



**Swan Hill Rural
City Council**

UNSCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Tuesday 4 June 2024
at 2:00 PM
Council Chambers
Swan Hill Town Hall
53 – 57 McCallum Street, Swan Hill.
VIC 3585

MINUTES

PUBLIC ACCESS

Open to the public and
Live streaming from Council's
website: www.swanhill.vic.gov.au

Confirmed 18 June 2024

Chairperson.....

Vision Statement

Built on strong foundations that embrace our rich History and natural environment, our region will be a place of progressions and possibility. We are a community that is happy, healthy and harmonious - we are empowered, we are respectful and we are proud.

Our Mission

We will lead, advocate, partner and provide efficient services and opportunities for growth and the wellbeing of our community, environment and economy.

Our Values

Council values our residents and community and will be responsive to their needs. In pursuing our objectives, we believe in, and are committed to, the following values:

Community engagement - We will ensure that our communities are consulted, listened to and informed.

Leadership - We will be at the centre of our community and by actively engaging our community we will form the collective view on strategic issues and will then express our views through strong advocacy and action.

Fairness - We will value and embrace the diversity of our community and ensure that all people are treated equally.

Accountability- We will be transparent and efficient in our activities and we will always value feedback.

Trust - We will act with integrity and earn the community's trust by being a reliable partner in delivering services, projects and providing facilities.

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1 Procedural Matters

1.1 Welcome

Mayor, Councillor Cr King assumed the chair and declared the Unscheduled Council Meeting - 4 June 2024 open at 2:01 pm.

1.2 Acknowledgement Of Country

Mayor, Councillor Cr King read the Acknowledgement of Country.

"Swan Hill Rural City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays its respects to their elders, past and present."

1.3 Opening Declaration

Cr Jeffery read the opening declaration.

"We, the Councillors of Swan Hill Rural City Council, declare that we will undertake the duties of the office of Councillor, in the best interests of our community, and faithfully, and impartially, carry out the functions, powers, authorities and discretions vested in us, to the best of our skill and judgement."

1.4 Apologies / Leaves of Absence

CM 2024/81 Motion

Apology Cr Bill Moar.

MOVED Cr McPhee

That Council accept the apology from Cr Bill Moar.

SECONDED Cr Jeffery

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0

1.5 Directors / Officers Present

Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer
Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning
Bruce Myers, Director of Community and Cultural Services
Bhan Pratap, Director of Corporate Services
Leah Johnston, Director of Infrastructure
Ash Free, Finance Manager
Sharon Lindsay, Executive Assistant

1.6 Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

Nil.

2 Officer Reports for Decision

2.1 Consideration of Submissions to Proposed 2024-25 Budget

Directorate: Corporate Services
File Number: S15-06-18
Purpose: For Decision

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

4. Leadership - We will ensure accountable leadership, advocacy and transparent decision making.

4.1 Excellent management and administration

4.1.3 Sound, sustainable:

- Financial management • Excellence in service delivery • Strategic planning

Current Strategic Documents

Budget

Declarations of Interest

Council Officers affirm that no general or material conflicts need to be declared in relation to the subject of this report.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to consider submissions for the Proposed 2024-25 Annual Budget.

Discussion

Council formally received four submissions to the proposed 2024-25 Annual Budget at a Special Council Meeting held on Tuesday 28 May 2024.

The officers' responses to the issues raised in the submission are detailed below.

Summary of Submission 1

The submitter questions the link between the Draft Budget and the Council Plan objective of reducing health impacts of climate change. A further question was asked as to how much Council spend on tree planting, how many trees this provides and whether Council has a plan as to where and why.

The draft budget includes several projects aimed at reducing the impacts of climate change. Projects for solar installations, compost facilities and building improvements to increase energy efficiency. Council Strategic Asset Management plans have environmental and sustainability measures included within to ensure our asset management decisions are made supporting projects that deliver environmental benefits.

Council has a range of programs that supports our tree infrastructure. This includes tree pruning/maintenance, powerline clearing, annual, triannual and five yearly tree inspections, and the planting of new trees.

In 2022/2023, Council planted approximately 340 new trees. In 2023/2024, Council planted approximately 350 trees. It is noted that the number of trees planted does vary dependent upon a range of factors, such as locations, types of trees purchased and watering regime. Unfortunately, some new trees don't survive, however losses have proven to be a very low percent.

From the inspection programs, trees that are missing in nature-strips or are dead, are also identified. This information is then used to program appropriate locations for replacement trees and various community groups can also provide information to Council for consideration.

Furthermore, Council delivers a range of projects that incorporates landscaping initiatives, which achieves the planting of further trees. This is demonstrated with the McCallum Street footpath project where a significant number of additional trees were planted. The development of various masterplans and community plans also consider the need for future tree planting, and this is again demonstrated with the Robinvale Riverfront Masterplan, which includes 300 trees to be planted in Centenary Park.

Summary of Submission 2

The submitter expressed their concern over people leaving the municipality and moving into gated communities and that Lake Boga could be an option for such a development.

No name or contact details were provided with the submission. No response provided.

Summary of Submission 3

The submitter wished to be advised as to the allocation of the \$1.2M surplus from the 2022-23 year.

The submitter has been provided with a copy of the Council resolution detailing the allocation of the 2022-23 rates surplus. No further submission was made.

Summary of Submission 4

The submitter raises some concerns regarding, increased Council cash contributions for capital works, operating and cost efficiencies, the rate cap increase, dependence on grant funding, solar panels on the Swan Hill Leisure Centre, services provided by private entities; and capital works project suitability and management.

Increased Council Cash Contribution to Capital Works

The Council cash value of \$28.3M includes \$14.4M of projects funded from carry forward reserves. This is funding received in a prior period and remained unspent at year end. The majority of the \$14.4M relates to \$2M grant funding received from the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Fund, and \$11.3M for the Art Gallery Redevelopment and Tourism and Cultural Hub that are to be undertaken and funded in partnership with the Federal and State Governments.

Operating Expenditure and Cost Efficiency

Review of operational services is undertaken each year as part of the budget process. This is done to ensure Council provides appropriate services efficiently as possible.

Rate Increases

As per above, each year during the budget process Council aims to ensure that services provided are undertaken as efficiently as possible. Over the past 5 years CPI has increased over 16%, whereas due to rate capping Council has increased its rates 9.6%. Council has had to ensure efficiencies have been realised to ensure the same levels of service can be provided under these cost pressure constraints. Further increases to the CPI over the rate cap put pressure on our ability to provide the appropriate service.

Dependence on Unpredictable Grant Funding

Council has a well-developed long term strategic capital works program that does identify the need for grants contributions from both Federal and State Governments. The process accepts that projects can only proceed when funding is achieved and is balanced in its expectations of what might be delivered.

The Council has a very high success rate of attracting grant funding but also recognises the need to look at alternative funding including co contributions from organisations who will benefit from the project.

Council continues to explore alternative models including working with the private sector to obtain funding for community benefit.

Solar Panel Installation at Leisure Centre

Council and the Community have directly benefitted from a renegotiation of the Leisure Centre contract with the provider which has reduced the cost to provide the service.

Council has assumed control of the utilities and implemented stricter control on these areas of expenditure with the savings going directly back to the Council Budget not the contractor.

The installation of the solar panels will further deliver savings to Council and the Community.

Scope of Government-Funded Projects

This is an ongoing evaluation, and as opportunities present, they are assessed to determine if there is a benefit to the rate payer. The most recent example is Council's withdrawal from the Aged Care Services. Changes to Federal Funding and the increase in organisations specialised in providing this service has seen the decision made by Council to withdraw.

Specific Concerns on Capital Works Programme Management

Recently Council has introduced a Project Management Framework and been able to staff a Project Management Office to deliver our extensive range of projects.

The function of the Project Management Office is to undertake the tasks you've listed above, these being, thorough project evaluation, cost-benefit analyses, risk assessments and community consultation to ensure that only projects with clear, tangible benefits to the community are approved.

A critical gatekeeper in the Project Management Framework is the Project Approval Committee (PAC). PAC has members from the Executive Leadership Team and Managers from various departments. PAC provides governance and oversight of the Council Project and Program Portfolio. The PAC fulfils the PRINCE2™ role of Corporate Governance and Program Management. The PAC is responsible for ensuring Council projects are properly prioritised, planned and managed to deliver agreed business benefits and outcomes.

Consultation

The submission process is part of the consultation process for the budget.

Financial Implications

The consideration of submissions has no direct financial impact. If changes are made to the Proposed Budget due to any of the submissions, then the financial implications will vary depending on the nature of the change.

Social Implications

The consideration of submissions has no direct social impact. If changes are made to the Proposed Budget due to any of the submissions, then the social implications will vary depending on the nature of the change.

Economic Implications

The consideration of submissions has no direct economic impact. If changes are made to the Proposed Budget due to any of the submissions, then the economic implications will vary depending on the nature of the change.

Environmental Implications

The consideration of submissions has no direct environmental impact. If changes are made to the Proposed Budget due to any of the submissions, then the environmental implications will vary depending on the nature of the change.

Risk Management Implications

The consideration of submissions has no direct risk management impact. If changes are made to the Proposed Budget due to any of the submissions, then the risk management implications will vary depending on the nature of the change.

Attachments: Nil

Options

1. After considering the submissions, Council can choose to adopt or amend the 2023/24 Annual Budget.

Recommendation/s

That Council:

1. Consider the issues raised in the submissions and the officer's response.
2. Having considered the submissions, not make any changes to the Proposed 2024-25 Annual Budget.
3. Adopt the 2024-25 Budget at the next scheduled Council meeting (18 June 2024).
4. Write to each submitter thanking them for their submission and outlining Council's response.

CM 2024/82 Motion

MOVED Cr McPhee

That Council:

1. Consider the issues raised in the submissions and the officer's response.
2. Having considered the submissions, not make any changes to the Proposed 2024-25 Annual Budget.

- 3. Adopt the 2024-25 Budget at the next scheduled Council meeting (18 June 2024).**
- 4. Write to each submitter thanking them for their submission and outlining Council's response.**
- 5. In response to submitters, favourable consideration will be given to "Little Murray Urban Frontage Rehabilitation Plan" and the "Greening and Cooling Urban Tree Canopy Strategy".**

SECONDED Cr Jeffery

The Motion was put and CARRIED 6 / 0

3 Close of Meeting

There being no further business the Mayor, Councillor Cr King closed the meeting at 2:08 pm