



STRATHBOGRIE SHIRE COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STRATHBOGRIE SHIRE COUNCIL HELD
ON TUESDAY 31 MARCH 2015 AT THE EUROA COMMUNITY CONFERENCE
CENTRE COMMENCING AT 5.00 P.M.

Councillors:	Debra Swan (Chair)	(Lake Nagambie Ward)
	Colleen Furlanetto	(Seven Creeks Ward)
	Malcolm Little	(Hughes Creek Ward)
	Alister Purbrick	(Lake Nagambie Ward)
	Patrick Storer	(Honeysuckle Creek Ward)
	Robin Weatherald	(Mount Wombat Ward)
	Graeme (Mick) Williams	(Seven Creeks Ward)

Officers:	Steve Crawcour - Chief Executive Officer
	David Woodhams - Director, Corporate and Community
	Phil Howard - Director, Sustainable Development
	Bruce Braines – Acting Director, Asset Services

BUSINESS

1. Welcome
2. Acknowledgement of Traditional Land Owners
'In keeping with the spirit of Reconciliation, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today. We recognise indigenous people, their elders past and present'.
3. Apologies

Roy Hetherington - Director, Asset Services
4. Disclosure of Interests

Nil
5. Reports of Council Officers
 - 5.1 Climate Change
 - 5.2 Infrastructure
 - 5.3 Private Enterprise
 - 5.4 Public Institutions
 - 5.5 Housing and Recreation
 - 5.6 Tourism
 - 5.7 Organisation
6. Urgent Business
7. Closure of Meeting to the Public to consider matters listed for consideration in accordance with Section 89(2) of the Local Government Act 1989
8. Confirmation of 'Closed Portion' Decision/s

CV

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5. REPORTS

5.7 ORGANISATION

5.7.1 2013 – 2017 Strathbogie Shire Council Plan (2015 Review) (incorporating the 2014/15 to 2018/19 Strategic Resource Plan) - Amended Actions and Strategic Indicators for Year Ending 30 June 2016

Author / Department

Director, Corporate and Community / Corporate and Community Directorate

Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest in relation to advice provided in this report

The author of this report and officers/contractors providing advice in relation to this report do not have a direct or indirect interest, as provided in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989.

Summary

In accordance with the requirements of Section 125 of the Local Government Act 1989, Council has amended the Actions and Strategic Indicators to its 2013 – 2017 Council Plan, which incorporates the 2014/15 to 2018/19 Strategic Resource Plan. Copies of the draft amendments to the Council Plan have been circulated to Councillors and a copy is attached to this report. The Strategic Resource Plan will be tabled for information and identification purposes, and appended to the Minutes of the meeting. Council is required, under Section 125 (2) (c), to exhibit the changes for comment to the public for at least 28 days, under Section 223 of the Act, when the Strategic Indicators which monitor achievement of the objectives have changed.

A resolution of Council is now required to give public notice that the amended Council Plan will be available for inspection, in accordance with Section 125 (9) of the Act, from 8 April 2015. Submissions will close at 5.00 pm on Friday 8 May 2015. A Special Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 26 May 2015 to receive / hear submissions to the amended Council Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the adjustment to the strategic indicators and actions in the draft amended Council Plan be proposed.**
- 2. That the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to give public notice of the proposed adjustments in accordance with Sections 125 and 223 of the Local Government Act 1989. Submissions will close at 5.00 p.m. on Friday 8 May 2015.**
- 3. That Council considers any:**
 - (a) submission on the proposed adjustments made in accordance with Sections 125(9) and 223 of the Local Government Act 1989, and**



5.7.1 2013 – 2017 Strathbogie Shire Council Plan (2015 Review) (incorporating the 2014/15 to 2018/19 Strategic Resource Plan)
- Amended Actions and Strategic Indicators for Year Ending 30 June 2016 (cont.)

(b) recommendations or Notice of Motion to make the adjustments proposed

at a Special Meeting of Council to be held on Tuesday 26 May 2015, commencing at 5.00 p.m. at the Euroa Community Conference Centre.

4. That a Special Meeting of Council to adopt the 2013 - 2017 Strathbogie Shire Council Plan (2015 Review) be held on Tuesday 9 June 2015, commencing at 5.00 p.m. at the Euroa Community Conference Centre.

20/15 CRS FURLANETTO/LITTLE : That the Recommendation be adopted, subject to amendments to the draft 2013-2017 Council Plan (2015 Review).

CARRIED

Background

Council is required at least once in each financial year under the Local Government Act 1989 Section 125 (7) to consider whether the current Council Plan requires any adjustment in respect of the remaining period of the Council Plan. As such, Council has reviewed the 2013 – 2017 Council Plan and adjusted the Actions and Strategic Indicators for year ending 30 June 2016.

The Council Plan is a strategic document of Council that sets its Vision / Mission / Goals and Objectives for the (4) four year term of the Council. The Actions that sit under each Goal ensure the organisation delivers what the Council has set as its long term strategic vision for its community.

Alternative Options

The author and other officers providing advice in relation to this report have considered potential alternatives. No feasible alternatives have been identified as it is a requirement of the Local Government Act 1989

Risk Management

The author of this report considers that there are no significant Risk Management factors relating to the report and recommendation.

Strategic Links – policy implications and relevance to Council Plan

The author of this report considers that the report is consistent with Council Policies, key strategic documents and the current Council Plan.

Best Value / National Competition Policy (NCP / Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (CCA) implications

The author of this report considers that the report is consistent with Best Value, National Competition Policy and Trade Practices Act requirements.

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Financial / Budgetary Implications

The author has advised that the actions identified in the 2013 – 2017 Council Plan (2015 Review) are funded through the 2015 /16 Draft Budget.

Economic Implications

The author of this report considers that the recommendation has no significant economic implications for Council or the broader community.

Environmental / Amenity Implications

The author has identified environmental benefits through the initiatives detailed in the 2013 – 2017 Council Plan (2015 Review).

Community Implications

The author of this report has identified significant community and / or social benefits for the community as detailed in the 2013 – 2017 Council Plan (2015 Review).

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

The author of this report considers that the recommendation does not limit any human rights under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Legal / Statutory Implications

The author of this report considers that the recommendation has no legal or statutory implications which require the consideration of Council.

Consultation

The community will have an opportunity under Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989 to make comments / submissions on the 2013 – 2017 Council Plan (2015 Review).

Attachments

- 2013 – 2017 Council Plan (2015 Review)

Amended Draft 2013-2017 Council Plan (2015 Review)



2013 – 2017
Strathbogie Shire Council Plan
(2015 – 16 Review)

31/03/2015



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Message from the Mayor and CEO

We are very proud to present the 2015 – 16 Review of the Strathbogie Shire Council Plan.

It is important to firstly acknowledge the success that has already been experienced in many areas through the hard work and dedication of our Councillors, Management and Staff.

However, we have much ground to cover and have set ambitious targets across all areas of our organisation.

Some of our initiatives include:

- Advocate for funding to provide an aquatic strategy
- Advocate for improved public transport across the Shire
- Introduction of a green waste service to four of our main townships
- Continue to rationalise our underutilised assets
- Continue to progress the Goulburn Valley Regional Collaborative Alliance to achieve savings across the organisation through 'Shared Services'
- Seek grant funding to support Council objectives
- Continue to roll out the actions in our Economic Development Masterplan
- Work with Goulburn River Valley Tourism to develop a Military Trail

These important initiatives along with the many other actions listed in this plan, will ensure the Strathbogie Shire is a progressive and sustainable organisation both now and into the future.

Notwithstanding the many challenges set (particularly with changes and availability of both State and Federal funding), the future looks bright.

We aim to be both an attractive and liveable destination for new residents, businesses and industry and will continue to focus significant effort and resource in this area.

Our thanks to the many stakeholders who have made our current success possible and we look forward to positive working relationships going forward.

Best regards

Mayor Deb Swan and CEO Steve Crawcour

Our Vision:

"A Shire that drives and supports investment for population growth, shared wealth and wellbeing."

Our Mission:

"To actively consult with community, investors and industry through advocacy and collaboration; delivering quality infrastructure, lifestyle and sustainable economic and community development."

Our Guiding Principles:

Councillors and staff at Strathbogie Shire Council are committed to the following principles (values) as a guide to all its decisions and actions:

- **Good Governance** – We value innovation, integrity, accountability, strength, and consistency in leadership and decision making with adherence to robust, transparent and equitable policies and processes.
- **Working together** – We value the ability to maximise outcomes by working in partnership and collaboration with an engaged community, government, regional bodies and other stakeholders.
- **Quality Services** – We value the role of research, strategic planning, flexibility and innovation in delivering accessible and effective services and regional solutions that enhance the quality of life.
- **Social Inclusion** – We value widespread participation in civic and community life among people of all abilities and backgrounds.
- **Environment** – We value the shire's natural and built environment and the importance of local amenity on quality of life.
- **Stability** – We value sound financial and resource planning and management to ensure Council's long term sustainability and provision of quality services and infrastructure.



Goal 1

A community that has equitable access to a range of quality services which respond to its diverse needs and supports the wellbeing of our communities (Community Wellbeing).

Objective: Plan, support and / or deliver a broad range of responsive and accessible services to our diverse community.

1.1 Strategy:

Enhance the wellbeing and participation of our community.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Continue to support and participate in the Strathbogrie Health and Community Services Consortium.	✓	✓
Support Community Action Groups to develop methods of improved communication during emergencies.	✓	✓
Collaborate and provide support to the development of Community Action Group Action Plans.	✓	✓
Support the "Prevention of Violence against women and children supporting safer communities" Action Plan.	✓	✓
Investigate opportunities for Shire Wide youth cultural activities.	✓	✓
Advocate for funding for a review of the Aquatic Strategy		
Support the development of a men's shed program across the Shire.	✓	✓
Investigate and seek funding for Shire Wide safe pick up and drop off areas at all Schools.	✓	

1.2 Strategy:

Increase community services to Nagambie post bypass.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Advocate for a full time child care facility in Nagambie.	✓	✓
Advocate for funding of Nagambie Lakes Community House.	✓	✓
Advocate for an Ambulance service based in Nagambie.	✓	✓
Advocate for a High School in Nagambie.	✓	✓

1.3 Strategy:

Provide equitable and high standard public transport services / facilities.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Advocate for improved train station facilities across the Shire.	✓	✓
Advocate for better timetabling and shuttle services between Shepparton to Seymour and Wodonga to Seymour.	✓	✓



Goal 2

To promote and foster sustainable development in our natural and built environment (Environment).

Objective: To continue to protect and enhance the natural and built environment for current and future generations.

2.1 Strategy:

Encourage clean, green environmental initiatives.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Work with GBCMA to develop a program to remove sand from the pondage of Seven Creeks and Castle Creek and develop an agreed revegetation program.	✓	
Continue to develop the Violet Town flood mitigation Scheme.	✓	
Introduce an Organic Household Waste Service.	✓	
Participate in Regional Street Light Retro Fit Program.	✓	
Complete the Euroa Office energy retro-fit.	✓	

2.2 Strategy:

Develop, maintain and protect our natural and built assets.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Support the Euroa Environment Group to develop a Shire Wide Significant Tree Register on public land.	✓	✓
Update Council's Tree Management Plan.	✓	✓
Support the actions in the Shire's Community Safety Fire Action Plan.	✓	✓
Work with the "Bush Crew" where possible as part of the Shire's revegetation programs.	✓	✓



Goal 3.

To ensure prudent, transparent and strategic financial planning which results in a sound legacy for the future **(Financial)**.

Objective: Provide best practice management and administrative systems and structures to support the delivery of Council services and programs.

3.1 Strategy:

Rationalise Council Owned Assets.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Sell the Euroa Youth Club Hall and relocate current use to a suitable location.	✓	
Develop for residential use and sell Nagambie Shire Depot.	✓	
Investigate and determine underutilised assets within the Shire.	✓	✓

3.2 Strategy:

Continue to focus on improving operational efficiencies by decreasing costs.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Continue to drive the Shared Service Project with Shepparton in an endeavour to reduce operating expenditure and ensure efficiencies of service.	✓	✓
Target major Capital Works Projects to seek government funding to reduce Councils costs.	✓	✓
Explore and take up partnership opportunities of non-core services with other Shires and organisations.	✓	✓
Benchmark Business Units under the Best Value Legislation to ensure efficient, effective and relevant services are provided.	✓	✓
Reduce Council's infrastructure gap in a financially responsible manner as per Council's Long Term Financial Plan.	✓	✓
Seek grant funding opportunities wherever possible.	✓	✓
Conduct a Cost Benefit Analysis for the following operations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Euroa Saleyards ▪ Boating safety (compliance) operations in Nagambie ▪ Finance Services 	✓	

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3.3 Strategy:

Ensure Council has equitable support financially from both Federal and State Governments.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Advocate to both Federal and State Government to ensure that the current funding formulas provide equitable funds to Local Government.	✓	✓





Goal 4

A Shire that builds trust and recognises community needs through transparent, accountable and democratic decision making (**Governance**).

Objective: To provide all our stakeholders with consistent and timely decision making.

4.1 Strategy:

Engage our community in our decision making processes.

Strategic Indicators	2015/16	2016/17
Continue to deliver a program that provides increased Councillor interaction with the community in their local settings.	✓	✓
Introduce an online system for improved community engagement.	✓	✓

4.2 Strategy:

Provide a workforce that is accountable and transparent in its operations.

Strategic Indicators	2015/16	2016/17
Investigate best methods of access and surveillance in relation to safety and security at all Transfer Stations.	✓	
Address the actions required from the Internal Auditors Reports and report back to Council via the Audit Committee.	✓	✓
Executive Management Team to monitor and review the ongoing performance of all staff operations and report back to Council.	✓	✓

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Goal 5

Encourage investment and development into the Shire by having a responsive and proactive business development culture (**Industry, Business and Investment**).

Objective: Pursue opportunities to increase the range of businesses and industries in the Shire to further strengthen our economy.

5.1 Strategy:

Ensure Council has the ability to provide a single point of contact for its customers.

Strategic Indicators	2015/16	2016/17
investigate a system to broaden Council's current Business Directory on the website to also include individual skill based details.	✓	✓
Seek funding to use interactive Kiosks at each Library with up to date Council information and with the ability to print.	✓	

5.2 Strategy:

Support Nagambie traders post bypass.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Support the Nagambie Lakes Tourism and Commerce Committee in relation to branding, marketing and development of High Street Nagambie retail area.	✓	✓

5.3 Strategy:

Support and enhance a "Can Do" Culture.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Investigate the formation of an education alliance group around advocacy, information sharing, strategic partnership and economic development.	✓	
Support actions in Council's Economic Development Masterplan.	✓	✓

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Goal 6

Ensure the Shires infrastructure enhances efficiency for people and freight movement, service delivery and community amenities (**Infrastructure**).

Objective: Provide well maintained, affordable and appropriate infrastructure.

6.1 Strategy:
Provide industry standard facilities.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Develop a Risk Management Plan for Euroa Saleyards.	✓	
Investigate options for the long term sustainability of the Euroa Saleyards including funding models and major Capital Works Programs.	✓	✓

6.2 Strategy:
Support History and Cultural Monuments.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Investigate the development of a long term Masterplan for the Euroa RSL and Third Age Club precinct.	✓	

6.3 Strategy:
Deliver Council's bridge replacement in line with industry best practice.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Review the management plan for Kirwan's Bridge including funding opportunities.	✓	
Investigate and consult in relation to proving a link bridge from the Friendlies Reserve to Memorial Oval over the Seven Creeks.	✓	
Support community initiative in securing funding to link the Apex Walking Track across the Seven Creeks near the Rockies.	✓	

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6.4 Strategy:

Provide passive and active recreational facilities and paths / tracks.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Investigate options to provide a shared pathway connecting the Regatta Centre to the Nagambie Town Centre	✓	
Investigate options to provide a shared pathway connecting Kirwan's Bridge Community to Nagambie Town.	✓	
Investigate the development of a no boating or fishing area at River Street and introduce a no life guard swimming area.	✓	
Support the Nagambie Lakes Recreational and Commercial Stakeholders Waterways Committee in implementing the Actions in the On Land and On Water Strategy.	✓	✓
Secure funding to develop options for an additional sport and recreation precinct in Nagambie.	✓	
Subject to funding extend landing in front of rowing club around to staged area at Buckley Park and back to walking bridge at boat ramp area.	✓	
Develop a Nagambie Recreation Reserve Masterplan.	✓	
Investigate the development of a Strathbogrie Reserve Sporting Precinct Master Plan.	✓	
Seek funding for stage two of Avenel Recreation Reserve upgrade.	✓	✓
Seek funding for the upgrade of the Avenel Memorial Hall.	✓	✓
Investigate and seek funding for the development of a Strategic Walking Tracks, Horse Trails and Bike Routes for the Shire in conjunction with the Action Groups and Goulburn River Valley Tourism (GRVT).	✓	

6.5 Strategy:

Provide best practice asset management.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Advocate for a pedestrian crossing at the railway gates on Birkett Street, Euroa.	✓	
Clean up town entrances / town entry signs in the Shire.	✓	✓
Investigate and communicate with the community the development of pedestrian crossings in Brock Street, Railway Street and Binney Street area.	✓	
Continue to design and seek funding for town drainage / sewerage schemes.	✓	✓
Investigate the expansion of additional street lights in the Shire.	✓	
Advocate to VicRoads and Vic track for the creation of a roundabout resulting in a safer intersection at Queen Street / Bank Streets / Avenel Railway Crossing.	✓	✓
Investigate costs for Plain Road Nagambie to be sealed as an alternative truck route away from the town centre.	✓	
Investigate improved signage and road condition of Muller's Road Nagambie in line with Council's Road Management Plan.	✓	
Investigate road widening / upgrading options east of the Kelvin View Fire Station ('S' Bends) and Bends in Longwood – Ruffy Road south of Tarcombe – Longwood Road near Ardroy Corner.	✓	



Goal 7

A desirable and safe destination that supports the development of tourism and hospitality enterprises that drive economic growth across our Shire (**Tourism and Hospitality**).

Objective: *Ensure a coordinated and effective approach to economic and tourism development is maintained at all times.*

7.1 Strategy:

Ensure there is consistent branding and marketing of the Shire.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Work with Goulburn River Valley Tourism to advocate to relevant State Government departments for extra tourism funding.	✓	✓
Investigate funding for a marketing company to work with tourism groups across the Shire.	✓	
Conduct a forum with stakeholders to develop the Shire's branding as recommended in the Economic Development Masterplan.	✓	
Ensure the successful implementation of the Tourism Strategies in the Economic Development Masterplan.	✓	✓
Continue to roll out updated Council Branding	✓	✓

7.2 Strategy:

Develop the Shire's tourism story and café culture.

Strategic Indicators:	2015/16	2016/17
Fund plaques on each building to advise of the history of that building.	✓	
Introduce a phone app. for website with town information.	✓	
Work with Goulburn River Valley Tourism to develop a Military Trail	✓	✓
Work with Goulburn River Valley Tourism to develop a Digital Tourism Platform	✓	✓

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**5.7.2 Draft 2015-2016 Strathbogrie Shire Council Budget
- Preparation of Budget for Exhibition and Comment**

Author & Department

Director, Corporate and Community / Corporate and Community Directorate

File Reference

F30/0020/10

Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest in relation to advice provided in this report

Officers providing advice in relation to this report do not have a direct or indirect interest, as provided in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989.

Summary

In accordance with the requirements of Section 127 of the Local Government Act 1989 (the Act), Council has prepared a budget for the financial year ending 30 June 2016.

Copies of the draft budget have been circulated to Councillors, and a copy will be tabled at the meeting. The draft Budget will also be appended to the Minutes of the meeting for identification purposes.

A resolution of Council is now required to give public notice that the budget will be available for inspection, in accordance with Section 129 of the Act.

Submissions on the proposed budget will be invited in accordance with Section 223 of the Act. Submissions will close at 5.00 pm on Friday 8 May 2015. A Special Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 26 May 2015 to receive / hear submissions to the draft Budget.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **That the draft budget annexed to this resolution and initialled by the Mayor for identification be the budget prepared by Council for the purposes of Section 127 of the Local Government Act 1989.**
2. **That the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to give public notice of the preparation of such budget, in accordance with Sections 129 and 223 of the Local Government Act 1989. Submissions will close at 5.00 p.m. on Friday 8 May 2015.**
3. **That Council receive / hear any submission on any proposal (or proposals) contained in such budget, made in accordance with Sections 129 and 223 of the Local Government Act 1989, at a Special Council meeting to be held on Tuesday 26 May 2015, commencing at 5.00 p.m. at the Euroa Community Conference Centre.**

5.7.2 Draft 2015-2016 Strathbogie Shire Council Budget
- Preparation of Budget for Exhibition and Comment (cont.)

4. That Council authorise the Chief Executive Officer to undertake minor editorial changes, if required.
5. That the 2015-2016 Strathbogie Shire Council Budget be adopted at a Special Meeting of Council to be held on Tuesday 9 June 2015, commencing at 5.00 p.m. at the Euroa Community Conference Centre.

21/15 **CRS WEATHERALD/STORER** : *That the Recommendation be adopted, subject to amendments to the draft 2015-2016 Budget.*

CARRIED

Background

In accordance with the requirements of Section 127 of the Local Government Act 1989 (the Act), Council has prepared a budget for the financial year ending 30 June 2016.

In preparing the 2015/2016 Draft Budget, the Council has considered many factors in an effort to continue to balance community expectations and benefits with financial responsibilities. The Council is pleased to place on public display a draft budget that works hard to maintain existing service levels and deliver strong investment in capital works across the municipality. The Council will continue to provide significant funding for renewal works on our ageing and outdated infrastructure, based on the requirements of the Road Management Plan and taking into account financial constraints.

The Council is proposing a 4.0 per cent increase in the total declared rates and charges revenue for 2015/2016, together with the introduction of a green organics waste collection and additional works for tree management. This level allows us to maintain existing service levels, fund a number of significant new initiatives and continue to allocate sufficient funds for the continuing strategic renewal of Council's infrastructure. The proposed rise is a reduction in forecast from the 2012 update to the Rating Strategy.

The 2015/2016 Draft Budget provides for a \$6.77 million capital works program with the following highlights:

- Roads (\$3.56 million) - including resealing, resheeting and rehabilitation.
- Bridges (\$1.05 million)
- Drainage (\$0.34 million)
- Footpaths, Kerb and Channel (\$0.21 million)
- Plant and Machinery (\$0.77 million)

5.7.2 Draft 2015-2016 Strathbogie Shire Council Budget
- Preparation of Budget for Exhibition and Comment (cont.)

The 2015/2016 Budget provides for the following services:

- Oval Improvements (\$0.79 million)
- Nagambie Main Street (\$0.7 million)
- Tree Management (\$0.165 million)
- Urban Tree Management (\$0.174 million)
- Swimming Pools (\$0.394 million)
- Roads and Bridges Maintenance \$1.18 million)
- Parks and Reserves Management \$1.18 million)
- Saleyards (\$0.191 million)
- Waste Management (\$1.92 million)

Alternative Options

Not applicable.

Risk Management

The author of this report considers that there are no significant Risk Management factors relating to the report and recommendation.

Strategic Links – policy implications and relevance to Council Plan

The report is consistent with Council Policies, key strategic documents and the Council Plan.

Best Value / National Competition Policy (NCP / Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (CCA) implications

The report is consistent with Best Value, National Competition Policy and Competition and Consumer Act 2010 requirements.

Financial / Budgetary Implications

The budget is fiscally responsible and is prepared in accordance with the objectives of the Council Plan, Rating Strategy and Long Term Financial Plan.

Economic Implications

The budget will provide long term economic benefit through increased investment in the renewal of community infrastructure assets.

Environmental / Amenity Implications

The budget has a number of initiatives which will provide positive environmental outcomes

Community Implications

The 2015/2016 draft budget has been prepared using the current Council Plan and associated priorities and the long term strategic financial plan as the basis for Council decision making during the budget setting process.

The Council will, as of Wednesday 8 April 2015, place the statutory public notices in local newspapers advising that documents are now available for inspection and that written submission are being sought in accordance with Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989.

Submissions will close at 5.00pm on Friday 8 May 2015.

5.7.2 Draft 2015-2016 Strathbogie Shire Council Budget
- Preparation of Budget for Exhibition and Comment (cont.)

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

The recommendations do not limit any human rights under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Legal / Statutory Implications

The recommendations have no further legal or statutory implications which require the consideration of Council.

Consultation

The budget will be advertised in the community and opportunity provided for submissions in accordance with Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989

Attachments

Nil

5.7.3 Rating Strategy 2015-2019

Author & Department

Director, Corporate and Community / Corporate and Community Directorate

Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest in relation to advice provided in this report

The author of this report and officers/contractors providing advice in relation to this report do not have a direct or indirect interest, as provided in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989.

Summary

Council's Rating Strategy is due for review, the last strategy being developed in 2010. There have been a number of reviews to the existing 2010 strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Chief Executive Officer be authorized to give public notice of the draft Rating Strategy 2015-2019 in accordance with Sections 129 and 223 of the Local Government Act 1989. Submissions will close at 5.00 p.m. on Friday 8 May 2015.
2. That Council receive / hear any written submission on the draft Rating Strategy 2015-2019, made in accordance with Sections 129 and 223 of the Local Government Act 1989, at a Special Council meeting to be held on Tuesday 26 May 2015, commencing at 5.00 p.m. at the Euroa Community Conference Centre.
3. That at a Special Meeting of Council to adopt the Rating Strategy 2015-2019 be held on Tuesday 9 June 2015, commencing at 5.00 p.m. at the Euroa Community Conference Centre.

22/15 *CRS FURLANETTO/WILLIAMS* : That the Recommendation be adopted, subject to amendments to the draft Rating Strategy 2015-2019.

CARRIED

Background

Council has undertaken a review of the Rating Strategy, the objective of which is to provide a fair and equitable basis for determining rates and charges levied on Shire ratepayers.

The Rating Strategy seeks to improve the communities understanding of how Council determines its rates by providing a detailed explanation of rating concepts and the decisions made by Strathbogie Shire Council in determining its rating system.

5.7.3 Rating Strategy 2015-2019 (cont.)

The draft strategy is looking to maintain closure of the renewal gap and maintain current services and levels, whilst maintaining sufficient ongoing working capital. Commonly known as being financially sustainable, Council has created the Long Term Financial Plan to provide assurance that today's decisions do not impose financial burdens on future generations. Accordingly, Council's Rating Strategy, Strategic Resource Plan and Budget are a reflection of these circumstances.

The key features of the proposed rating/charge structure are:

- A 4% rate rise per annum for the term of the strategy;
- Retention of the existing policy of full cost-recovery for all service charges, with the level of service charges indexed annually in line with costs;
- Retention of the Municipal Charge at the present level;
- Retention of the kerbside collection and recycling services;
- Introduce an organics service;
- Introduce a service charge that fully recovers the cost of transfer stations and tree management program; and
- Maintain the current five differential rates in the dollar
 1. Residential – General Differential 100%
 2. Vacant Residential Differential 175%
 3. Commercial/Industrial Differential 120%
 4. Vacant Commercial/Industrial Differential 175%
 5. Farm Differential 85%

Alternative Options

The author and other officers providing advice in relation to this report have considered potential alternative courses of action. Council considers that this is the best option.

Risk Management

The author of this report considers that there are no significant Risk Management factors relating to the report and recommendation.

Strategic Links – policy implications and relevance to Council Plan

The author of this report considers that the report is consistent with Council Policies, key strategic documents and the Council Plan.

Best Value / National Competition Policy (NCP / Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (CCA) implications

The author of this report considers that the report is consistent with Best Value, National Competition Policy and Competition and Consumer Act requirements.

Financial / Budgetary Implications

The Rating Strategy has been developed to provide a fair and equitable basis for determining rates and charges levied on Shire ratepayers. The total rates and charges to be applied has been developed as part of budget deliberations and will be identified in the draft Budget 2015-2016.

5.7.3 Rating Strategy 2015-2019 (cont.)

Economic Implications

The author of this report considers that the recommendation has no significant economic implications for Council or the broader community as the raising of rates is central to Council providing the services currently provided.

Environmental / Amenity Implications

The author of this report considers that the recommendation has no significant environmental or amenity implications for Council or the broader community.

Community Implications

The author of this report has identified community and/or social implications and benefits for the community. Without a strategy to raise and levy rates and charges, the council will not be in a position to provide the services that are currently provided.

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

The author of this report considers that the recommendation does not limit any human rights under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Legal / Statutory Implications

The recommendation has no further legal or statutory implications which require the consideration of Council

Consultation

The Rating Strategy will be advertised in the community and opportunity provided for submissions in accordance with Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989

Attachments

Draft Rating Strategy 2015-2019.

Amended Draft Rating Strategy 2015-2019)

Strathbogie Shire Council

Rating Strategy



RATING STRATEGY

2015 – 2019

... a Fair and Equitable Rating Structure

Prepared: March 2015

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1.0 Background

The Strathbogie Shire Council rating strategy has been developed to maintain a fair and equitable basis for determining rates and charges levied on/charged to residents and ratepayers of the Shire.

The Rating Strategy seeks to improve the communities understanding of how Council determines its rates by providing a detailed explanation of rating concepts and the decisions made by Strathbogie Shire Council in determining its rating system.

The strategy is to be used as a basis for consultation with the community about defining a fair rating system for the Shire. The recently announced Victorian State Government commitment to a fair rates capping system would require more detailed consulting with communities.

The strategy is prepared to reflect the legislative requirements of the Local Government Act 1989.

In considering the objectives of the strategy, Council must have regard for the following.

In common with most small rural local governments, Strathbogie Shire has a fundamental strategic weakness -

- It has a relatively low population and consequent low revenue base;
- It has a large sparsely populated geographic area with consequent extensive infrastructure network maintenance and technical requirements; and
- Community capacity to pay is less than larger municipalities where households have a higher disposable income.

The combination of these circumstances creates a critical problem with regard to the funding of infrastructure renewal, ie how do we maintain the shire's roads, bridges, buildings, drainage assets etc. with a relatively low revenue base?

This problem, commonly referred to as the "infrastructure renewal gap" is symptomatic of the majority of small rural municipalities and has over time resulted in inadequate levels of investment in infrastructure renewal with consequent progressive decline in the standard of rural infrastructure.

In addition to addressing the renewal gap, there is increasing pressure from a community and its capacity to pay. Subsequently, Council is reviewing the types and levels of services that it provides in an endeavour to reduce the rate burden on its community.

Council, individually and in conjunction with other rural municipalities and industry groups has endeavoured over many years, and will continue to endeavour, to enlist the support of the Commonwealth and State governments to assist with fairer funding arrangements.

The State government recently announced that the funding of \$1million per annum for infrastructure renewal which was provided for the past 4 years, has been withdrawn. This will have a significant long term effect on Council's financial position, its renewal gap and will bring forward all reviews on the types and levels of services that Council provides. This funding, together with the Local Government Infrastructure Program provided valuable resources for infrastructure renewal. Similarly, the Federal Government's commitment to Roads to Recovery (R2R) is providing valuable funding for infrastructure renewal.

Consequently, the previous strategy identified the need to arrest the deterioration of Shire infrastructure through increased investment in infrastructure renewal from local resources.

The current strategy is looking to maintain closure of the renewal gap and maintain current services and levels, whilst maintaining sufficient ongoing working capital. Commonly known as being financially sustainable, Council has created the Long Term Financial Plan to provide assurance that today's decisions do not impose financial burdens on future generations. Accordingly, Council's rating strategy, strategic resource plan and budget are a reflection of these circumstances.

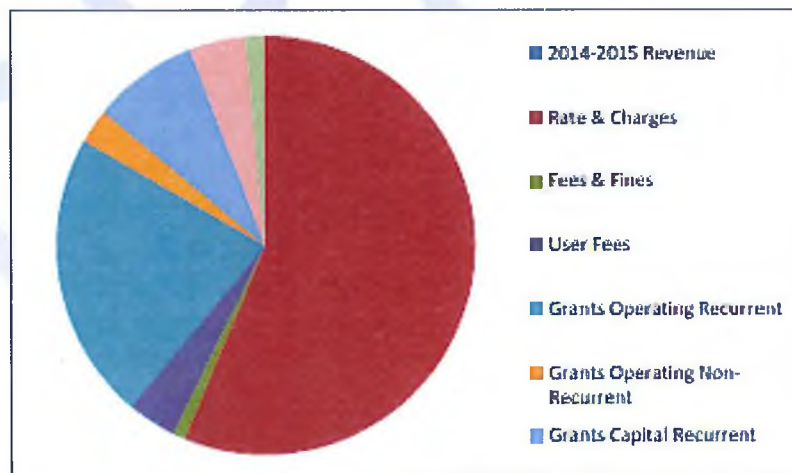
Section 10.0 "Proposed Rates Structure" provides further supporting information and details of the rating structure proposed to maintain the levels of investment required.

1.1 What are rates?

Rates are collected by Councils to fund the broad range of services that they provide to their communities. All Councils must determine the fairest and most equitable rating system for their individual municipalities from within the parameters established in the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act).

Rates and Charges (predominantly rates) are the primary source of income for local government. Other revenue sources that local governments rely upon include grants from Federal and State Governments, fees, fines and charges, income from the sale of assets and interest earned.

The diagram below depicts revenue for Strathbogie Shire Council, of the \$28.7 million in total revenue for 2014-2015 - \$16.2 million is sourced from rates.



Rates are levied on each property owner based on the value of their property.

Council rates are the contribution that each ratepayer makes towards services provided by Council. Some Council services are statutory which means they are required by a law, and others are based on the needs and aspirations of the community.

Some of the services which Council provides include:

- Land use planning, development and building control and assessment;
- Environmental health (food and public health, noise and nuisance inspection);
- Fire prevention (building inspection / fire prevention);
- Dog and cat management and control. Traffic and parking regulations;
- Community leadership and advocacy / community development programmes;
- Sporting and leisure centres including swimming pools and community centres;
- Festivals, events, arts spaces and libraries;
- Parks, gardens, reserves and playgrounds;
- Street lighting;
- Cycling tracks, road and footpath construction and maintenance;
- Skate parks, sporting and recreation ovals, courts and facilities
- Stormwater and drainage management;
- Family services including maternal and child health and immunization;
- Waste and recycling collection and disposal and water conservation; and
- Roads, bridges and drainage.

1.2 Sound Financial Management and its relationship to the Rating Strategy

Council is committed to continually review its expenditure base and is determined to make savings where they can be made.

The *Act* (section 136) provides four principles of sound financial management for Councils. All Councils are required to implement these principles and establish budgeting and reporting frameworks that are consistent with the following principles:

1. Manage financial risks prudently, having regard to economic circumstances;
2. Pursue spending and rating policies that are consistent with a reasonable degree of stability in the level of the rate burden;
3. Ensure that decisions and actions have regard to financial effects on future generations; and
4. Ensure full, accurate and timely disclosure of financial information relating to the Council.

Developing a rating strategy requires Council to strike a balance between competing priorities for Council services and infrastructure and to come up with a mixture of rates and charges (the Rating System) that provides the revenue needed for ongoing financial sustainability.

1.3 Strathbogie Shire Council's Rating System

The key platforms that currently form the basis of the current approach to rating at Council include:

- That rates will continue to be based principally on an ad-valorem basis (i.e. based on the valuation of the various properties) using the CIV method of calculation;
- That Council will continue to apply a municipal charge to all rated properties and apply service charges to fully recover the cost of the collection and disposal of garbage, recyclables, organics and transfer stations and tree management program; and
- That Council will continue to apply differential rating against various property classes that assists to achieve equality across the community. (The use of differential rates enables Council to maintain a fair and equitable rate contribution by property type).

Section	STRATHBOGIE SHIRE COUNCIL – RATING SYSTEM
Section 2 Property Valuation	Council applies Capital Improved Valuation (CIV) as the valuation methodology to levy Council rates. Council reviews the impacts of revaluations as they occur.
Section 9 Rating Differentials /Rate Type	Council applies differential rating as its rating system. Council considers that each differential rate contributes to the equitable and efficient carrying out of Council functions.
Section 9 What differential rates should be applied?	<p>That Council applies differential rates for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residential – General 2. Vacant Residential 3. Farm 4. Commercial/Industrial 5. Vacant Commercial/Industrial
Section 9 Service Rates and Charges	The service charges applied by Council are a Waste Collection Charge for the collection and disposal of household waste, including recyclables, litter bins collections and organic waste for developed properties only. A service charge applies to cover the full cost of transfer stations and a tree management program - this applies to all rateable properties.
Section 9 Municipal Charge	Council applies a Municipal charge in accordance with legislation.
Section 12 Rate Payment Date Options	<p>Council will allow a lump sum payment option therefore all rates must be paid via instalments with the due dates for payment each financial year as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Instalment due – 30 September • 2nd instalment due – 30 November • 3rd Instalment due – 28 February • 4th Instalment due – 31 May <p>or in total by 15 February.</p> <p>Council also allows ratepayers to pay property rates via payment arrangements, by any number of instalments, provided the full amount of rates and charges are paid by 31 May each year.</p>
Section 12 Hardship Policy	Council recognises there are cases of genuine financial hardship and has a Hardship Policy which establishes the guidelines for assessment based on fairness, compassion, confidentiality and compliance with statutory requirements.

1.4 Rates & Charges

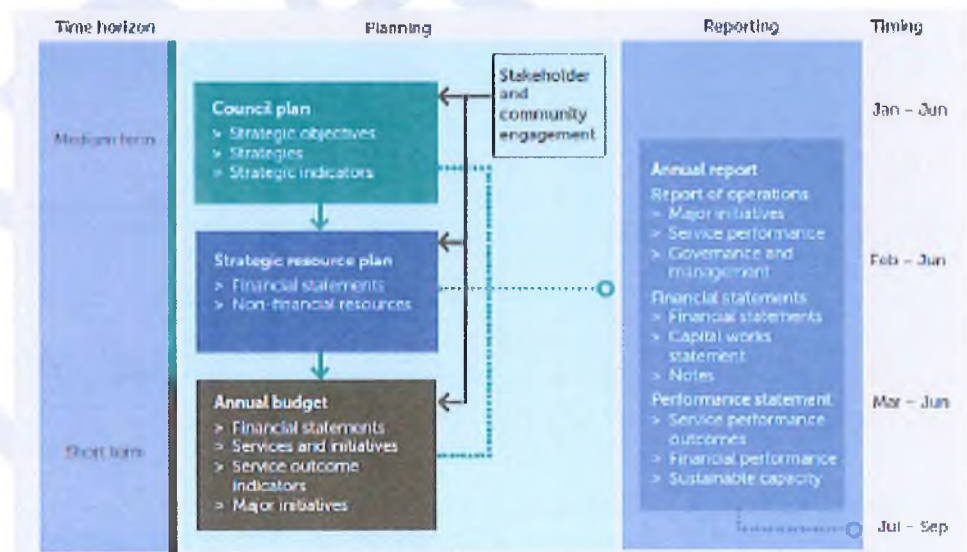
In order for Council to determine its revenue building capacity to meet current and future activities while "pursuing spending and rating policies that are consistent with a reasonable degree of stability in the level of the rate burden rates and charges" Council has developed a Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) which assesses Council's current and future objectives with a view to maintaining service levels and continuing a strong capital expenditure programme.

In doing so, Council has projected the required rate increases for the period 2015-2024.

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%

1.5 Planning and accountability framework

The Strategic Resource Plan, included in the Council Plan, summarises the financial and non-financial impacts of the objectives and strategies and determines the sustainability of these objectives and strategies. The Annual Budget is then framed within the Strategic Resource Plan, taking into account the services and initiatives included in the Annual Budget which contribute to achieving the strategic objectives specified in the Council Plan. The diagram below depicts the planning and accountability framework that applies to local government in Victoria.



The timing of each component of the planning framework is critical to the successful achievement of the planned outcomes. The Council Plan, including the Strategic Resource Plan, is required to be completed by 30 June following a general election and is reviewed each year in advance of the commencement of the Annual Budget process.

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2.0 What is a Rating Strategy?

A rating strategy is the method by which Council systematically considers factors of importance that informs its decisions about the rating system. The rating system determines how Council will raise money from properties within the municipality. It does not influence the total amount of money to be raised, only the share of revenue contributed by each property. The rating system comprises of the valuation base for each property and the actual rating instruments allowed under The Act to calculate the property owners' liability for rates.

The Act requires that the rating system provides a "reasonable degree of stability in the level of the rates burden", it must also meet the requirements of Part 8 of The Act - Rates and Charges on Rateable Land.

The Rating Strategy must also link with other Council strategies and key planning documents.

This strategy details the framework which will be used by Strathbogie Shire Council in determining a fair and equitable distribution of rates and charges. The rating framework is set out within The Act and determines a Council's ability to develop a rating system. The framework provides sufficient flexibility for a Council to determine its rating system to best suit its requirements within the context of a public finance methodology, which includes principles of equity, benefit, efficiency and community resource allocation.

The following recommendations are the basis for the Rating Strategy:

- Apply Capital Improved Value as the valuation methodology to levy Council rates.
- Apply five (5) differential rates in the dollar; (Residential - General, Vacant Residential, Commercial/Industrial, Vacant Commercial/Industrial, Farm).
- Review the rating structure following each biennial valuation.
- Charge a municipal charge.
- Apply a kerbside collection and recycling services.
- Introduce an organics service.
- Apply a service charge for transfer stations and tree management program.
- Apply the mandatory rate instalment payment options.
- Allow direct debit payments from cheque or savings accounts.
- Consider waivers in accordance with the hardship policy.

2.1 Revenue-Side

This strategy takes account of known rates and charges variables effecting potential rating/revenue futures in the Shire. The strategy addresses revenue-side issues only as they relate to rates and charges. It is based on assumed expenditure (operating and capital) forecasts as set out in Council's Strategic Resource Plan and Long Term Financial Plan.

This strategy does not address the potential for Council to increase other revenue sources such as user fees and charges, government grants and developer contributions. Nor does it explore any potential for new income sources to offset the net rate/charge requirement such as from new business undertakings/enterprises. The strategy assumes a given total rate and charge requirement.

2.2 *CIV Rating Basis*

The Shire raises rates and charges under The Act (s.157(1)). It strikes rates based on the Capital Improved Value (CIV) of rateable property in the Shire. The CIV represents the value of a property including land and all constructed and other improvements on the land.

Under The Act, Council may also raise revenue from a range of flat charges and has the power to levy differential rates on different classes of property. The basis of and assumptions that apply to these are addressed in this Strategy.

3.0 Defining Success - Fairness & Equity

The rating mechanism is simply the method by which the cost of providing Council services and facilities is distributed across the Shire's property base. Council's goal is to strike a mix of rates and charges that will distribute these costs as fairly as possible across all ratepayer groups.

Wealth tax principle. Wealth can be defined as the total value reflected in property and investments and income directed to day-to-day living. Local government is limited to taxing one component of wealth – real property. Council rates tax the stored "wealth" or unrealised capital gains inherent in land and buildings. The "wealth tax" principle implies that the rates paid are dependent upon the value of a ratepayer's real property and have no correlation to the individual ratepayer's consumption of services or the perceived benefits derived by individual ratepayers from the expenditures funded from rates.

In terms of equity, section 3C (2) (f) of *The Act* – to ensure the equitable imposition of rates and charges is of significance in developing this strategy. Equity is a subjective concept that is difficult to define – especially because it has a number of elements. What is eminently fair to one person may be totally unfair to another. Other considerations are horizontal and vertical equity. Horizontal equity means that those in the same position (e.g. with the same property value) should be treated the same. Vertical equity in respect to property taxation means that higher property values should incur higher levels of tax.

Efficiency - meaning that in a technical sense the tax should not unduly interfere with the efficient operation of the economy. For Local Government the tax should be consistent with the major policy objectives of Council.

Simplicity - for both administrative ease (and therefore lower cost) and to ensure that the tax is understood by taxpayers. The latter ensures that the tax system is transparent and capable of being questioned and challenged by ratepayers.

In considering what rating approaches are equitable Council must deal with all facets of the rating structure, including valuation, budgetary requirements, differential rating, government taxation and concessions, collection and hardship considerations.

An issue often raised is that the rates levied have no correlation with the services consumed. This issue is based on the benefit principle (the opposite of the wealth tax principle). The application of the benefit principle is difficult in practice because of the complexity and, in some cases, impossibility, of measuring the relative levels of access and consumption across the full range of council services. A simplistic determination of rates based on where services are located is also short sighted because it ignores issues such as:

- Some services are not location specific;
- Access is not synonymous with consumption;
- Residents can travel or use technology to access some services; and
- Service levels provided in different locations within the municipality have different costs. For example, the actual cost of providing the same service may be higher for Marraweeny than for a property in the middle of Euroa.

In adopting a differential rating structure for ad valorem taxes, Council considers that they will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of its functions – *The Act* section 161(1) (b).

The outcomes being sought from Council's rating structure include:

- A system which can be demonstrated to be 'fair and equitable';
- A system which meets Council's revenue requirements (based on the Strategic Resource Plan and Long Term Financial plan).
- A system which provides stability in terms of the proportional revenue contribution by the various property category segments.

3.1 *Property Value Fluctuations*

Section 4.0 of this report discusses the various tools which Council can use to effect the distribution of the rates burden to achieve a fair and equitable outcome.

The key rating determinants are, however, the Capital Improved Value of each property and the rate in the dollar of CIV applied by Council.

Property value is a factor outside Council's control. Property values are determined (for local government rating purposes) by independent valuations undertaken every 2 years. Valuations are determined through a market-based statistical assessment of property values for a range of property types and geographic areas. Property value changes can be volatile and reflect wider prevailing economic conditions that are also beyond Council's control. A municipal revaluation is currently being undertaken and will have effect from 1 January 2016.

As property values do not increase or decrease uniformly across the various geographic areas and property types, shifts in the level of rates burden experienced by individual ratepayers, will vary.

Recognising and communicating the potential impacts of property value volatility is an important aspect of an effective rating strategy. Increased property value is often the factor most responsible for significant rating increases and is probably the factor which is least well understood by the community. The positive aspect of this equation, which is often not sufficiently acknowledged, is that such a valuation increase is a real and realisable increase in the capital asset of the effected ratepayer.

It is a widely held truth that when it comes to municipal rating, ratepayers object more to the sudden and sharp percentage shifts in the rates they pay, than to the actual amount of rates they pay. Expectations tend to be built on the status quo and sudden changes to relative rate shares inevitably (and understandably) are met with community concern. Clear and transparent communication is a key factor in the management of any revaluation process.

The underlying assumption of the local government rating mechanism is that property values, in the long term, represent an individual's capacity to pay. Council understands that this is often not the case; however it is constrained by the methodology determined by The Act.

4.0 The Rating/Charge 'Levers' Available to Council

As indicated, Council cannot influence the property values which are the key determinant in rate burden distribution. There are however 3 basic revenue-side 'tools' or 'levers' available to Council which can be used to assist the achievement of fair and equitable rating outcomes.

- Use of differential rates - differential rates can legally be levied (up to a differential ratio of 4:1 from the highest to the lowest differential) for property type/use, location or in combination.
- The level of direct service charges (garbage charge, recycling charge, organics charge and a service charge to recover transfer station costs and tree management program). Council determines the level of these charges on a cost – recovery basis.
- The amount of the municipal charge levied on assessments (irrespective of valuation); and

4.1 Differential Rates

Differential rates can only be applied if the CIV valuation system is used (which Strathbogie Shire does). It is also necessary to be able to demonstrate that any proposed differential rates are consistent with the principles of fairness and equity.

Where Council decides to apply differential rates it should consider three equity principles:

- the benefit or user pays principle – some groups have more access to, make more use of and benefit more from specific council services
- the capacity to pay principle – some ratepayers have greater ability to pay rates than do others with similarly valued properties
- the incentive or encouragement principle – some ratepayers may be doing more towards achieving council goals than others in areas such as environmental or heritage protection.

Another consideration is delivering an efficient, simple and transparent system of rates and charges. A simple rating system is more transparent, meaning that the underlying purpose and principles behind it are clearer – who is liable for a particular rate and how the liability is calculated.

4.2 Service Charges

The level of service charges is ultimately a policy matter for Council. Council's current policy for service charges is to align the level of charges for service to that required to achieve full cost recovery. This policy is consistent with mainstream local government practice for non-rate charges.

Such a policy enables full transparency for the charges levied. Residents/ratepayers as a general rule would expect that a charge levied for a particular service would be in some way aligned to the costs of that service.

In policy terms, there are several arguments that need to be considered in relation to the use of service charges to raise revenue (as opposed to levying higher rates in the dollar):

- Service charges shift the cost burden from ratepayers generally to those who actually use the service, thereby reducing the overall amount needed to be raised through rates; and
- Service charges (if set at levels that equate with full service cost recovery) eliminate cross-subsidies from the general ratepayer populace to specific service users.

4.3 *Municipal Charge - General Policy*

Under The Act, Councils are able to levy a uniform Municipal Charge. The charge is generally designed to be a base charge reflecting a proportion of base/administrative costs incurred by Council. The level of municipal charge cannot exceed 20% of the total rates and municipal charges of Council.

Strathbogie Shire currently levies a municipal charge of \$266 p.a. The revenue raised from the municipal charge currently equates to 11.6% of total rates and charges.

The main impact of the municipal charge (and service charges) is that they create a 'floor' resource pool that is independent of property value. This means that the use of flat charges generally flattens the rate and charge profile. This advantages higher value properties and disadvantages lower value properties.

Council may vary the level of the municipal charge from time to time if it is considered appropriate to achieve a more equitable rating outcome.

This 2015/2016 update of the Rating Strategy proposes the retention of the Municipal Charge at the current level (\$266) until such time as the revenue raised by municipal charge equates to 10% of total rates and charges (2017/18)

The effect of maintaining the current level of municipal charge will be a modest but gradual easing of the rate burden on lower valued properties.

5.0 Financial Sustainability and Capacity to Pay

In developing this strategy Council has reviewed the relative sustainable capacity of council and the community. The components of this include:

- Capacity to pay
- Impact of inherent geographic and demographic factors on costs
- Assistance received from recurrent government grants

5.1 Capacity to Pay

There are two (2) methods consistently proposed to assess the capacity of the community to pay:

1. Property valuations (using capital improved valuation or CIV)
2. Rates Affordability

"The higher the aggregate income of a community, the higher the potential for its local government to raise revenue" (Australian Government Productivity Commission).

For the purposes of assessing the community's capacity, net disposable community income has been utilised as it provides another method of assessing the capacity to contribute. Community income comprises of:

- Individual disposable income (after tax & mortgage payments)
- Commonwealth pensions & benefits
- Company income after tax
- Partnership/trust income distributed to individuals & companies

Council's accesses this community income by raising:

- rates & charges
- fees, fines & user charges

5.2 Impact of inherent geographic and demographic factors on costs

There are six (6) "general" independent variables used in modeling the impact of geographic and demographic factors on the costs of operating Council.

1. Population size
2. Population density
3. Concentration of service activity (CSA)
4. Average traffic volumes (ATV)
5. Dispersion of population into townships & rural areas
6. Remoteness of the municipality from major population centres

There are four (4) "cost" specific variables used in modeling the impact of geographic and demographic factors on the costs of operating Council.

1. Aged population
2. Infant population
3. Bridges
4. Roads

5.3 Assistance received from recurrent government grants

Council receives a significant portion of its income from various, commonwealth and state grants. These grants are either tied grants (for specific services) or untied grants (VGC) and comprise 37% of council recurrent revenue. Such grants:

- Provide reliable & consistent source of recurrent income (although diminishing when compared to costs)
- Have a direct impact on sustainable capacity, reducing net operating cost per head

5.4 Sustainable Capacity – Council and Community

Sustainable capacity is measured annually by the Victorian Auditor General's Office. The results of the 2013/2014 year were presented to parliament and show that Strathbogie has a low risk of being financially unsustainable. What it does not measure is the Rates Affordability of the community and its capacity to pay.

The 2014 VAGO report shows that the ability of ratepayers in Strathbogie to pay their rates, is less than for the Small Shire average. A total of 4.8% of disposable household income is spent in Strathbogie on rates, compared to only 3.7% of household disposable income for other Small Shires. Council is aware of community concerns in relation to the level of rates and has developed a Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) to reflect lower rate rises to address these community concerns and their capacity to pay.

The effect of rating capping proposed to be introduced in 2016/2017 is another factor that Council has been considering and will have the effect of reduced rate rises for the community which should enhance its ability to pay.

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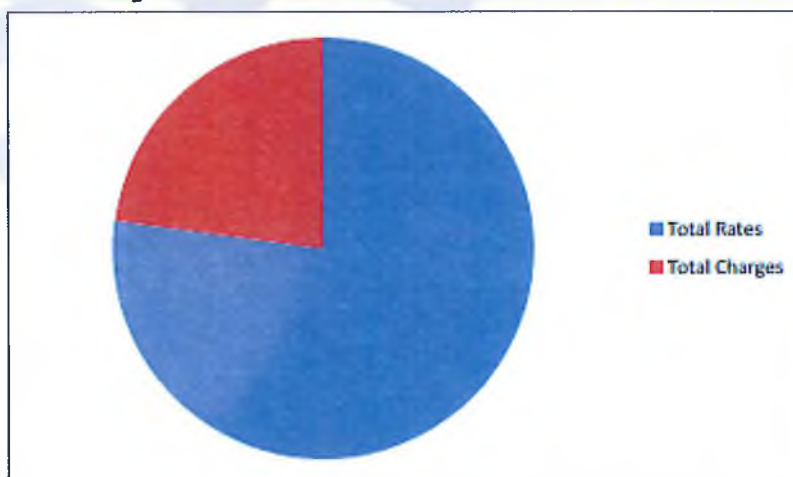
6.0 Strathbogie Shire – Current Rates/Charges Profile

Strathbogie Shire currently levies the following rates and charges (2014/2015):

Rate/Charge:	c/\$	No. of Assess.	\$ Revenue 2014/15
Residential Rate	0.5106248	4,307	\$5,585,141
Vacant Residential Rate	0.8035934	393	\$513,987
Commercial/Industrial Rate	0.6127488	280	\$506,992
Vacant Commercial Industrial Rate	1.0723121	7	\$8,289
Farm Rate *	0.4340311	2,195	\$5,785,730
TOTAL RATES:		7,182	\$12,470,140
Charges:	c/\$	No.	\$ Revenue 2014/15
Recycle Charge	\$168	3,577	\$600,864
Garbage Charge - 120 Litre	\$339	3,886	\$1,317,529
Garbage Charge – 240 Litre	\$679	68	\$47,310
Municipal Charge	\$266	6,232	\$1,735,121
TOTAL CHARGES:			\$3,700,824
TOTAL RATES & CHARGES:			\$16,170,964

(*Less RL Rebates where applicable)

The following chart shows the current distribution of the Shire's total rates and charges:



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Profile Summary:

The above profile charts show:

- Service and municipal charges generate 23% of total rates and charges revenue. Rates generate 77% of total rates and charges.
- The major source of rates and charges income is the Residential sector (49%) followed by the Farm sector (46%);
Note: The chart has been amended to now reflect Farm zoned properties of less than 40 hectares as Residential.
- The weighting (in an overall context) of the Commercial/Industrial rate base is small (5%). This is concentrated in the Nagambie and Euroa townships.

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7.0 Differential Rating

The CIV rating method allows differential rating (s.157(1) of the Act). That means Councils can strike different rates in the dollar for different property classes. This effectively attributes a greater or lesser percentage of the total cost burden of local government services onto different classes of ratepayers according to the levels of differentials applied. Under The Act, the highest differential cannot be more than 4 times the lowest differential. There is no limit to the number of differentials that may be applied.

Any differentials applied must be demonstrably fair and equitable. Any rates struck by Council may be legally challenged. Ministerial Guidelines for Differential Rating were released 26 April, 2013 and define what types of land are considered to be appropriate for differential rates, what types of land needs to be carefully considered for differential rates and land that would be considered not appropriate to declare differential rates. Using the current differential rates, the distribution of the rates burden is clearly defined and easily applied. Equity is defined in s.3.

A general observation of other local government experience indicates that successful outcomes in the determination of fair differential rates have been arrived at only with high levels of consultation with community and interest groups. Whilst some attempts have been made to ascribe differential rates based on levels of deemed benefit derived, these have generally been unsuccessful. This is due to the very subjective nature of determining levels of benefit (directly and indirectly) from Council services, the related arguments such as the community service obligations of businesses and the balance between benefit derived and capacity to pay.

Arguments regarding benefit derived become entwined with related philosophical issues such as the equity of progressive taxation regimes, the validity of capacity to pay as a criteria (and property values as a fair representation of capacity to pay) and the tax deductibility of local government rates available to businesses.

The following broad principles ought to be applied to the use of differential rates:

- Differential rates should be levied on the basis of fairness and equity;
- Differential rates should not be used merely as a means of negating the impacts of shifts in the rating base (property market valuations);
- Councils should attempt, as far a possible, to achieve efficiency, transparency and stability in any differential rates applied.

8.0 Pensioners Rate Remission

Pensioners in Victoria may apply for the State Government Pensioner Rates Remission. At present, pensioners are entitled to a rates remission of 50% of their rates bill up to a maximum of \$208 per annum. The Fire Services Property Levy has a government rebate of up to \$50.

Clearly, the remission payable to pensioners under Pensioner Rates Remission Scheme is vastly less than the average residential rates bill. As such, the scheme could be said to, at best, offer only a modest relief to the financial impost of local government rates and charges.

The Pensioner Rates Remission Scheme is cost-neutral in the context of the Shire's rating strategy. Council presently provides no additional relief to pensioners over and above the State-funded remission scheme.

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9.0 Proposed Rates Structure

9.1 *Expenditure Assumptions and Infrastructure Investment Needs*

As indicated, the focus of this strategy is on the fair and equitable distribution of the rating burden across the wider community. The expenditure assumptions upon which future rating scenarios have been developed are drawn from Council's Strategic Resource Plan and Long Term Financial Plan.

Under the previous Council's long-term strategic planning, significant increases in Council expenditure were identified as being necessary to maintain an effective program of infrastructure renewal. The level is expected to be maintained to meet the infrastructure renewal gap.

The key drivers of the need for additional resources are:

- The need for significantly increased investment in renewal of community facilities and public infrastructure to arrest the long-term decline in the condition of these crucial community assets; and
- Normal annual increases in the costs associated with local government service provision.

The Local Government Cost Index published by the Municipal Association of Victoria identifies 4% per annum as the cost indexation factor that should be applied for base budgeting purposes by councils.

The need for increased expenditure on renewal of community infrastructure and facilities is referred to as the 'infrastructure investment gap'. It is represented by what has been a growing gap between the amount of money that Council spends on the renewal of its existing community infrastructure (ie; buildings, facilities, parks, roads, footpaths and drainage etc.) and the amount by which the value of these critical assets decreases each year.

It also needs to be understood that the infrastructure investment gap refers to renewal only and does not include allowance for investing in new assets, facilities and infrastructure for our communities.

9.2 Rates Structure

Council introduced in 2010/11 a 2 tiered rating and revenue structure over 5 years to address infrastructure issues. The components were:

- Normal annual rate increases:
 - these would be set at levels necessary to meet Council recurrent costs indexed in line with inflation; and
- An 'Infrastructure Catch-up levy':
 - this levy was a surcharge on Council rates and municipal charges specifically to address the infrastructure and asset renewal backlog.

The introduction of the 2011/2015 Rating Strategy was as a result of an identified renewal gap of approximately \$9M in 2009. The gap was expected to increase if that rating strategy was not introduced. The strategy was introduced with the result that the gap renewal expenditure would exceed depreciation in 2016/2017, with the gap closing in 2021/2022. The closing of the gap is still predicted to be in 2021/2022. This strategy is now replaced with an across the board 4% rate increase and changes to service charges.

Strathbogie's Shire Council's rate increases have reduced in comparison to the LTFP. The current LTFP is now based on 4% rate increases plus investment growth as a result of the 2011/2015 strategy which had provided Strathbogie with the ability to address the gap. This has also provided the basis for the consistent rate rises over the term of the LTFP and should help Council to address rate capping that is being introduced from 2016/2017 by the current State Government.

The key features of the proposed rating/charge structure, as amended, are:

- Rates increases of 4 % a year;
- Retention of the existing policy of full cost recovery for all service charges, with the level of service charges indexed annually in line with costs;
- Introduces an organics collection;
- Introduces a service charges to fully recover the cost of the collection and disposal of garbage, recyclables and organics. There is also a service charge to be assessed on all assessments that contributes to the recovery of costs required to operate transfer stations and tree management program and ;
- Retention of the level of municipal charge at the 2014/15 level (\$266) until the total amount raised by municipal charges comprises 10% of total rates and municipal charges. It is anticipated that this level will be achieved by 2017/18.

9.3 Proposed Differential Rates

The differential rates shown will be applied to the items of expenditure described in the annual budget. The level of the rates for each land category is considered to provide for an appropriate contribution to Council's budgeted expenditure, having regard to the characteristics of the land.

- General/Residential Rate (Base) 100%
- Vacant Residential Land Rate 175%
- Commercial/Industrial Rate 120%

- Vacant Commercial/Industrial Land Rate 175%
- Rural Farm Rate 85%

9.4 Proposed Commercial/Industrial Differential Rate

A differential rate will be applied to land used for commercial or industrial use.

Council currently has a 120% differential rate on commercial/industrial properties – this is proposed to be retained at this level. Commercial and industrial differential rates are commonly applied in local governments throughout Victoria and Australia. Indeed, Council has previously applied a higher differential rate for commercial and industrial properties.

Land classed as commercial/industrial is identified as that land which is categorised within the rating system as having a predominantly commercial or industrial use. Where a commercial enterprise is a secondary use to the predominate farm use, then land in this case will be classed as farm use.

The characteristics of the land classed as commercial/industrial are that it is used for the purposes of retail, wholesale, tourism activities, accommodation, professional or other commercial services or for manufacturing, maintenance, storage and distribution of goods or other industrial services.

Council considers that the introduction of a commercial/Industrial differential is consistent with the principles of fairness and equity.

The objectives, definitions, identification and characteristics of the various differential rates are provided in Section 12 of this strategy.

9.5 Proposed Farm Differential

A differential rate will be applied to land used for farming purposes.

Council currently has a 85% differential rate on farm properties above 40 hectares. The farm differential rate is available to all farm properties of 40 Hectares or greater and to farm properties of less than 40 Hectares which can meet criteria which establish them as bona fide farming activities.

Land classed as farm is identified as that land which is situated within the farming zone, is not less than 40 hectares in area and is not classified as having a commercial or industrial use. Land classified as having a commercial or industrial use will be rated accordingly. Land situated within the farming zone of less than 40 hectares may be considered for the farm differential rate, subject to satisfying Council's criteria for recognition as a bone fide farming activity. Typically such consideration would apply to intensive farming pursuits.

The characteristics of the land classed as farm are that it is used to;

- propagate, cultivate or harvest plants, including cereals, flowers, fruit, seed, trees, turf, and vegetables; or keep, breed, board, or train animals, including livestock, and birds; or propagate, cultivate, rear, or harvest living resources of the sea or inland waters.

Farming properties of less than 40 Hectares, which do not satisfy farm rate criteria, are rated at the general rate.

The objectives, definitions, identification and characteristics of the various differential rates are provided in Section 12 of this strategy.

9.6 Proposed Vacant Residential Land Differential

A differential will be applied to land which is classed as vacant residential land.

Council currently has a 175% differential rate on vacant residential land properties – this is proposed to be retained at this level. Vacant residential land differential rates are commonly applied in local governments throughout Victoria and Australia.

The differential is applied to encourage the development of vacant residential land for the general benefit of the community. Land classed as vacant residential is identified as that land which is categorised within the rating system as having a residential use and having improvements valued at not greater than \$20,000. Vacant residential land which is considered contiguous with occupied residential land will be rated as residential. The characteristics of the land classed as vacant residential are that it is located within a residential (or township or similar) zone, is permitted for residential development and has improvements of not greater than \$20,000.

Council considers that the introduction of a vacant residential land differential is consistent with the principles of fairness and equity.

The objectives, definitions, identification and characteristics of the various differential rates are provided in Section 12 of this strategy.

9.7 Proposed Vacant Commercial/Industrial Land Differential

A differential will be applied to land which is classed as vacant commercial or industrial land.

Council currently has a 175% differential rate on vacant commercial/industrial land properties – this is proposed to be retained at this level. Vacant commercial/industrial land differential rates are commonly applied in local governments throughout Victoria and Australia.

Land classed as vacant commercial/industrial is identified as that land which is categorised within the rating system as having a commercial or industrial use and having improvements valued at not greater than \$20,000. Vacant commercial/industrial land which is considered contiguous with occupied commercial/industrial land will be rated as vacant commercial/industrial. The characteristics of the land classed as vacant commercial/industrial are that it is located within a commercial or industrial zone, is permitted for commercial or industrial development and has improvements of not greater than \$20,000.

Council considers that the introduction of a vacant commercial/industrial land differential is consistent with the principles of fairness and equity.

The objectives, definitions, identification and characteristics of the various differential rates are provided in Section 12 of this strategy.

9.8 Proposed Municipal Charge

The Municipal Charge is applied to each rateable property to allow Council to recover part of the administrative cost in operating Council.

The Act is not definitive on what comprises administrative costs and does not require Council to specify what is covered by the charge, however, administrative programmes such as finance, asset management, information systems, corporate records, human resources and governance are supported by this income. Legislation requires that this amount cannot exceed 20% of total rates raised (including rates, municipal charge and environmental charges). The Strathbogie Shire Council has set the municipal charge at 10.7% of total rates and charges. Council will reduce the Municipal Charge to 10%.

Council raised \$1.74 million of municipal charge income at a rate of \$266 per rateable property in 2014-2015.

9.9 Service Charges

The LGA allows Council to declare a service rate or an annual service charge.

This charge can be applied on, or a combination of, any of the following services:

- Provision of a water supply
- Collection and disposal of refuse
- Provision of sewerage services
- Any other prescribed service

This service rate or service charge may be declared on the basis of any criteria specified by the Council in the rate or charge. The service charges applied by Council are a Waste Collection Charge for the collection and disposal of household waste, including recyclables and organics, together with an environmental levy to cover waste management and tree maintenance.

Details of service charges are as follows:

9.10 Garbage Charge

All developed land used primarily for residential, commercial or other purposes that are serviced by the weekly or fortnightly waste collection service will incur a Garbage Collection Charge for the provision of a domestic garbage bin. This charge will also be applied to all non-rateable properties that utilise the garbage collection service.

9.11 Recycling Charge

All developed land used primarily for residential, commercial or other purposes that are serviced by the weekly or fortnightly waste collection service will incur a Recycling Charge for the provision of a recycling bin. This charge will also be applied to all non-rateable properties that utilise the recycling collection service.

9.12 Organic Waste Charge

All developed land used primarily for residential, commercial or other purposes that are serviced by the weekly or fortnightly waste collection service will incur a Organic Waste Charge for the provision of an organic waste bin. This charge will also be applied to all non-rateable properties that utilise the organic waste collection service.

9.13 Service Charge

All rateable properties will be levied a service charge to offset the net cost of (a) the garbage, recycling, organic and transfer station costs of Council and (b) to provide for a specific tree maintenance program that addresses Councils requirement to manage tree maintenance on roadsides.

9.14 Proposed Rates/Charges Profile

Rate/Charge:	c/\$	No. of Assess.	\$ Revenue 2015/16
Residential Rate	0.005334707	4,346	\$5,893,206
Vacant Residential Rate	0.009335737	403	\$566,293
Commercial/Industrial Rate	0.008401848	284	\$634,004
Vacant Commercial Industrial Rate	0.009335737	7	\$6,660
Farm Rate *	0.004534501	2,202	\$6,099,690
TOTAL RATES:		7,242	\$13,201,852
Charges:	c/\$	No.	\$ Revenue 2015/16
Recycle Charge	\$89	3,638	\$323,819
Garbage Charge - 120 Litre	\$151	3,948	\$596,151
Garbage Charge -- 240 Litre	\$302	69	\$21,046
Municipal Charge	\$266	6,533	\$1,737,778
Organics Charge	\$179	3,030	\$542,370
Transfer Station & Tree Management Program	\$126	6,591	\$830,426
TOTAL CHARGES:			\$4,051,590
TOTAL RATES & CHARGES:			\$17,253,442

10.0 Special Rates & Charges

Section 163 of *The Act* provides that Councils may declare a special rate or charge or combination of both if Council considers that such action will provide a special benefit to the persons required to pay the rate or charge.

This is a commonly used rating mechanism in local government and is typically used for projects such as footpath, kerb and channel and drainage construction works where the benefit is relatively easy to identify and quantify.

Council will investigate opportunities for the consideration of such schemes. Of particular interest is the potential to utilise special rate or charge schemes for stormwater management works.

The implementation of such schemes would only proceed subject to extensive community consultation.

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11.0 Differential Rates – Objectives and Characteristics

Section 161 of The Act provides that a Council may raise any general rates by the application of a differential rate if -

- (a) it uses the capital improved value system of valuing land; and
- (b) it considers that the differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of its functions

Section 161 further requires that the objectives of the differential rate and characteristics of the land which are the criteria for declaring the rate be specified.

11.1 Commercial/Industrial Differential Rate

A differential rate will be applied to land used for commercial or industrial purposes. The reasons for the application of a commercial/industrial differential rate are to ensure the equitable and efficient carrying out of Council's functions and to ensure the appropriate distribution of costs associated with the delivery of services which specifically benefit commercial/industrial properties.

Services specifically benefiting commercial/industrial properties include - street cleaning, streetscape infrastructure maintenance, waste management, environmental health, compliance - particularly car parking and animal control, street tree management and improvements to commercial and industrial areas.

The appropriate level for the commercial/industrial differential rate is considered to be 120% of the general rate.

Land classed as commercial/industrial is identified as that land which is categorised within the rating system as having a commercial or industrial use.

The characteristics of the land classed as commercial/industrial are that it is used for the purposes of retail, wholesale, tourism activities, accommodation, professional or other commercial services or for manufacturing, maintenance, storage and distribution of goods or other industrial services.

11.2 Farm Differential Rate

A differential rate will be applied to land used for farming purposes.

The reason for the application of a farm differential rate is to ensure the equitable and efficient carrying out of Council's functions.

Specifically, reasons include –

- Acknowledgement that land invested in farming is intrinsic to the activity, distinguishing it from land upon which an activity is based.
- Acknowledgement that farming viability generally requires broadacre investment and recognition of the consequent adverse rating impacts of that investment.
- Acknowledgement that farmers are key contributors to the successful management of the rural environment and that the general community derives benefit from that management.

- Recognition of the importance of farming as a local economic generator with flow on impacts for local business and employment.
- The importance of maintaining the Shire's rural amenity for the enjoyment of residents and the attraction of tourists.
- The application of a farm differential is consistent with the general practice of rural local governments.
- National economic importance of encouraging investment in primary industry.

The appropriate level for the farm differential rate is considered to be 85% of the general rate.

Land classed as farm is identified as that land which is situated within the farming zone, is not less than 40 hectares in area and is not classified as having a commercial or industrial use.

Land situated within the farming zone of less than 40 hectares may be considered for the farm differential rate, subject to satisfying Council's criteria for recognition as a bone fide farming activity. Typically such consideration would apply to intensive farming pursuits.

The characteristics of the land classed as farm are that it is used to -

- propagate, cultivate or harvest plants, including cereals, flowers, fruit, seeds, trees, turf, and vegetables; or
- keep, breed, board, or train animals, including livestock, and birds; or
- propagate, cultivate, rear, or harvest living resources of the sea or inland waters.

11.3 Vacant Residential Land Differential Rate

A differential rate will be applied to land which is classed as vacant residential. Residential land will be deemed to be vacant if improvements are valued at \$20,000 or less.

The reason for the application of a vacant land differential rate is to ensure the equitable and efficient carrying out of Council's functions.

Specifically, reasons include -

- To encourage occupation of developed residential land to ensure the appropriate distribution of the cost of Council services
- To discourage the stockpiling of sought after residential land for investment purposes
- To encourage social and economic development
- To encourage development of community facilities and amenity

The appropriate level for the vacant residential land differential rate is considered to be 175% of the general rate.

Land classed as vacant residential is identified as that land which is situated within the residential zone and has improvements valued at \$20,000 or less.

The characteristics of land classed as vacant residential land are that -

- it is zoned residential under Council's planning scheme; and
- it has improvements valued at \$20,000 or less; and
- it satisfies any other requirements for the construction of a dwelling;

11.4 Vacant Commercial/Industrial Land Differential Rate

A differential rate will be applied to land which is classed as vacant Commercial/Industrial. Commercial/Industrial land will be deemed to be vacant if improvements are valued at \$20,000 or less.

The reason for the application of a vacant commercial/industrial land differential rate is to ensure the equitable and efficient carrying out of Council's functions.

Specifically, reasons include –

- To encourage occupation of developed commercial/industrial land to ensure the appropriate distribution of the cost of Council services
- To discourage the stockpiling of sought after commercial/industrial land for investment purposes
- To encourage social and economic development
- To encourage development of community facilities and amenity

The appropriate level for the vacant commercial/industrial land differential rate is considered to be 175% of the general rate.

Land classed as vacant commercial/industrial is identified as that land which is categorised within the rating system as having a commercial or industrial use and has improvements valued at \$20,000 or less.

The characteristics of the land classed as vacant commercial/industrial are that it is classed as being available for purposes of retail, wholesale, tourism activities, accommodation, professional or other commercial services or for manufacturing, maintenance, storage and distribution of goods or other industrial services.

12.0 Collection of Rates

In accordance with Section 167(1) of The Act, Council must allow a person to pay a rate or charge in four instalments and the instalments are due and payable on the date fixed by the Minister by notice published in the Government Gazette.

Section 167(2A) provides that a Council may allow a person to pay a rate or charge in a lump sum. Strathbogie Shire Council does not provide for a lump sum payment option therefore all rates must be paid via instalments with the due dates for payment each financial year as follows:

- 1st Instalment due – 30 September
- 2nd instalment due – 30 November
- 3rd Instalment due – 28 February
- 4th Instalment due – 31 May

Council also allows ratepayers to pay property rates via payment arrangements, by any number of instalments, provided the full amount of rates and charges are paid by 31 May each year.

12.1 Payment Methods

Council has a number of different payment options for rates:

- Over the Counter
 - In person at Australia Post agencies.
 - At Councils Customer Services.
- Internet
 - Payment via BPay.
 - Payment via Post billpay.
- Telephone
 - Payment via Post billpay.
 - Via BPay.
 - Payment via Securepay.
- Direct Debit
 - May make payment from cheque or savings account.
- Mail
 - Post cheque or Money Order to Council.

12.2 Unpaid Rates or Charges

In accordance with section 172 of *The Act* Council may charge interest on unpaid rates and charges in accordance with the rate fixed under section 2 of the *Penalty Interest Rate Act 1983* which is altered from time to time by the Victorian State Government. The penalty interest rate applicable under *The Act* is the rate ruling on 1 July each year. The current rate is 10% and will apply each year unless it is amended on or before 30 June.

12.3 Debt Recovery

After the final day for payment of rates and charges, reminder notices are forwarded to ratepayers. A further final notice is sent requesting payment or inviting ratepayers to make arrangements to pay their outstanding debt.

Any ratepayer who has difficulty paying their rates is invited to contact Council to make alternate payment arrangements. If no payment is forthcoming or no arrangements have been made to pay the amount outstanding, Council pursues the recovery of outstanding rates and charges through Debt Collection agents. All costs incurred for recovery are added to the amount outstanding.

Council has a Hardship Policy that is to be referenced in all cases.

Council will also make every effort to contact ratepayers at their correct address but it is the ratepayer's responsibility to properly advise Council of their contact details. Amendments to the LGA require both the vendor and buyer of the property, or their agents to notify Council by way of notices of disposition and acquisition respectively.

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13.0 Fire Service Property Levy (FSPL)

While the Fire Service Property Levy is not part of the rating strategy, Council is responsible for the collection of the FSPL on behalf of the State Government.

Prior to the introduction of the Fire Services Property Levy, Victoria's fire services were funded by financial contributions from insurance companies, the State Government and metropolitan Councils. Insurance companies recovered the cost of their contributions by imposing a fire services levy on insurance premiums.

One of the key findings of Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission was that this model for fire services funding was inequitable, lacked transparency and discouraged some owners from insuring, or fully insuring, their property due to the additional cost the levy imposed on premiums. As a result, the Commission recommended that the insurance-based fire services levy be replaced with a property-based levy which would require all property owners contributing to fire services funding, not just those with adequate insurance.

On 28 August 2012, the Victorian Government announced that it would implement the Commission's recommendation. The *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012* (FSPLA) was developed to establish the legal framework for the new Fire Services Property Levy. The Act received Royal Assent on 16 October 2012, and will impose a levy on land in Victoria from 1 July 2013.

The Local Government sector or Councils were appointed as the collection agency for the State Government to collect the levy on leviable land within their municipal district including leviable land owned by Council.

13.1 Property Subject to FSPL

All land is leviable under the FSPLA unless that land is:

- Commonwealth owned land;
- State Government owned land; and
- Public bodies.

13.2 Fixed Charges

For the 2014-2015 financial year, the fixed charges are set as follows:

- Residential land (including vacant residential land): \$102;
- Commercial land: \$205;
- Industrial land: \$205;
- Primary production land: \$205;
- Public benefit land: \$205; and
- Vacant land (excluding vacant residential land): \$102.

The fixed charge is subject to adjustment in line with the Victorian Consumer Price Index (CPI). The State Revenue Office (SRO) will notify Councils of changes when they occur.

The Minister will publish the CPI adjusted fixed charge for a levy year before 31 May of the previous year on the SRO website at www.sro.vic.gov.au.

13.3 Levy of Rates

The Minister may determine different levy rates based on land use classification and whether the land is located in the metropolitan fire district or in the country fire district of Victoria. If the Minister does not determine and specify the levy rate by 31 May for the next levy year, the levy rate will remain the same as the most recently determined levy rate.

13.4 FSPL Collection

Section 25(2) of the *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012* currently requires that for levy purposes the assessment notice must display a number of information items. The information that must be displayed is as follows:

- Date of the notice;
- Name and address of the owner of the land or a person that the owner has nominated the notice should be sent to;
- The levy amount including the fixed charge and variable component;
- How the levy amount was calculated, including the levy rate and any concession applied;
- Land use classification (residential, commercial, industrial etc);
- Address or legal description of the land;
- CIV of the land;
- Date by which the levy amount must be paid;
- Any outstanding levy or levy interest payable;
- That the owner of the land may apply for a waiver, deferral or concession in respect of the leviable land under section 27 of the *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012* for rateable land and section 28 for non-rateable land; and
- Any prescribed matters.

14.0 Recommendations

1. Apply Capital Improved Value as the valuation methodology to levy Council rates.
2. Apply five (5) differential rates in the dollar; (Residential - General, Vacant Residential, Commercial/Industrial, Vacant Commercial/Industrial, Farm).
 - Residential - Differential - 100%
 - Vacant Residential - Differential - 175%
 - Commercial/Industrial - Differential - 120%
 - Vacant Commercial/Industrial - Differential - 175%
 - Farm - Differential - 85%
3. Review the rating structure following each biennial valuation.
4. Apply a municipal charge to cover costs such as finance, asset management, information systems, corporate records, customer service human resources and governance and review on an annual basis.
5. Apply a kerbside collection and recycling services.
6. Introduce and apply an organics service.
7. Introduce and apply a service charge that fully recovers the cost of transfer stations and tree management program.
8. Apply the mandatory rate instalment payment options.
 - o 1st instalment due - 30 September
 - o 2nd instalment due - 30 November
 - o 3rd instalment due - 28 February
 - o 4th instalment due - 31 May
9. Allow direct debit payments from cheque or savings accounts.
10. Consider waivers in accordance with the hardship policy.

6. **URGENT BUSINESS**
7. **CLOSURE OF MEETING TO THE PUBLIC TO CONSIDER MATTERS LISTED FOR CONSIDERATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 89(2) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1989**
8. **CONFIRMATION OF 'CLOSED PORTION' DECISION/S**

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, THE MEETING CLOSED AT 5.18 P.M.

Confirmed as being a true and accurate record of the Meeting


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Chair

21/4/15
.....
Date