



AGENDA
of the
SCHEDULED MEETING OF COUNCIL
Wednesday 24 November 2021
at
Murrindindi Shire Council
Council Chambers
Yea
The Semi Circle
6:00 PM

Audio recordings of all Council meetings are taken by Council's Governance Officers and published on Council's website (Resolution of Council 23 January 2019)

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1 PLEDGE AND RECONCILIATION STATEMENT**2 APOLOGIES AND REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE****3 COMMUNITY RECOGNITION****4 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST OR CONFLICT OF INTEREST****5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

5.1 Minutes of the Scheduled Meeting of Council held on 27 October 2021.

Officer Recommendation

That Council confirm the minutes of the 27 October 2021 Scheduled Meeting of Council.

5.2 Minutes of the Scheduled Meeting of Council held on 17 November 2021.

Officer Recommendation

That Council confirm the minutes of the 17 November 2021 Scheduled Meeting of Council.

6 PETITIONS**7 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION****7.1 Open Forum****7.2 Questions of Council****8 REPORTS - DIRECTOR ASSETS & DEVELOPMENT****8.1 Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025**

Presenter: Vito Albicini, Director Assets and Development

Attachment(s):

1. Draft DAMP 2021 2025 for adoption [8.1.1 - 27 pages]

Executive Summary

This report is to seek Council's adoption of the 2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) after completing consultation with the Community.

Officer Recommendation

That Council adopt the 2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Background

Council's current DAMP (2017-2021) expires December 2021. S68A of *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires councils to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan by 4 December 2021 and at the end of each period of 4 years thereafter.

At its 28 July 2021 meeting, Council endorsed the Draft 2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan for public exhibition.

The public exhibition period extended from 15 August to 5 September 2021. A report of the feedback received during the public exhibition was presented at Council's 27 October 2021 meeting.

Following the public exhibition period, some minor changes were made to the draft DAMP. Some amendments were also made to align the document with the Council Plan 2021-2025, which was adopted on 27 October 2021.

Discussion

The 2021 DAMP key focus areas and strategies are as follows:

- Animals and Amenity (Nuisances)
Strategy: Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create nuisance
- Animal identification, registration, overpopulation and euthanasia
Strategy: Increase registration and reduce overpopulation
- Community Engagement
Strategy: Ensure the community are kept well informed of Council services
- Dog attacks
Strategy: Reduce impact of dog attacks on community and business
- Compliance
Strategy: Improve voluntary compliance
- Training of Authorised Officers
Strategy: Ensure that all staff involved in animal management obtain and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work efficiently, effectively and safely
- Animal Health and Welfare
Strategy: Promote animal health, welfare and emergency planning
- Dangerous, menacing and Restricted Breed dogs
Strategy: Effective management of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

Once Council adopts the 2021-2025 DAMP, it will be submitted to the Secretary of Animal Welfare Victoria, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (Department Jobs, Precinct and Regions) as per S68A(1) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Council Plan/Strategies/Policies

This report supports the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Resilient Communities* strategy "Provide and promote safe, passive and active recreational opportunities that will enhance the health, and wellbeing of residents and visitors".

Relevant Legislation

S68A of *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires Councils to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan by 4 December 2021.

Financial Implications and Risk

The development of the Draft 2021-2025 DAMP was completed using internal resources.

The delivery of the 2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan will require additional resourcing during its lifespan. This will be sought as part of Council's deliberation during the preparation of annual Council budgets.

Conflict of Interest

There are no declared conflicts of interest by Council officers in relation to this report.

Community and Stakeholder Consultation

This consultation considered the deliberative engagement principals within the constraints of COVID-19 lockdowns.

8.2 Consideration to join VECO - Victorian Energy Collaboration

Presenter - Vito Albicini, Director Assets & Development

Attachment(s):

1. Consideration to join - VECO Victorian Energy Collaboration (distributed to Councillors separately)

Executive Summary

This report seeks Council endorsement to participate in the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) and sets out the benefits and opportunities associated with this proposal.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. **resolve to join all of its electricity accounts (including small facilities, large facilities and un-metered streetlights) to the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2030, for an assessed total contract value of around \$860,000 over the contract period; and**
2. **delegate the CEO to sign all of the related contractual documentation, including the Letter of Intent.**

Background

Victorian councils have formed Australia's largest ever buying group in the local government sector to switch to renewable energy, and the largest ever emissions reduction project undertaken by local government in Australia. VECO – the Victorian Energy Collaboration is the collective effort of council operations that is sourced from 100% renewable energy sources. Murrindindi Shire Council previously considered joining VECO, and on 24 July 2019 Council resolved to participate in VECO, which was then known as the Local Government Power Purchasing Agreement (LG PPA) project, to procure renewable energy for Council's Alexandra Corporate Office, Marysville Community Centre and unmetered public street light accounts. However, following this decision, the project timeline was reported to have experienced major delays, and so at the time, Murrindindi Shire Council made a decision to withdraw from the process.

Darebin Council continued to pursue the arrangement and, in May 2021, 46 Councils signed up to the rebadged Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) electricity supply agreement. Darebin City Council, in its capacity as Lead Organisation, has now invited other councils, including Murrindindi Shire Council, to join VECO.

Discussion

Purchasing 100% renewable energy is the biggest single climate mitigation action that Council can take. During a limited period until early 2022, invited councils, including Murrindindi Shire are being provided the opportunity to access the VECO offer with Red Energy under the same contract rates and conditions as existing councils. The contract period would extend to 31 December 2030, with an option for rollover at that time. Murrindindi Shire Council's large facilities and unmetered public streetlights contract is currently expired, and the small facilities are eligible for rollover at 31 December 2021. All of the accounts, therefore, fit within the proposed VECO timeframe to join on 1 January 2022. However, in order to meet this timeframe, Council must provide an indication to join VECO by 3 December 2021.

Following the completion of the procurement process in April 2021, and acceptance by the VECO Buyers Group, Red Energy/Snowy Hydro were confirmed as VECO's retailer. Red Energy is a 100% Australian owned company, born in Victoria. VECO is a cost-effective way to transition Council's electricity to 100% renewable energy, demonstrated by comprehensive cost analysis and market-testing results, along with its existing track record. Purchasing renewable power through VECO represents a significant step towards achieving the Council Plan 2021-2025 goal of reaching net zero by 2035.

VECO is a unique opportunity to achieve a long-term contract for low cost renewable energy. Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) have existed for many years for large energy consumers, however renewable energy PPAs are becoming increasingly popular for organisations that want to demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and meet emissions reduction targets. The opportunities for Murrindindi Shire Council include:

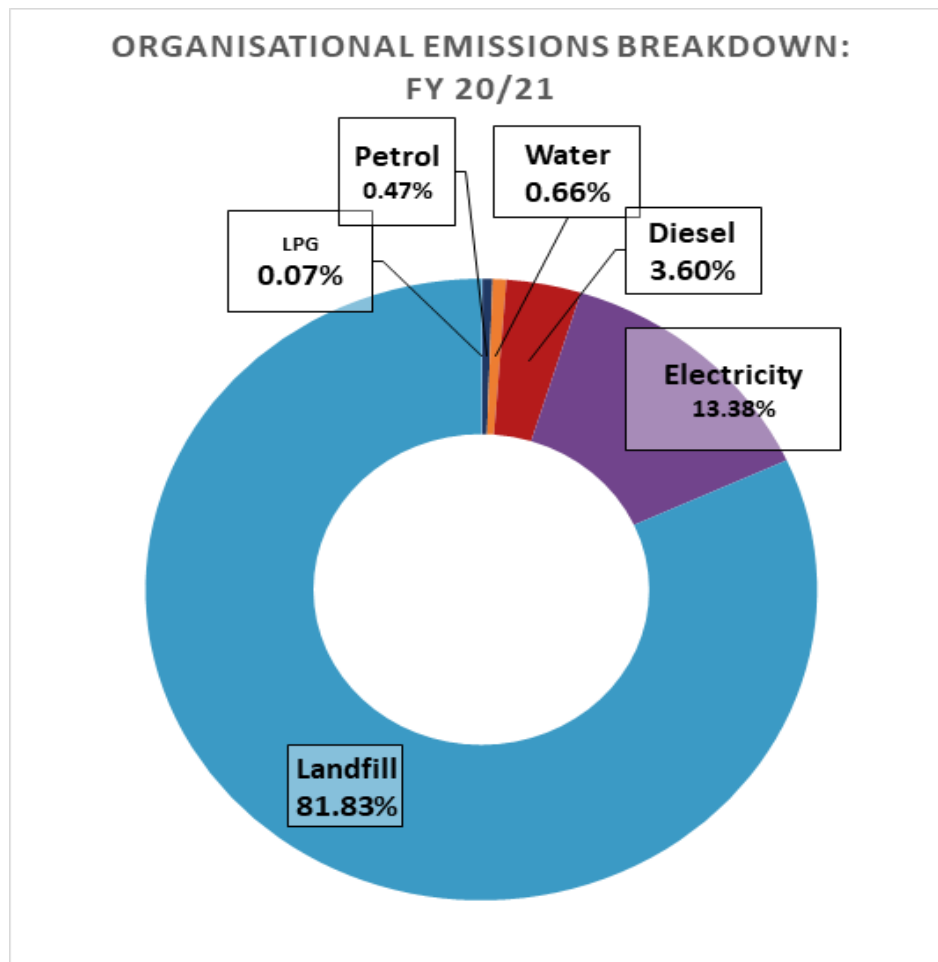
- A contract that includes all market account types
- A price that has been analysed and assessed by the project's energy advisors (Energetics), which has demonstrated that the delivered price is better than business as usual over the contract term
- Demonstrated commitment to 100% renewable energy for Council electricity accounts, through the purchase of Large Scale Generation Certificates
- An opportunity to reduce emissions from Council operations and contribute significantly to the net zero by 2035 target – of a saving of at least 10% of overall Council emissions, equivalent to approximately 739 tonnes of CO₂-e per year
- An opportunity to demonstrate climate change leadership to the community, State and Federal Governments, supporting renewable electricity generation in Victoria
- Linking the electricity supply to two considerable wind farms, therefore supporting additional renewable energy supplies to the grid
- Considerable marketing and promotional opportunities on an ongoing basis.

Emissions savings through VECO

As noted in Figure 2 below, electricity use contributes to up to 13% of Murrindindi Shire Council's emissions and it is estimated to indicate an approximate contribution of 10%, taking into account fluctuations over time. Therefore, transferring all of Council's electricity accounts to VECO would remove this approximate 10% - equivalent to 739 tonnes CO₂-e per year. This, combined with implementation of Council's Waste Strategy, is a key action that could significantly assist Council to meet its carbon emissions targets. Further action to support the development of community renewable energy would further contribute to community wide emissions reductions. Also, ongoing efficiency gains and environmental projects, such as solar panel installations, will help to

reduce electricity usage and costs to Council even further (while also supporting community-wide emissions reduction).

Figure 2 - Organisational emissions – FY 2020/2021



Commitment to Participate/Sign

Murrindindi Shire Council has been invited to indicate commitment to participate in VECO by signing a Letter of Intent by 3 December 2021, to enable the opportunity to commence on 1 January 2022. Note that this is not formal notification of entering into a contract, and that Council will have to subsequently enter into the VECO specific Renewable Electricity Supply Agreement (RESA), to be signed by 17 December 2021. The offer comprises a single RESA for each council across all market categories, therefore, councils will only sign one contract regardless of how many market categories they have committed to the project.

Access to the VECO RESA for additional councils is dependent on signing the Implementation Deed, which defines the governance arrangements between the participating Councils. By signing this Letter of Intent, Council acknowledges it has done its own due diligence and will have the necessary delegations in place to sign the contract.

Council Plan/Strategies/Policies

This report supports the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Our Protected Environment* strategy “to protect and enhance our natural environment, supporting environmental sustainability, community resilience, innovation and adaptation to climate change to achieve net-zero emissions by 2035”.

The approximate 10% emissions reduction and support of renewable energy development in Victoria would demonstrate to the community that Council is committed to tangible action on climate change.

Relevant Legislation

Climate Change Act 2017 and Local Government Act 2020.

The Victorian *Local Government Act 2020* mandates the consideration of climate change risks in Council decision making processes.

Financial Implications and Risk

Energetics were engaged as an energy advisor to provide end-to-end strategic and analytical support for the VECO Buyers' Group, and prepared a financial and commercial report for the VECO project in 2021. The Energetics analysis assessed the value of VECO on the basis of net present cost (NPC) over the life of the PPA compared to Business as Usual + GreenPower. This allows for a like-for-like comparison. The outcomes of Energetics' financial modelling of the Red Energy offer against the BAU + GreenPower option indicates a better price outcome for councils under VECO compared to the Business as Usual (BAU) scenario (further detail is included in the confidential attachment).

Energetics were also contracted to prepare a detailed financial analysis to show the costs, benefits and risks for Murrindindi Shire Council to join VECO, with an analysis spanning the life of the nine-year contract and considering market forces, and other future variables. This report also shows a cost benefit to Murrindindi Shire Council, of approximately 8% over the life of the project, equivalent to a savings of approximately \$74,000. The total contract value for Council has been assessed by Energetics and is projected to be no more than \$860,000 over the contract period.

Conflict of Interest

There are no declared conflicts of interest by Council officers in relation to this report.

Community and Stakeholder Consultation

Community feedback through the Council Plan and other engagement processes have identified community support for Council purchasing renewable energy.

8.3 Take2 Climate Change Pledge

Presenter - Vito Albicini, Director Assets & Development

Attachment(s):

1. Take2 Pledge [8.3.1 - 2 pages]

Executive Summary

In line with Council's stated objectives to address climate change, this report presents a *Take2 Climate Change Pledge* for Council's adoption. This includes an emissions reduction goal and strategic commitments to achieve during the term of the Pledge. A graphic is included in the report to illustrate the expected emissions savings during the period covered by the Pledge, in order to achieve zero net emissions by 2035.

Officer Recommendation

That Council adopt the attached Take2 Climate Change Pledge.

Background

Council is required to address climate change under both the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Victorian *Climate Change Act 2017*. It is also included in the *Council Action Plan 2021-22*.

The *Climate Change Act* sets a strong, clear pathway for Victoria by legislating a target of net zero net emissions by 2050. The Take 2 Pledge is Australia's first state government-led pledge initiative and one of the most comprehensive climate change programs in the world. More than 12,000 Victorians and 1200 organisations have so far made a pledge.

It is estimated by the Take2 Network that we will cut Victoria's emissions by at least 20% if every TAKE2 member addresses their carbon footprint.

Discussion

Voluntary council pledges under the *Climate Change Act* seek to acknowledge the substantial efforts of local governments on climate change. A council pledge should include council actions over next 5 years (from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2025) that are reasonably expected to reduce emissions caused or otherwise influenced by the council; and a reasonable estimate of emissions reductions that are expected to result from those actions.

The Pledge is a statement of intent and taking the Pledge has a number of benefits:

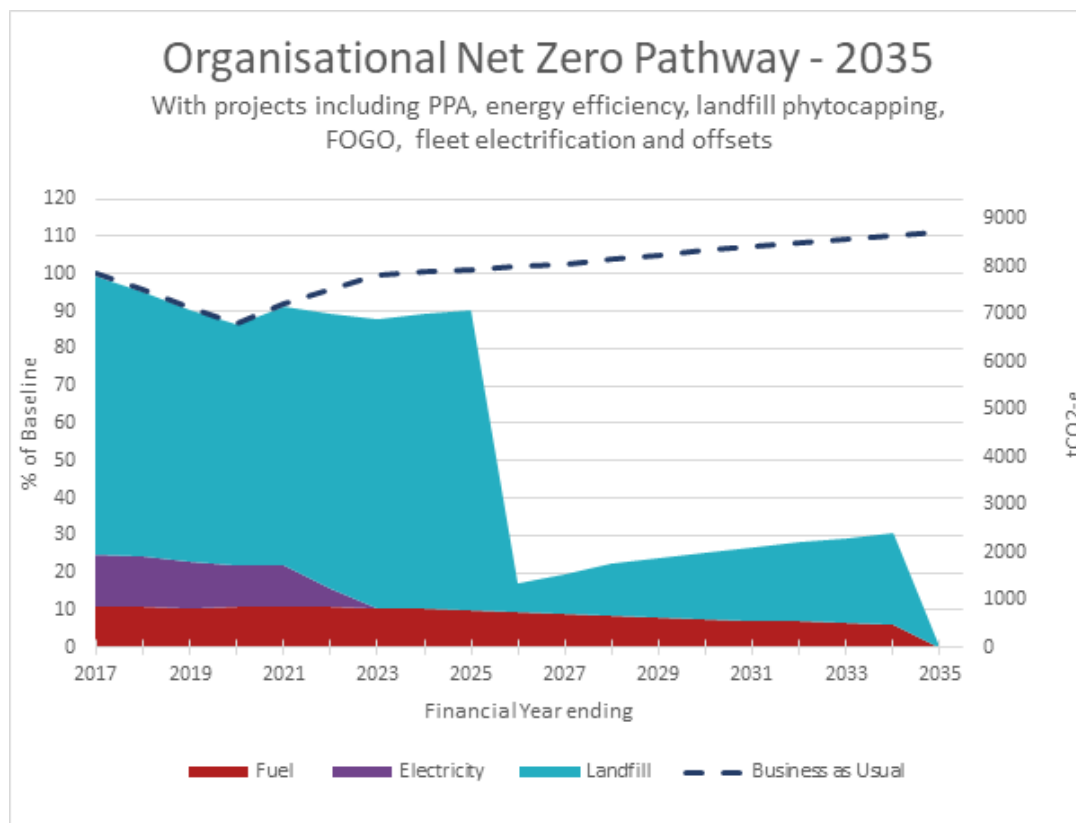
- Helping Council to demonstrate that it is meeting legislative requirements;
- Reputational benefits;
- Setting a clear direction for Council and the community for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change; and
- Demonstrating leadership on this issue, including how Council intends to work with the community.

By signing the Pledge, Council will be making a public commitment to act on climate change, in partnership with the community, by continuing existing activities and/or taking further action to address the issue. There is significant scope for work in both of these areas, supported by the Victorian Government, the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance, and other agencies and networks, and through working in partnership with the community.

Attachment 8.3.1 provides the recommended Take2 Pledge statement of Council.

The Pledge includes a preamble, with a goal to reduce total organisational emissions of roughly 739 tonnes CO₂-e per annum, which is equivalent to an approximate reduction from current levels of 10% by 2025. This is depicted in an accompanying graphic (Figure 1 below). Note that this is a conservative estimate based on present day timelines for the projected reduction in emissions based on shifting to 100% renewable electricity supply and implementation of key components of Council's Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy (namely the 50% capping of landfill and implementation of FOGO). Reductions are predominantly reliant on electricity usage and landfill. Note also that the projected achievement of net zero by 2035, particularly the final 30% of emissions from 2030 to 2035, may need to be met through a combination of direct and purchased offsets. Revegetation and farm forestry activities could potentially contribute towards Council's offsets.

Figure 1: Murrindindi Shire Council emissions reduction projections for Take2 Pledge (see next page)



** note final 30% in emissions reduction to net zero will be likely met through offsets

Following the guidance provided by the *Council Plan 2021-2025*, the recommended statement also outlines Council's commitments as a four-step process. In the attached Pledge, the four commitments are:

Strategic commitment 1:

Council, in partnership with the Community, will make every effort to reach net zero emissions by 2035 across the municipality. This will include developing clearer policies, plans, processes and goals that help to reach this target and inform better decision making in the context of climate change. This effort will focus on all areas of Council responsibility, including the operations of Council, assets, infrastructure and essential services to our local community, and direct community engagement and education activities.

Strategic commitment 2:

Council will implement emission reduction projects and adaptation actions as identified through strategic commitment 1.

Strategic commitment 3:

Council will continue to collaborate with and support community groups, local businesses, regional authorities, local governments and the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance to reduce the municipality's emissions and help the region adapt to the impacts of climate change. Council will also build further partnerships to progress achievement of the key climate change commitments outlines above.

Strategic commitment 4:

Council will transition to 100% renewable electricity use for all of its electricity accounts by 2025.

Council Plan/Strategies/Policies

This report supports the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Our Protected Environment* strategy “to protect and enhance our natural environment, supporting environmental sustainability, community resilience, innovation and adaptation to climate change to achieve net-zero emissions by 2035”.

Relevant Legislation

Climate Change Act 2017 and Local Government Act 2020.

The Victorian *Local Government Act 2020* mandates the consideration of climate change risks in Council decision making processes.

Financial Implications and Risk

The *Local Government Act 2020* has placed a legislative requirement on Councils to consider climate change risks, therefore if insufficient effort is made in discharging this obligation it opens up Council to potential risk.

Between 2021 and 2025, most of the additional emissions reductions will be due to a transition to 100% renewable energy for all of Council’s electricity supply, as well as the costs associated with implementation of the waste strategy.

Conflict of Interest

There are no declared conflicts of interest by Council officers in relation to this report.

Community and Stakeholder Consultation

The Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning was consulted in the preparation of the draft pledge.

9 REPORTS - DIRECTOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**9.1 Grants and Contributions Program - November Allocations**

Presenter – Shivaun Brown, Director Community Engagement

Attachment(s): Nil

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present Council with the October 2021 Grants and Contributions Program applications for noting and endorsement.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. note the following allocations and variations awarded by Officers under Delegation:

Grant Application	Amount
Fawcett Mechanics Institute Reserve Committee of Management - UV Water Filter Controller Replacement	\$600

Variation Application	Variation	Grant Awarded
Park Life Alexandra	Delivery date change due to COVID19	\$16,000

2. endorse the following allocations recommended by the Grants and Contributions Assessment Panel:

Grant Application	Amount
Pathways for Carers Murrindindi – Pathways for Carers	\$2,653
Murrindindi East U3A Inc - Positive Ageing in Murrindindi	\$750
Big Hill Events - Bella Buxton, Buxton Bootcamp, Hux at Bux, Shifty Fifty, G50	\$5,000
Yea Water Tigers Amateur Swimming Club - 2021 – Yea Swimming Comeback!	\$1,800
Alexandra Community Christmas Tree Festival	\$1,100

Background

The Grants and Contributions Program provides the opportunity for not-for-profit community groups and organisations, social enterprises and businesses to seek funding from Council to support events, activities and projects that align with the *Murrindindi Shire Council 2017-2021 Council Plan*.

The funding streams provided under the program are:

- Fee Reductions (and waivers by exception)
- Quick Response
- Governance, Skills and Capacity Building
- Sponsorships (including eligible individuals)
- Community Projects and Events
- Small and New Tourism Events
- Events of State Significance
- Business Plan Support.

Each stream has its own objectives, eligibility and assessment criteria and can be found in the Program Guidelines on Council's website.

Assessment occurs monthly for Fee Reductions, Quick Response and Governance, Skills and Capacity Building grant streams and in March, July and October for all other streams.

Discussion

Council officers have assessed the following grant application under delegation and have made the following allocation:

Quick Response

1. Fawcett Mechanics Institute Reserve Committee of Management - UV Water Filter Controller Replacement

This project will address the replacement of mandatory UV Water Filter Controller at Fawcett Hall before the hall can be reopened for hire following COVID-19 shutdowns.

COVID-19 has restricted community use of the Fawcett Hall for the past 18 months that has reduced income generation for the hall committee of management. Operational expenses have continued during this time depleting savings. The Fawcett Hall provides a venue for the small rural community to connect and support each other, including the local CFA and Landcare group.

The venue is booked for events including birthdays, parties and weddings. **Supported with a grant of \$600.**

Council officers have assessed the following grant variation request under delegation and have made the following grant variation:

Business Growth and Establishment

1. Park Life Alexandra - Insta Home - rapid built housing providing affordable home ownership and high ROI investment for tourism operators

The project will provide affordable housing to a sector which is widely recognised as experiencing a crisis. It will convert a smart housing product to comply with Australian standards and regulations to provide permanent housing solutions within the Shire.

The project has been impacted by global supply chain delays due to COVID-19 and is seeking to extend the timeline of the project. Council officers support the request and recommend a 3-month extension to the project timeline. **Grant variation supported.**

Council officers have assessed the following grant applications and provided recommendation for decision by Council:

Community Projects and Events

1. Pathways for Carers Murrindindi – Pathways for Carers

This project is to support the carers group for 12 months to assist with funding the morning tea activity each month at a local Café after our walk, linking participants to a local community special guest each month and delivering a special event for Carers Month in October 2022.

The project will support regular social connection between carers within Murrindindi and provide a platform to enhance access to local services, whilst increasing the resilience and wellbeing of the group. Funding will also enable a celebration event during National Carers Week. The project will provide a way to support the wellbeing of carers across Murrindindi by providing social connection, emotional support and physical activity. **Recommended for a grant of \$2,653.**

2. Murrindindi East U3A Inc – Positive Ageing in Murrindindi

This project will support production of an A3 information page highlighting the range of activities available for the Murrindindi 50 + age community to join and become actively involved in Murrindindi community life.

The project highlights the value of U3A in supporting older community members to remain active mentally and physically in a supportive environment. The project will encourage increased membership, and connect with new residents to the area. COVID-19 has impacted social connection and mental wellbeing for this age group, by showcasing the U3A program and increasing membership participants will be encouraged to resume normal social engagement following the restrictions of COVID-19. **Recommended for a grant of \$750.**

Event Support

1. Big Hill Events - Bella Buxton, Buxton Bootcamp, Hux at Bux, Shifty Fifty, G50

The project will support the delivery of a series of five cycling events over two weekends to be held at Buxton in 2021 and 2022. The events target to different niche demographics in the cycling

community and has an individual focus included a dedicated event for female cyclists and a new gravel road cycling event.

The project demonstrates strong alignment with Council's Tourism and Events Strategy and Council Plan objectives and leverages our nature-based asset strengths. The events will attract a significant number of visitors, introduce many new cyclists to the Shire and support local businesses through event support opportunities and competitor accommodation. **Recommended for a grant of \$5,000.**

Fee Reductions

1. Yea Water Tigers Amateur Swimming Club - 2021- Yea Swimming Comeback!

The application seeks a fee reduction relating to pool hire costs for training nights for the Club. Swim Club membership numbers are predicted to be lower than average in 2021/22 due to unexpected COVID-19 lockdowns and ongoing community hesitancy.

The Yea Tigers Swim club has a long history of supporting learn to swim, swim coaching and advanced squad programs for the Yea district. Hundreds of young people and adults have developed life skills and friendships through club membership. The club is run by volunteers and supports health and wellbeing via physical activity, social connection and sense of purpose. Due to COVID-19 impacts the Club was forced to cancel 20/21 swim season. **Recommended for a grant of \$1,800.**

2. Alexandra Community Christmas Tree Festival - Alexandra Community Christmas Tree Festival

The project will see the display of decorated Christmas trees by local community groups, schools and businesses in Alexandra Shire Hall. The event attracts visitors to Alexandra to enjoy the spectacular Christmas exhibition and bring joy to all that visit. The applicant is seeking a fee reduction for the cost of use of Alexandra Shire Hall.

The project is a beneficial one for the community and provides the chance to involve many different parts of the community for the purpose of celebrating Christmas - a particularly positive thing to do after a difficult year for the community. **Recommended for a grant of \$1,100.**

Council Plan/Strategies/Policies

This report supports the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Growth and Opportunity* strategic objective "to prioritise and promote a culture in which the economy, businesses and community can grow and thrive".

This report supports the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Growth and Opportunity* strategy to "boost local investment and employment opportunities through activities that encourage businesses, social enterprise, and industry sectors to thrive and grow".

This report supports the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Growth and Opportunity* strategy "support and promote our tourism and events sector to boost the economy through increased visitation".

Relevant Legislation

There are no legislative considerations to this report.

Financial Implications and Risk

The below financial table shows grant funds allocated, and recommended for allocation, for October and those allocated to date in this Financial Year:

Grant Stream	October allocations	Previous allocations	Total 21/22
Fee Reductions	\$2,900	\$4,251	\$7,151
Governance, Skills and Capacity Building			
Quick Response	\$600.00		\$600
Community Sponsorship, Projects and Events	\$3,402	\$12,827	\$16,230
Tourism Events	\$5,000		\$5,000
Business Plan Support			
TOTAL	\$11,902	\$17,078	\$28,981

The indicative total budget of the Grants and Contributions Program for the 2021/22 financial year is \$180,000.

Conflict of Interest

There are no declared conflicts of interest by Council officers in relation to this report.

Community and Stakeholder Consultation

No external community or stakeholder consultation was required for this matter.

9.2 Customer Complaints Policy

Presenter- Shivaun Brown, Director Community Engagement

Attachment(s):

1. DRAFT Customer Complaints Policy - November 2021 [9.2.1 - 6 pages]

Executive Summary

This report is to seek Council's adoption of the revised Customer Complaints Policy (Policy).

Officer Recommendation

That Council adopt the revised Customer Complaints Policy as contained in Attachment 9.2.1.

Background

Victorian councils are required to revise their customer complaints policies by the end of 2021 in order to comply with new provisions relating to management of customer complaints set out in the *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*.

The new provisions include the need to articulate in a complaints policy the process for lodging, reviewing and escalating complaints. The Act also provides a revised definition of what constitutes a complaint in the local government context.

This Policy replaces Council's existing Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy, adopted by Council in October 2019.

Discussion

The revised Policy aims to provide clarity for staff and customers about Council's expectations for complaint handling and will provide the basis for planned future improvements for complaint handling. The Policy aims to

- provide clarity for customers and staff about what does, and doesn't, constitute a complaint
- reinforce Council's commitment to making it easy for customers to make complaints to Council
- reinforce the importance of complaints to staff as a means to keep Council accountable and an opportunity to improve our service

- stress the importance of ongoing communication with customers, including in the event a resolution to a complaint is delayed for any reason
- provide clarity around processes for internal treatment of complaints, escalation of complaints within Council and for escalation to external agencies for review, where appropriate.

The Policy also reflects a range of best practice recommendations made in the Victorian Ombudsman's 2021 Good Practice Complaint Handling Guide for councils.

Council Plan/Strategies/Policies

This Policy supports the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Transparency, Inclusion and Accountability* strategy "to put the customer first in everything we do".

Relevant Legislation

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

Financial Implications and Risk

Nil.

Conflict of Interest

There are no declared conflicts of interest by Council officers in relation to this report.

Community and Stakeholder Consultation

No external community or stakeholder consultation was required for this matter.

10 REPORTS - DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND SHARED SERVICES

10.1 Rural Councils Transformation Project

Presenter - Michael Chesworth, Director Corporate and Shared Services

Attachment(s): Nil

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of a funding approach by Murrindindi, Mansfield, Strathbogie and potentially Benalla Councils under the State Government's Rural Councils Transformation Program.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

- 1. note that Murrindindi Shire Council is a participant in a grouping of councils that will be making an application for funding under the Victorian Government Rural Councils Transformation Program (RCTP) for the following initiative: Lifting Service Performance Through Shared Technology and Collaboration**
- 2. note that the application is due for submission by 10 December 2021**
- 3. support, in principle, the submission of a grant application by Murrindindi, Mansfield, Strathbogie and potentially Benalla Councils.**

Background

For many years Victorian councils have explored ways of improving the sustainability and service delivery of Council operations. In many cases this has involved working in a collaborative way with other municipalities to share resources or combine efforts in some way to enhance services to the community.

A number of examples of this exist in the Hume region with councils sharing services and working together on collaborative projects. Often these efforts are constrained by the limited resourcing that is available to make transformational change to processes or systems that would enable collaboration.

In December 2017 a report prepared by KPMG advised the State Government that significant investment into the Victorian Local Government sector would be required to facilitate change in business practices and to provide the funding needed to transition to new models of service delivery.

In 2018 the Victorian Government launched Rural Councils Transformation Program (RCTP) to enable rural councils to work with other councils to improve services and reduce costs. A \$8 million second round of this program was recently announced to help improve the financial sustainability of rural councils.

The RCTP aims to:

- Improve the financial sustainability of rural councils by achieving economies of scale, including through regional service delivery or collaborative procurement
- Promote more efficient and improved service delivery through collaboration and innovation
- Facilitate benefits for rural and regional communities, with priority given to those for rural communities
- Demonstrate potential efficiencies to be gained through regional service delivery.

Round two is focused on projects that include new and ongoing collaboration and resource sharing. Projects will be funded up to \$1 million, with a maximum of \$250,000 for each rural council involved. While funding is not awarded for metropolitan or regional council involvement, all Victorian councils can participate in the program. A minimum of two rural councils (and no more than four councils) must be involved and projects will have to be completed within two years.

Murrindindi, Mansfield and Strathbogie Shire Councils are in the process of preparing a joint funding application. At the time of preparing this report it was highly likely that Benalla City Council will also join the collaboration. Timelines for this project are tight with applications due on 10 December 2021.

Discussion

For the past 12 months Murrindindi, Mansfield and Strathbogie councils have been working with the three upper North East Rural councils, Towong, Indigo and Alpine on a business case for shared digital services. This business case was presented to Local Government Minister Leane earlier this calendar year.

The RCTF Round 2 does not provide for more than four councils to collaborate on an application therefore the six councils have separated into Upper North East Councils and Lower North East Councils for the purpose of applying for these funds. However, all six councils share a long-term view of continuing down a similar path so as not to limit future opportunities.

The application under development details a number of proposed digital transformations across a number of service areas spanning the three councils.

The project has been titled 'Lifting Service Performance Through Shared Technology and Collaboration' and aims to address the following shared issues:

- Disparate systems impeding shared services
- Ageing legacy systems offering little support for customer visibility
- Unsatisfactory customer responsiveness
- Difficulty attracting, and then holding ICT resources

- Need to improve compliance with Records Management requirements
- Lack of ICT Tools to support collaboration
- Limited capability to address current and emerging ICT technology risks – such as Cyber security.

The proposed project recognises that increasing community expectations of Council services are exceeding current Council capabilities, due to ageing and unintegrated systems, with limited council funds available to adequately address the problem.

Although the funding application is still under development, it is envisaged the project will focus on the following outcomes:

- Aligning the ICT enterprise architecture
- Establishing shared ICT governance arrangements
- Pursuing economies of scale through joint procurement of ICT
- Optimising use of existing resources to enable resource sharing
- Migrating 'on-premise' technology to jointly procured cloud-based solutions
- Implementing improved customer focus.

A preliminary presentation to State representatives by the three councils was conducted on 10 November which outlined these aims. Feedback provided was encouraging, although there is a need to more specifically identify anticipated outcomes in the submission.

To support the submission, evidence that each Council endorses the funding submission is required. To date both the Mansfield and Strathbogie Shire Councils have resolved to support a joint application at their respective November 2021 Council meetings.

Council Plan/Strategies/Policies

This report supports the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Transparency, Inclusion and Accountability* strategic objective “to ensure our services, people and systems deliver the best possible outcomes for our communities now and into the future”.

Council’s participation in the RCTP broadly aligns with directions for Council’s ICT Strategy.

Relevant Legislation

There is no specific legislation that relates to this project.

Financial Implications and Risk

The funding program does not require matching council financial contributions; however it is anticipated councils will need to provide ongoing funding for the solutions developed. The \$750,000 available across the three councils (or \$1million if Benalla Council joins) must be expended within two years and will enable each council to leverage their existing budgeted ICT expenditure on the focus areas. At this stage it is anticipated these budgeted funds (across Murrindindi, Mansfield and Strathbogie) will total approximately \$130,000 in the first year and \$350,000 in the second year of the project.

Council’s recently development ICT Strategy sets out Council’s roadmap over the next few years to modernise Council’s ICT systems. Council’s participation in the RCTF Round 2 Program is consistent with this Strategy and should realise savings with joint procurement power.

Conflict of Interest

There are no declared conflicts of interest by Council officers in relation to this report.

Community and Stakeholder Consultation

No community consultation has been undertaken for this project. Any community consultation that may be appropriate for any of the project areas would be premature at this pre-application stage and would be more appropriate as part of the project development phase.

11 NOTICES OF MOTIONS**12 MATTERS DEFERRED FROM PREVIOUS MEETING****13 URGENT BUSINESS****14 COUNCILLOR REPORTS****14.1 Cr Karine Haslam****14.2 Cr Ilona Gerencser****14.3 Cr Eric Lording****14.4 Cr John Walsh****14.5 Cr Sandice McAulay****14.6 Cr Damien Gallagher****14.7 Cr Sue Carpenter - Mayoral Report****15 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT****16 ASSEMBLIES OF COUNCILLORS****Purpose**

This report presents the records of assemblies of Councillors for 27 October 2021 to 17 November 2021, for Council to note in accordance with Section 80A of the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act).

Officer Recommendation

That Council receive and note the records of assembly of Councillors for 25 October 2021 to 19 November 2021.

Background

In accordance with Section 80A of the *Act*, written assemblies of Councillors are to be reported at an Scheduled Meeting of Council.

An assembly of Councillors includes advisory committees, where one or more Councillors were present, along with planned or scheduled meetings involving at least half of the Councillors and a Council officer.

A Councillor who has a conflict of interest at an assembly of Councillors, must disclose the conflict of interest, and leave the meeting while the matter is being discussed.

Discussion

A written record is required to be kept of every assembly of Councillors, including the names of all Councillors and staff at the meeting, a list of the matters considered, any conflict of interest disclosed by a Councillor, and whether a Councillor who disclosed a conflict left the meeting.

The following summary details are for 27 October 2021 to 17 November 2021:

Meeting Name/Type		Council Pre-Meet		
Meeting Date:		27 October 2021		
Matters Discussed:		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 – Public Exhibition 2. General Liquor Licence – 3 Back Eildon Road, Thornton 3. Development of a Farm Shed – 25 Phillips Road, Toolangi 4. Response to Petition – Falls Road Upgrade 5. Grants and Contributions Program – October Allocations 6. Annual Report 2020/21 7. 2017-2021 Council Plan Final Report 8. Council Plan 2021-25 and Priority Action Plan 2021-22 9. Long Term Financial Plan 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2030 10. MAV WorkCare Payment 11. CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee Composition and Appointment of Independent Member 12. Capital Works Quarterly Report – September 2021 13. Gordon Street Alexandra – Proposed Cooperative Works 14. CONT21/16 – McDonalds Bridge Renewal and Upgrade – Tender Award 		
Councillor Attendees:		Cr S Carpenter, Cr D Gallagher, Cr K Haslam, Cr I Gerencser, Cr E Lording, Cr S McAulay, Cr J Walsh		
Council Officer Attendees:		L Bonazzi, M Chesworth, V Albicini, S Brown, T Carter, N Stewart, C Fraser, C Gartland, C Southurst, A Cassell		
Conflict of Interest Disclosures: Yes				
Matter No.	Councillor making disclosure	Was a vote taken?	Did the Councillor leave the room?	When? Before or after discussion?
2	Cr K Haslam	No	Yes	Before
2	Cr J Walsh	No	Yes	Before

Meeting Name/Type	Briefing Session
Meeting Date:	3 November 2021
Matters Discussed:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Councillor Workshop with Chris Kotur 2. Family Violence – 16 Days of Activism 3. RV Friendly Towns Project
Councillor Attendees:	Cr S Carpenter, Cr D Gallagher, Cr I Gerencser, Cr K Haslam, Cr E Lording, Cr S McAulay, Cr J Walsh
Council Officer Attendees:	L Bonazzi, M Chesworth, V Albicini, S Brown, N Carter, S Coller, M Thomas
Conflict of Interest Disclosures: Nil	

Meeting Name/Type	Briefing Session
Meeting Date:	10 November 2021
Matters Discussed:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning Quarterly Report 2. Customer Complaints Policy 3. Council Meeting and Briefing Calendar 2022 4. Visitor Services Review Update
Councillor Attendees:	Cr S Carpenter, Cr D Gallagher, Cr K Haslam, Cr E Lording, Cr J Walsh
Council Officer Attendees:	L Bonazzi, M Chesworth, V Albicini, S Brown, T Carter, N Stewart, J Rabel, M Thomas
Conflict of Interest Disclosures: Nil	

Meeting Name/Type	Workshop Session
Meeting Date:	17 November 2021
Matters Discussed:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFA & DELWP Presentation – Fire Prevention Program and Fire Season Preparedness 2. Consideration to join VECO & Take2 Pledge Update 3. Waste Strategy Action Plan – Priority Actions & 10 Year Cost Estimates 4. Grants and Contributions Program – Monthly Allocations 5. Community Communications Preferences Project 6. Capital Works Monthly Report
Councillor Attendees:	Cr S Carpenter, Cr D Gallagher, Cr K Haslam, Cr E Lording, Cr S McAulay, Cr J Walsh
Council Officer Attendees:	L Bonazzi, M Chesworth, V Albicini, S Brown, C Price, C Southurst, J Kirkwood, L Harrison, J Russell, J Rabel, R Kane, S Russell, B Scott
Conflict of Interest Disclosures: Nil	

Council Plan/Strategies/Policies

This matter supports the *Council Plan 2021-2025 Transparency, Inclusion and Accountability* strategy to “maintain transparent, inclusive and accountable governance practices”.

Relevant Legislation

For full details of Council’s requirement for assemblies of Councillors, refer to Section 80A of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

Financial Implications and Risk

There are no financial or risk implications.

Conflict of Interest

Any conflicts of interest are noted in the assembly of Councillors tables listed above.

17 SEALING REGISTER

No report.