the preliminary meeting with residents a further report will be presented to Council to discuss the outcome of this meeting and considerations for the matters raised in the Williams Road footpath petition.

13. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

13.1 INFORMAL MEETINGS OF COUNCILLORS – RECORD OF MEETINGS

- Council Briefing Meetings held on 4, 11 and 18 August 2025

Refer to **Appendix 13.1A**

13.2 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

Nil

13.3 INWARD CORRESPONDENCE

Nil

13.4 COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

- Natimuk Economic & Social Plan Project Advisory Committee meeting held on 9 July 2025.

Refer to **Appendix 13.4A**

Recommendation

That Council receive and note agenda items:

- 13.1 Informal Meetings of Councillors – Record of Meetings
- 13.2 Sealing of Documents
- 13.3 Inward Correspondence
- 13.4 Council Committee Minutes.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION