

Strathbogie Shire Council

Extraordinary Council Meeting Agenda

Tuesday 25 June 2024

Agenda

Extraordinary Council Meeting

Tuesday 25 June 2024 at 6pm

**Meeting to be held at the Euroa Community Conference Centre and
livestreamed on Council's website:**

<https://www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au/council/our-council/council-meetings-and-minutes/>

Administrator:

Peter Stephenson

Officers:

Julie Salomon – Chief Executive Officer

Amanda Tingay – Director People and Governance

John Harvey – Director Sustainable Infrastructure

Rachael Frampton – Director Community and Planning

Rosemary Scott – Executive Manager Communications, Engagement and Advocacy

Meeting Procedure

1. Welcome

2. Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the places we live, work and play. We recognise and respect the enduring relationship they have with their lands and waters, and we pay respects to the Elders past, present and emerging. Today we are meeting on the lands of the Taungurung peoples of the Eastern Kulin nation, whose sovereignty here has never been ceded.

3. Privacy Notice

This public meeting is being streamed live via our website ([Council Meetings and Minutes | Strathbogie Shire](#)) and made available for public access on our website along with the official Minutes/Decisions of this meeting. All care is taken to maintain your privacy; however, as a visitor in the public gallery, it is assumed that your consent is given in the event that your image is broadcast to the public. It is also assumed that your consent is given to the use and disclosure of any information that you share at the meeting (including personal or sensitive information) to any person who accesses those recordings or Minutes.

4. Governance Principles

Council considers that the recommendations contained in this Agenda gives effect to the overarching governance principles stated in Section 9(2) of the Local Government Act 2020. These principles are as follows:

- 1. Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law;*
- 2. priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;*
- 3. the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;*
- 4. the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;*
- 5. innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued;*
- 6. collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;*
- 7. the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;*
- 8. regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making;*
- 9. the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.*

5. Apologies / Leave of Absence

6. Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

7. Public Question Time

- 8. Officer Reports**
 - 8.1 Strategic and Statutory
 - 8.2 Community
 - 8.3 Infrastructure
 - 8.4 Corporate
 - 8.5 Governance and Customer Service
 - 8.6 Executive

Julie Salomon
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

21 June 2024

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8.4.1 Pitch My Project – Recommendations for Funding

Author: Rosemary Scott, Executive Manager Communications, Engagement and Advocacy

Responsible Director: Chief Executive Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Now in its fourth year, Council's Pitch My Project initiative is ensuring our Budget includes the projects and plans that matter to our community.

Since its inception, Council has funded more than 20 community projects throughout the Shire.

This year, Council has allocated \$300,000 for Pitch My Project as part of the draft 2024-25 Budget with \$50,000 available across each of the six strategic focus areas in the Council Plan:

1. Engage. Create. Unite.
2. Live. Access. Connect.
3. Protect. Enhance. Adapt.
4. Inclusive. Productive. Balanced.
5. Strong. Healthy. Safe.
6. Accountable. Transparent. Responsible.

After the assessment period, 15 projects were presented to the community to prioritise at voting stations across the Shire and on the Share Strathbogie consultation platform.

Council received 452 community contributions to the project, with 221 submitted online and the remainder coming from survey stations in Avenel, Euroa, Longwood, Nagambie, Ruffy, Strathbogie and Violet Town.

Factoring in a weighting for population, the projects scoring the highest were identified for each category. Projects were then assessed against the six strategic focus areas with a weighting for population of the project area and participation. To further differentiate between shortlisted projects, consideration was also given to the balance of projects across the shire by population served.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. ***Allocate \$300,000 to the Pitch My Project initiative in the 2024/25 Budget;***
2. ***Fund six community projects, that align to the Strategic Focus Areas in the 2021/25 Council Plan. These being:***
 - a. ***\$50,000 for Euroa Strathbogie Shire Art Trail***
 - b. ***\$50,000 for Strathbogie Walking Path***
 - c. ***\$50,000 for Euroa Branding Project Stage 2***

8.4.1 Pitch My Project – Recommendations for Funding (cont.)

RECOMMENDATION (cont.)

- d. \$50,000 for Longwood Nature Play Space Stage 2**
 - e. \$50,000 for Avenel Memorial Hall**
 - f. \$50,000 for Ruffy Tablelands Centre Verandah**
- 3. Authorise Officers to write to all 15 Pitch My Project applicants to inform them of the outcome and thank them for their participation.**

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Pitch My Project initiative was established in 2021 as a way of encouraging community involvement in the development of the draft Budget.

Based on the deliberative principles in the *Local Government Act 2020* and Strathbogie Shire Council's Engagement Policy, Pitch My Project provides a way to involve the community in setting priorities and identifying which projects and initiatives that matter to them.

Since the project was established, Council has funded more than 20 projects across the municipality. Including the coming year, this will total more than \$1 million.

Council allocated \$300,000 in the draft Budget for 2024/25. This is in addition to other community grants available through Council.

The community was invited to submit projects for consideration in 2023. They were then assessed against a range of criteria including:

- Project is deliverable under \$50,000;
- Ability for Council to deliver the project in the coming financial year;
- Whether there are other available funding sources;
- Is it a one-off project or initiative;
- Whether it is council owned asset for infrastructure projects;
- Is there community benefit; and
- alignment to Council Plan Strategic Focus Area.

In total, 15 projects progressed through to a community vote as part of the 2024/25 draft Budget engagement. Community members were invited to rank the following projects from 1 to 15:

- Avenel Memorial Hall standby generator to enable the hall to operate as a power outage and heat refuge;
- Avenel Hughes Creek Bridge condition assessment and proposed works by experienced heritage consultant;
- Euroa Branding Project Stage 2 wayfinding signage;
- Euroa Outdoor Space Precinct design plan;
- Euroa Strathbogie Shire Art Trail installation;
- Longwood Nature Play Space Stage 2 installation;
- Nagambie Tennis Club Master Plan including staged approach for clubhouse; renovations and tennis court detailed design;
- Nagambie Recreation Reserve hot water service upgrade;

8.4.1 Pitch My Project – Recommendations for Funding (cont.)

- Ruffy - Tablelands Community Centre Shelter Shed veranda;
- Strathbogie Walking Path on the eastern side of Spring Creek Road between the Recreation Ground and Main Street;
- Strathbogie Memorial Hall generator and rewiring to provide a power source during outages;
- Violet Town Bowls Club floor covering replacement;
- Violet Town Outdoor Gym Equipment near the Town Sports and Recreation Reserve and the Honeysuckle Creek Walking Track;
- Violet Town Community Complex Hall Upgrade; and
- Violet Town to Euroa Cycling Track feasibility study and design concept for McDiarmids Road between Mahers Road and Wilbraham Road.

Projects were then ranked based on this vote, the number of votes, the participation rate per capita and the population of the area served by the project or initiative.

ISSUES, OPTIONS AND DISCUSSION

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

In the four (4) years of Pitch My Project, more than 20 projects across the shire have been funded totalling more than \$1 million including this coming year.

Council has made a number of refinements since the initiative first started including:

- Earlier timeframes for launching the initial pitch to enable projects to be included in the draft budget;
- Clearer guidelines to assess projects;
- The addition of a participatory budgeting exercise to put the decision making in the hands of the community;
- Stronger alignment to the projects with the six Strategic Focus Areas in the Council Plan; and
- Increasing the amount of funding available.

The biggest change has been the introduction of a participatory budgeting exercise last year that put the decision making in the hands of the community. Council wanted to ensure meaningful community input and to show a commitment to genuine community engagement.

Participatory budgeting has continued this year, with an added requirement for participants to register online and provide their name, locality and email address on the hard copy submissions to minimise the potential for duplication of voting.

There was strong participation across all project areas, with the smaller communities of Strathbogie, Ruffy and Longwood outperforming the larger towns on a per capita participation rate.

The biggest challenge with this voting has been how to fairly weight votes amongst smaller rural localities and our larger towns.

Last year, there were only two Strategic Focus Areas where there was more than one project. Data was scored based on a weighted average for the ranking of the projects and then a further weighting based on population for the project area.

8.4.1 Pitch My Project – Recommendations for Funding (cont.)

This year, all but one of the six Strategic Focus Areas had multiple entries. Community members voted for all 15 projects in order of their preference.

A weighted average based on the number of participants and the spread of their vote from 1 to 15 was used to shortlist projects by category. An additional population weighting measure was then added for the project area, with projects scoring the highest identified for each of the six Strategic Focus Areas.

In the instance of more than one project for a community being shortlisted across the six focus areas, an additional review to consider the spread of projects across the shire compared to the population served by the project and wider community benefit was also conducted.

Each of the six (6) projects recommended in Table 1 below for funding will help Council deliver its Community Vision. Each project has shown strong alignment with our Council Plan, the key strategic document that details how we will achieve the vision.

Table 1: Recommended Projects

Strategic Focus Area	Project	Value
Engage. Create. Unite.	Euroa Strathbogie Shire Art Trail	\$50,000
Live. Access. Connect.	Strathbogie Walking Path	\$50,000
Inclusive. Productive. Balanced.	Euroa Branding Project Stage 2	\$50,000
Strong. Healthy. Safe.	Longwood Nature Play Space Stage 2	\$50,000
Protect. Enhance. Adapt.	Avenel Memorial Hall	\$50,000
Accountable Transparent. Responsible.	Ruffy Tablelands Centre Verandah	\$50,000

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the Local Government Act 2020 is that the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making.

Council Officers created a three-stage engagement program for the Pitch My Project development.

Stage One (December 2023 to February 2024)

- Community encouraged to submit projects for pitching in accordance with the Pitch My Project Guidelines.

Stage Two (March/April 2024)

- Projects assessed across a number of criteria in accordance with the guidelines.
- Ideas that passed this criteria and received a score of 11 or over proceeded to community voting.

8.4.1 Pitch My Project – Recommendations for Funding (cont.)

Stage Three (April/May 2024)

- Draft Budget includes \$300,000 for Pitch My Project with \$50,000 available in each Strategic Focus Area.
- Voting conducted through Share Strathbogie online platform and through hard copy survey stations in project areas
- Council also sought submissions to the 2024/25 draft Budget and draft Fees and Charges during a 28-day public exhibition period. Submissions could be made online, in writing or via email.

Throughout every stage we created simple, clear communication materials that provided the community with information about Pitch My Project and highlighted the range of ways that people could get involved.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Council Plans and Policies

Every one of the six (6) projects recommended for funding will help Council deliver its Community Vision. Each project has shown strong alignment with the Council Plan, the key strategic document that details how Council will achieve the Vision.

Funding has been recommended in all six of the Strategic Focus Areas:

- Engage. Create. Unite
- Live. Access. Connect
- Inclusive. Productive. Balanced
- Protect. Enhance. Adapt
- Strong. Healthy. Safe
- Accountable. Transparent. Responsible

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision-making.

The *Local Government Act 2020* has at its core, the aim of ensuring all Victorians have the opportunity to engage with their council on local priorities and the future of their community. The Pitch My Project initiative achieves this principle.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

Risk(s)	Likelihood	Consequence	Rating	Mitigation Action
Funding balance between different sized communities and across the shire	Likely	Moderate	High	Weighting to consider participation in vote, population served by project and spread of projects across the shire over the four year Council Plan period

8.4.1 Pitch My Project – Recommendations for Funding (cont.)

Reliance on digital or hard copy voting creating an unfair advantage for any given area or demographic	Likely	Moderate	High	Hard copy voting stations provided in each project area Promotion including the range of ways to participate
Multiple votes from individuals	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Registrations for online votes and name, location and contact details for hard copy votes
Failure of digital platform	Unlikely	Major	Medium	Regular monitoring of site and votes coming in
Lost votes	Possible	Minor	Low	Regular check ins of voting stations and clear instructions for people returning voting forms
Ability for Council to deliver the projects in the timeframes and on budget	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Projects assessed against criteria for deliverables before being shortlisted for voting
Projects not aligned to wider council priorities	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Projects assessed against Council Plan strategic focus areas before being shortlisted for voting
Communities competing against each other for funds	Almost certain	Moderate	High	Clear information about how to pitch and how to vote and an acknowledgement that there needs to be consideration of population spread and participation when assessing shortlist.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.

This project meets the deliberative engagement principles outlined in the Act and in Council's Engagement Policy.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

All officers and/or contractors involved in the preparation of this report have signed a written declaration that they do not have a conflict of interest in the subject matter of this report.

Transparency

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

8.4.1 Pitch My Project – Recommendations for Funding (cont.)

The guidelines show how projects have been assessed. An Engagement Summary will also be provided on Share Strathbogie at the conclusion of the project.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured.

\$300,000 was allocated to the Pitch My Project initiative in the 2024/25 draft Budget. This report recommends expenditure of \$300,000 across six (6) projects throughout the municipality.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.

All of the projects relate to relevant Strategic Focus Areas in the Council Plan and cover a variety of economic, social and environmental sustainability initiatives including a number that were responding directly to climate change risks.

Economic

The primary Strategic Focus Area related to Economic Sustainability is Inclusive, Productive. Balanced. This includes the following community goal:

In the future we... have a thriving economy for everyone. This means:

- We are smart spenders, buying local wherever possible
- We target economic development to enhance our region
- We are capitalising on our region's strengths.

The recommended project in this category is the Euroa Branding Project Stage 2 which builds on the previously funded Stage 1 which is currently underway. Stage 2 is expected to focus on rolling out wayfinding signage in Euroa to foster a thriving visitor economy which in turn supports economic growth, stimulates business investment, generates direct local expenditure and supports new jobs.

Social

The social benefits to the Pitch My Project are extensive. The participatory nature of Pitch My Project creates meaningful input into the Council Budget and encourages the community to think about a range of projects across the shire.

The primary Strategic Focus Area related to Social Sustainability is Engage. Create. Unite. This includes the following community goal:

In the future we.... foster and support creative responses in the community. This means:

- We are inspired by our creatives and celebrate art and culture.
- We create welcoming social spaces where people can connect.
- First Nations culture, knowledge and heritage enriches our Shire.

8.4.1 Pitch My Project – Recommendations for Funding (cont.)

In this category, the recommended project is the Euroa Strathbogie Shire Art Trail which supports arts and culture, encourages social connections and provides opportunities to enrich the shire with First Nations culture, knowledge and heritage.

Environmental

The primary Strategic Focus Area related to Environmental Sustainability is Strong. Healthy. Safe. This includes the following community goal:

In the future...our communities are filled with happy, healthy people. This means:

- We have protected 'the vibe' we love
- We are working together to share knowledge and get things done
- We are encouraging health and wellbeing activities in sport and recreation.

In this category, the recommended project is Longwood Nature Play Space Stage 2. The nature play space will provide an opportunity for locals and visitors to come together to relax and unwind as well providing valuable exercise, social skills and health and wellbeing connections.

Climate change

The primary Strategic Focus Area related to Climate Change is Protect. Enhance. Adapt. This includes the following community goal:

In the future we...consider Climate Change in everything we do. This means:

- We are minimising harmful impacts on our natural environment
- We are reversing biodiversity decline
- We are championing best practice environmental strategies.

The recommended project in this category is for a standby generator to enable the hall to operate as a power outage and heat refuge. This is in direct response to Avenel's Local Emergency Action Plan and supports residents who may be vulnerable to extreme heat and power outages.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is the pursuit of innovation and continuous improvement.

The Pitch My Project initiative will be reviewed as part of the development of the next Council Plan and Financial Plan.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

Community engagement programs are consistent with the Human Rights Charter, in particular, by promoting the rights of members of the community to take part in public life.

A number of options for participation were provided to the community to encourage involvement and meaningful input.

CONCLUSION

The Pitch My Project initiative and recommendation in this report supports the funding of six (6) projects as voted by the community.

8.4.1 Pitch My Project – Recommendations for Funding (cont.)

The projects recommended for funding align to the six Strategic Focus Area in the Council Plan, which is helping Council achieve its Community Vision.

Pitch My Project is a community-driven initiative that helps Council prioritise funding for the projects and programs that matter to our community. It also encourages discussion and involvement in the Council Plan, Budget and financial planning.

Participation has been significant over several years with projects providing extensive community benefit.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil.

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025

Author: Chief Financial Officer

Responsible Director: Director People and Governance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following its resolution of 16 April 2024 to release the 2024-25 Draft Budget and 2024-25 Draft Fees and Charges (*the Draft Budget*) for public review and comment for a period of 28 days, Council has now fulfilled the legislative requirements for preparing the Draft Budget.

The Draft Budget was placed on public exhibition as part of a broad public engagement process around the Draft Budget's development with the IAP2 engagement level set at 'involve' for the overall budget engagement and 'collaborate' for the Pitch My Project initiative.

In total, 22 written submissions were received through Council's Share Strathbogie engagement portal, via email and mail. 18 submissions related to the 2024-25 Draft Budget and four submissions related to the 2024-25 Draft Fees and Charges.

All submitters had the opportunity to make a verbal presentation at an extraordinary meeting of Council on 4 June 2024; eight parties elected to take up this opportunity.

In addition, throughout the budget submission period, the need to make some modifications to the Draft Budget were identified to respond to newly acquired information, technical adjustments and shifts in assumptions.

The Draft Budget contained capital expenditure to undertake significant drainage improvements in Hovell Street, Avenel. This expenditure was included on the assumption and subject to the receipt of external funding. Unfortunately, due to the discontinuation of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, external funding for this program was unable to be realised. Therefore, the amount of \$2,000,000 in grant income and subsequently the project, has been removed from the final Draft Budget.

Immediate drainage issues will be investigated as part of regular maintenance work, whilst understanding that a long-term solution is still required to provide a more holistic approach to drainage management within this area. Officers will continue to advocate for funding in future years to support the ongoing need for this project.

As per Section 94 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Council is required to officially approve the Budget and Fees and Charges by June 30 and inform the community about the Budget's adoption.

For transparency and auditing purposes, a copy of the approved Strathbogie Shire Council 2024-25 Budget and 2024-25 Fees and Charges will be attached to the Minutes of this meeting.

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **Having completed the community engagement process prescribed by Council's Community Engagement Policy, adopt the Budget, Fees and Charges for the year ending 30 June 2025.**
2. **Declare the Rates and Charges for the year ending 30 June 2025 in accordance with the following recommendations:**

1. **Amount intended to be raised.**

An amount of \$23,100,128 (or such other amount as is lawfully raised as a consequence of this resolution) be declared as the amount which Council intends to raise by general rates, annual service charges and environmental levy (described later in this Resolution), which amount is calculated as follows:

General Rates	19,964,214
Annual Service Charges (Waste Management Charge)	3,135,914
Total	23,100,128

2. **General Rates**

- 2.1 **A general rate be declared in respect of the 2024-25 Financial Year;**
- 2.2 **It be further declared that the general rate be raised by the application of differential rates;**
- 2.3 **A differential rate be respectively declared for rateable land having the respective characteristics specified below, which characteristics will form the criteria for each differential rate so declared:**

Residential Land

All land used primarily for residential purposes or obviously adapted to being used primarily for residential purposes but excluding farm land.

Vacant Residential Land

All vacant land which may be used primarily for residential purposes or obviously adapted to being used primarily for residential purposes but excluding farm land.

Farm Land

Any land zoned Farming under the Strathbogie Planning Scheme which is not less than 40 hectares in area and is not classified as having a commercial or industrial use.

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

RECOMMENDATION (cont.)

Land situated within the Farming zone of less than 40 hectares in area may be considered for the farm differential rate, subject to satisfying Council's criteria for recognition as a bone fide farming activity.

Commercial / Industrial Land

All land used primarily for commercial or industrial purposes or obviously adapted to being used primarily for commercial/industrial purposes.

Vacant Commercial / Industrial Land

All vacant land which may be used primarily for commercial or industrial purposes or obviously adapted to being used primarily for commercial/industrial purposes.

- 2.4** ***Each differential rate will be determined by multiplying the Capital Improved Value of each rateable land (categorised by the characteristics described in 2.3) by the relevant percentages indicated in the following table:***

<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Residential Land</i>	<i>0.307631% (or 0.00307631 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value)</i>
<i>Vacant Residential Land</i>	<i>0.646025% (or 0.00646025 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value)</i>
<i>Farm Land</i>	<i>0.246105% (or 0.00246105cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value)</i>
<i>Commercial / Industrial Land</i>	<i>0.369157% (or 0.00369157 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value)</i>
<i>Vacant Commercial / Industrial Land</i>	<i>0.646025% (or 0.00646025 cents in the dollar of the Capital Improved Value)</i>

- 2.5** ***It be recorded that Council considers that each differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying of Council functions, and that:***

2.5.1 ***the respective objectives of each differential rate be those specified in the Schedule to this Resolution;***

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

RECOMMENDATION (cont.)

2.5.2 the respective types or classes of land which are subject to each differential rate be those defined in the Schedule to this Resolution;

2.5.3 the respective uses and levels of each differential rate in relation to those respective types and classes of land be those described in the Schedule to this Resolution; and

2.5.4 the relevant:

(a) uses of;

(b) geographical locations of;

(c) planning scheme zoning of; and

(d) types of buildings on

the respective types or classes of land be those identified in the Schedule to this Resolution.

2.6 It be confirmed that no amount is fixed as the minimum amount payable by way of general rate in respect of each rateable land within the municipal district.

3. Municipal Charge - No Municipal charge be declared in respect of the 2024-25 Financial Year.

4. Annual Service Charge

4.1 An annual service charge be declared in respect of the 2024-25 Financial Year;

4.2 An annual service charge (Waste Management Charge) be declared for the collection and disposal of refuse from land;

4.3 The annual service charge (Waste Management Charge) be in the sum of, and be based on the criteria, set out below but dependent upon which option is chosen:

4.3.1 for the collection and disposal of recyclables, \$205 per annum (120 litre, 240 litre and 360 litre bins);

4.3.2 for the collection and disposal of waste and organics (80 litre and 120 litre bins), \$432 per annum; and

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

RECOMMENDATION (cont.)

4.3.3 for the collection and disposal of waste and organics (240 litre bins), \$860 per annum.

in respect of each rateable land (or part) to which the service of collection and disposal is made available.

5. Rebates & Concessions

Pensioner Rebate

5.1 It also be recorded that Council grants to each owner of rateable land who is an "eligible recipient" within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 1986, a rebate as determined by the Victorian State Government, in respect of each rateable land; and

5.2 The rebate described in paragraph 5.1 be granted to assist the proper development of the municipal district, and to provide a concession to ratepayers whose circumstances may limit their capacity to pay.

6. Payment

6.1 All rates and charges to be paid in four instalments, in accordance with Section 167 (1) and (2) of the Local Government Act 1989 due on:

1st Instalment 30th September 2024

2nd Instalment 30th November 2024

3rd Instalment 28th February 2025

4th Instalment 31st May 2025

7. Consequential and Further Actions

7.1 It be confirmed that, subject to sections 171 and 172 of the Local Government Act 1989, Council will require a person to pay interest on any rates and charges which:

7.1.1 that person is liable to pay; and

7.1.2 have not been paid by the date specified for their payment.

7.2 The Director People & Governance be authorised to levy and recover the general rates and annual service charge in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989.

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

RECOMMENDATION (cont.)

7.3 The Chief Financial Officer be authorised to write to all those who have made a written submission thanking them for their input and advising them of Council's decision and the reason for its decision.

7.4 The adoption of the 2024-25 Budget and Fees and Charges be publicised through Council's website, notices in local newspapers and through Council's social media channels.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

At the Council meeting held on 16 April 2024, the 2024-25 Draft Budget and 2024-25 Draft Fees and Charges were reviewed, and Council resolved to release for public inspection and comment.

Following the meeting, public notice of the 2024-25 Draft Budget and Fees and Charges documents was issued through local newspapers and social media pages. The proposed Draft Budget was also made available for review at various locations within the Shire, as well as on the Council's website and the Share Strathbogie platform.

As part of a broad public engagement process around the Draft Budget's development, the IAP2 engagement level set at 'involve' for the overall budget engagement and 'collaborate' for the Pitch My Project initiative.

In total, 22 written submissions were received through Council's Share Strathbogie engagement portal and via email. 18 submissions related to the 2024-25 Draft Budget and four submissions related to the 2024-25 Draft Fees and Charges.

All submitters had the opportunity to make a verbal presentation at an extraordinary meeting of Council on 4 June 2024; eight parties elected to take up this opportunity.

In summary, the written submissions made the following requests:

Submission Details	Number of submissions	Response to submissions
Kirwans Bridge engagement of Heritage Victoria Consultant and review of bridge deck for user safety	9	Included - \$100k investigation for pedestrian and cycling access
Avenel Railyard car park project over 4 years 2024-25 to 2027-28	3	Not included - continue to provide advocacy

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

Street sweeper with vacuum capacity to clean leaf litter in streets	1	Not included - recently purchased walk behind vacuum sweeper
Local road, bridge, drainage maintenance and request for additional details in proposed works and capital expenditure, fees & charges schedule too small to read	1	Noted - increased budget for rehabilitation, resealing and resheeting programs
Condition of asphalt footpath of the bus parking area to Euroa Primary School and new footpath along Euroa Primary School fence	1	Noted - further investigation required and repair if necessary, within existing budget parameters
Sealing of Agar Street in Violet Town due to more people using Shadforth Reserve Clubroom and the Men's Shed, the dust problem is exacerbated	1	Not included - to be investigated for special charge scheme
Changes to waste charge, tree management charge, waste service education officer, waste collection service	2	Noted - not included
Fees and Charges - objection to proposed event fees	4	Not Included - Proposed Fees & Charges remain as per draft budget
Total	22	

In addition, throughout the Budget submission period, the need to make some modifications to the Draft Budget were identified to respond to newly acquired information, technical adjustments and shifts in assumptions. These are summarised as follows:

Nature of Expense or Income	Positive or negative dollar impact	\$ change reflected in Budget
Updated income from supplementary valuations (stage 4)	+ Increase in income	54,128
Updated Depreciation figures	+ Decrease in expense	27,713
Additional funds for swimming pool operations	- Increase in expense	(100,000)
Kirwans bridge – investigation for pedestrian and cycling access	- Increase in expense	(100,000)
Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program (LRCI) grant carry forward from 2023-24 to 2024-25 for already committed projects	+ Increase in income	1,829,600
Removed Hovell Street, Avenel Drainage, and expected forecasted grant income	- Decrease in income	(2,000,000)
Fees & Charges – amendment to Hire Charges Clarification and increase in Violet Town Recreation Reserve Seasonal Booking	N/A	N/A

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the submissions received, the adjustments made to the Draft Budget following the receipt of additional information in relation to grants and unexpected expenses that have arisen since the development of the Draft budget so that the 2024-25 Budget and 2024-25 Fees and Charges can be adopted and set prior to the 30 June deadline.

ISSUES, OPTIONS AND DISCUSSION

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

In preparing the 2024-2025 Draft Budget and 2024-25 Draft Fees and Charges, Council has considered many factors to try and balance community expectations and benefits with financial responsibilities.

Council has attempted to minimise rate increases and has prepared the Draft Budget based on a 2.75 per cent increase in the average rate per property. This is in line with the increase allowed for under the State Government's 'Fair Go Rates' legislation.

The Valuer General has issued advice to the effect that the 2024 general valuation has a relevant date of 1 January 2024 and is based on market conditions at, and immediately before that date. Any market changes occurring now or in the future will be applicable to future valuation cycles.

Rate outcomes for individual properties will vary, depending on how that property's valuation has changed when compared to the average increase.

The rate increase allows for maintenance of existing service levels, funding of several significant new initiatives and the allocation of sufficient funds for the continuing strategic renewal of Council's infrastructure.

The following factors have been considered in relation to waste charges:

- The costs of rehabilitation of the Violet Town landfill which has been funded by borrowings with a cost of approximately \$280,000 per year,
- New waste collection contracts which will apply from 1 July 2025 and will see reduced costs,
- New landfill disposal contract that will apply from 1 July 2025 and will see increased costs,
- One off costs of bins related to new contracts,
- Implementation of a fourth bin for glass collection from 1 July 2025 which will see increased cost and offsetting revenue, and
- Application of overhead costs to the waste service as recommended by Government and a recent Internal Audit report.

Considering these factors, this has presented an opportunity to restructure and simplify waste charges by:

- Maintaining a revenue increase for kerbside collections for 2024-25 in line with previous predictions (4%),

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

- Discontinuing the former Tree Management Levy (currently \$32 per property),
- The combination of these two changes will see a reduction in revenue of approximately 3.2%, and
- Maintaining expenditure on tree maintenance estimated at \$1,254,478 in 2024-25.

In 2025-26, after allowing for the above factors, the aim will be to contain increases at or below CPI.

The Draft Budget details the resources required over the next year to fund the large range of services that Council provides to the community and proposes maintenance of existing service levels and the creation of a dedicated reseal preparation crew to improve the quality of works.

Furthermore, the Draft Budget provides a significant amount for renewal of existing assets as well as the creation of new assets. Addressing the community feedback regarding the conditions of the road network have also been considered which has resulted in a significant uplift of resources to this area.

Included in the Capital programs are:

- \$632,000 for replacement of Council's major Information Technology systems to improve efficiency and customer service. This is part of a regional transformation project with Murrindindi, Mansfield and Benalla Councils and has attracted significant State Government funding,
- \$1.548 million for resealing of the road network including the creation of a dedicated reseal preparation crew to improve the quality of the works,
- \$1.242 million for Rehabilitation of existing sealed road pavement,
- \$565,000 for re-sheeting of gravel roads,
- \$296,000 for works on existing bridges and culverts,
- \$344,000 for footpath and cycleway works,
- \$640,000 for Female Friendly amenities at Longwood Recreation Reserve (subject to successful grant application), and
- \$500,000 for improvements to Nagambie Splash Park.

Capital works expenditure in future years lies between \$8.2 and \$18.9 million.

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 considering financial constraints.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year provided the opportunity for a three-stage engagement program to ensure input into every stage of the Draft Budget's development.

In stage one, we launched the innovative Pitch My Project initiative in November 2023, allowing the community an opportunity to 'pitch' their ideas. Council allocated \$300,000 for Pitch My Project as part of the 2024-25 Draft Budget. Pitched ideas were required to demonstrate how they aligned to one of the six strategic focus areas within Council's 2021-2025 Council Plan. Each strategic focus area was allocated \$50,000 for successful projects. Assessment of the "pitches" occurred in March, in line with program guidelines.

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

In stage two, we created a series of clear communication materials that provided our community with information about the Draft Budget and ensured they understood how they could have their say. To ensure those who did not have access to the internet could have their say, we established survey stations in every township to gather hard copy surveys.

We also continued to seek submissions to the 2024-25 Draft Budget and 2024-25 Draft Fees and Charges during a 28-day public exhibition period. Submissions could be made online, by mail or via email. During this period, successful pitch ideas were put out to public prioritisation.

Stage three of the engagement program will be closing the loop with the community to inform them how their feedback was used to inform the final 2024-25 Draft Budget. Throughout every stage we created simple, clear communication materials that provided our community with information about Pitch My Project and the development of the 2024-25 Draft Budget to ensure they understand how they could have their say.

Participation and reach

- Twenty-two submissions were received to the Draft Budget
- 436 contributions were received for Pitch My Project (221 online and 215 from township survey stations).
- 1179 people visited Pitch My Project page on Share Strathbogie website.
- The top five downloaded projects were:
 - Euroa Outdoor Space (103)
 - Longwood Nature Play Space Stage 2 (98)
 - Nagambie Recreation Reserve Hot Water (84)
 - Nagambie Tennis Club Master Plan (81)
 - Avenel Memorial Hall (79)

Pitch My Project and successful “pitches” is subject to a separate report also being considered as part of this Extraordinary Council meeting.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Council Plans and Policies

The Draft Budget document provides financial resources to achieve the following 2021-25 Council Plan strategies and key initiatives:

Strategic Focus Area 2: Live. Access. Connect

Action 2.1.1 Implement the Asset Plan to guide future investment in buildings, plant and infrastructure through the 10 Year Capital Budget.

Strategic Focus Area 6: Accountable. Transparent. Responsible.

- *Maximise public transparency and accountability around our performance and decision making processes*
- *Be financially responsible, achieving the greatest possible community benefit from the programs, initiatives and services we fund.*

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

The 2024-25 Draft Budget has been informed by Council's ten-year Financial Plan and Revenue and Rating Plan.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that regional, state, and national plans and policies are to be considered in strategic planning and decision-making.

The preparation of the Draft Budget has been informed by Federal and State government priorities, initiatives, and funding streams.

Risk Considerations

The following risk considerations have been identified:

Risk(s)	Likelihood	Consequence	Rating	Mitigation Action
Poor performance against budget.	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Regular monitoring and reporting of performance against budget and forecast variances.
Deterioration of Council's financial position against the adopted Financial Plan, resulting in diminished ability to achieve and maintain financial sustainability, as measured by the adjusted underlying operating result liquidity and renewal and upgrade of assets.	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Linkage of budget setting and performance to the adopted Financial Plan.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with legislation.

The provisions of both the *Local Government Act 1989* (which provides for rating and special charge scheme provisions) and the *Local Government Act 2020* (which sets out requirements for financial management, budget preparation and community engagement) have been complied with through the process of preparing and adopting the Budget.

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

The Draft Budget has also been prepared in accordance with the financial management principles outlined in section 101 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the requirement to adopt the Budget by 30 June 2024.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

All officers, and/or contractors, involved in the preparation of this report have signed a written declaration that they do not have a conflict of interest in the subject matter of this report.

Transparency

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

The community engagement process, along with review of the high-level strategic indicators by Council's Audit and Risk Committee, seeks to achieve the highest levels of public transparency around the development and content of the Draft Budget documents.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured.

22 submissions to the Draft Budget were received and have been carefully considered by Council in the preparation of the final Draft 2024-25 Budget and Fees and Charges documents.

Some amendments to the exhibited Draft Budget document have been required as a result of changed circumstances and new information coming to light following the budget consultation process. The amendments made are mainly due to unavailability of grant funds for proposed capital expenditure projects and additional income and expenses recorded as a result of new information received.

The strategic financial indicators show that targets are met in future years on the whole, however, liquidity measures and renewal measures require further focus. Furthermore, this situation should improve once grant income from State and Federal governments become known for future years.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.

There are several funding allocations within the Draft Budget for environmental and sustainability programs.

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

Economic and Social

The Draft Budget provides funding for a range of programs which are designed to improve:

- (a) sense of community – e.g. arts and cultural activities, stakeholder participation, recognition of diversity, cultural heritage or social cohesion
- (b) community services – e.g. range and quality of services for different groups (children and families, young people, elderly people and people with disabilities), accessibility of services or cost of services
- (c) community health and well-being – e.g. recreation facilities, public safety, health services and facilities or public health implications
- (d) transport – e.g. safety, emissions and fuel consumption, public transport usage, walking and cycling or transportation needs of all people.

Environment and Climate change

Council is mindful of the requirement under section 9(2)(c) of the *Local Government Act 2020* relating to overarching governance principles to mitigate and plan for climate change risks.

The Budget identifies increased resourcing to deliver and investigate Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is the pursuit of innovation and continuous improvement.

The community engagement process undertaken for the Draft Budget has seen new projects and a higher level of participation by the community through the Pitch My Project initiative.

COLLABORATION

One of the overarching governance principles in section 9 of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that collaboration with other councils, levels of government and statutory bodies is to be sought.

The preparation of the Draft Budget was a collaboration across the entire organisation, along with Council's Internal Auditors, our Audit and Risk Committee, the Victorian Auditor-General's Office and our community through various engagement processes.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The Draft Budget documents support a range of human rights under the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* in relation to supporting participation in community life and providing services for all sectors of our community.

8.4.2 Adoption of Budget, Fees and Charges and Declaration of Rates and Charges for the 12 Months ending 30 June 2025 (cont.)

CONCLUSION

The preparation of the Draft Budget and Fees and Charges for the 2024-25 financial year has been an extensive process undertaken over the past eight (8) months.

Community engagement and collaboration have played a significant role throughout this period and process.

The Budget seeks to find a balance between maintaining current service standards amidst a challenging fiscal environment marked by high inflation while also acknowledging the financial strain experienced by many households.

If adopted, the Strathbogie Shire Council 2024-25 Budget and associated documents will be appended to the Minutes for identification purposes.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: 2024-25 Strathbogie Shire Council Budget (*separate attachment*)

Attachment 2: 2024-25 Fees and Charges (*separate attachment*)

Attachment 3: Schedule 1 – Residential Land

Attachment 4: Schedule 2 – Vacant Residential Land

Attachment 5: Schedule 3 – Farm Land

Attachment 6: Schedule 4 – Commercial / Industrial Land

Attachment 7: Schedule 5 – Vacant Commercial / Industrial Land

ATTACHMENT 3:

SCHEDULE 1

RESIDENTIAL LAND

Objective:

To ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council, including the:

1. Construction and maintenance of public infrastructure;
2. Development and provision of health and community services; and
3. Provision of general support services.

Types and Classes:

Rateable land having the relevant characteristics described in the Resolution.

Use and Level of Differential Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund some of those items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council.

The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings:

All buildings which are now constructed on the land or which are constructed prior to the expiry of the 2024-25 Financial Year.

ATTACHMENT 4:**SCHEDULE 2****VACANT RESIDENTIAL LAND****Objective:**

To ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council, including the:

1. Construction and maintenance of public infrastructure;
2. Development and provision of health and community services; and
3. Provision of general support services.

Types and Classes:

Rateable land having the relevant characteristics described in the Resolution.

Use and Level of Differential Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund some of those items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council.

The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings:

All buildings and other improvements which are now constructed on the land or which are constructed prior to the expiry of the 2024-25 Financial Year and whose total value does not exceed \$20,000.

ATTACHMENT 5:**SCHEDULE 3****FARM LAND****Objective:**

To ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council, including the:

1. Construction and maintenance of public infrastructure;
2. Development and provision of health and community services; and
3. Provision of general support services.

Types and Classes:

Rateable land having the relevant characteristics described in the Resolution.

Use and Level of Differential Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund some of those items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council.

The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

Rural Zone under the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings:

All buildings which are now constructed on the land or which are constructed prior to the expiry of the 2024-25 Financial Year.

ATTACHMENT 6:**SCHEDULE 4****COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL LAND****Objective:**

To ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council, including the:

1. Construction and maintenance of public infrastructure;
2. Development and provision of health and community services; and
3. Provision of general support services.

Types and Classes:

Rateable land having the relevant characteristics described in the Resolution.

Use and Level of Differential Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund some of those items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council.

The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings:

All buildings and other improvements which are now constructed on the land or which are constructed prior to the expiry of the 2024-25 Financial Year.

ATTACHMENT 7:**SCHEDULE 5****VACANT COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL LAND****Objective:**

To ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council, including the:

1. Construction and maintenance of public infrastructure;
2. Development and provision of health and community services; and
3. Provision of general support services.

Types and Classes:

Rateable land having the relevant characteristics described in the Resolution.

Use and Level of Differential Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund some of those items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council.

The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings:

All buildings and other improvements which are now constructed on the land or which are constructed prior to the expiry of the 2024-25 Financial Year and whose total value does not exceed \$20,000.

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