



**Swan Hill Rural  
City Council**

# **UNSCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING**

Held on Tuesday 23 January 2024  
at 12:00 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](http://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au)

Confirmed 20 February 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.

## Table of Contents

<b>1 Procedural Matters</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.1 Welcome .....	4
1.2 Acknowledgement Of Country .....	4
1.3 Prayer.....	4
1.4 Apologies / Leaves of Absence .....	4
1.5 Directors / Officers Present .....	4
1.6 Disclosures of Conflict of Interest.....	4
<b>2 Officer Reports for Decision</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1 Visit to sister cities - Yamagata and Villers-Bretonneux.....	5
<b>3 Close of Meeting</b> .....	<b>8</b>

## 1 Procedural Matters

### 1.1 Welcome

Mayor, Councillor Cr King assumed the chair and declared the Unscheduled Council Meeting - 23 January 2024 open at 12.00pm.

### 1.2 Acknowledgement Of Country

Mayor, 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 Prayer

Cr Young read the prayer.

**We beseech you Lord, that we may be granted wisdom, understanding and sincerity of purpose, in the decisions we are called on to make for the welfare of the people of the Rural City of Swan Hill.**

### 1.4 Apologies / Leaves of Absence

Apology Cr Chris Jeffery, Cr Nicole McKay and Cr Jacquie Kelly.  
Leave of Absence Cr Les McPhee.

That Council note the apologies/leave of absence.

### 1.5 Directors / Officers Present

Scott Barber, Chief Executive Officer  
Michelle Grainger, Director Development and Planning  
Bhan Pratap, Director of Corporate Services  
Leah Johnston, Director of Infrastructure  
Natalie Thomson, Executive Support

### 1.6 Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

Cr King declared a direct conflict of interest in item 2.1 Visit to sister cities - Yamagata and Villers-Brentonneux as this decision relates to him.

The Mayor Cr King stated that with four Councillors away a quorum cannot be obtained and as per the Governance Rules declared to adjourn the meeting to a date to be advertised within seven days.

There been no further business the Mayor, Councillor Cr King closed the meeting at 12:02 pm

## 2 Officer Reports for Decision

### 2.1 Visit to sister cities - Yamagata and Villers-Bretonneux

**Directorate:** Chief Executive Officer  
**File Number:** S16-02-03  
**Purpose:** For Decision

#### Council Plan Strategy Addressed

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

#### **4.3 Bold leadership, strong partnerships and effective advocacy**

4.3.1 Create meaningful partnerships across our communities

#### Current Strategic Documents

No strategic documents applicable.

#### 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 share feedback provided by the community, via the Mayor and Member for Mildura, Jade Benham, regarding the recent decision to authorise travel for the Mayor to visit Yamagata, Japan and not authorise travel to Villers-Bretonneux, France in April 2024.

#### Discussion

At the Scheduled Meeting in December 2023 (full report attached), Council considered two invitations received by the Mayor to visit Yamagata and Villers-Bretonneux in April 2024, the following motion was put and carried:

#### That Council:

- 1. Formally thank the Mayor of Yamagata for the invitation to Swan Hill Rural City Council's Mayor;**

## **2. Authorise the Mayor to accept the invitation to visit Yamagata in 2024.**

The Mayor has received community feedback, along with an email via the CEO and cited an accompanying letter to the editor of the Sunraysia Daily from Jade Benham, Member for Mildura.

The Mayor has advised of general community concern including feedback from residents after this decision, expressing concerns regarding Council's decision for the Mayor not to accept the invitation to attend the 40th Anniversary of the sister city relationship between Robinvale and Villers-Bretonneux.

Council may unintentionally offend one of our sister city relationships with the contradiction of accepting an invitation from Yamagata, while rejecting the invitation from Villers-Bretonneux.

According to Jade Benham, the decision has raised concerns within the Robinvale community, particularly given the special significance of this year being both the 40th anniversary of our sister city relationship during Robinvale's centenary year.

Council has been asked by the community to reconsider this decision made in December 2023, for equal consideration of both sister cities.

New information to be considered by Council is that from 2003 to 2023, Council records show that representatives have officially visited Yamagata five times and Villers-Bretonneux once.

Acknowledging the importance of maintaining both sister city relationships and continuing the great work that the Council has accomplished over the past 40 plus years, officers are recommending an amendment to the December 2023 motion be made.

### **Consultation**

Email and article from Jade Benham, Member for Mildura (attached).  
Direct contact with the Mayor.

### **Financial Implications**

Nil financial implications as the Mayor Cr King has said that he would pay for his own expenses.

### **Social Implications**

The Yamagata exchange and Villers-Bretonneux visit will foster and maintain cultural and social relationships. Creating a richer appreciation and understanding of the wider world.

It should also be noted that previous Council representatives have more frequently visited Yamagata than Villers-Bretonneux.

Council risks offending volunteers associated with either sister city arrangement when we accept one and not the other.

## Economic Implications

There are no significant economic ties between Yamagata and Swan Hill Rural City Council or Villers-Bretonneux and Swan Hill Rural City Council.

## Environmental Implications

Not applicable.

## Risk Management Implications

Not applicable.

- Attachments:**
1. Yamagata Villers- Bretonneux Report Scheduled Council Meeting unconfirmed MINUTES 19 December 2023 [2.1.1 - 5 pages]
  2. Jade BENHAM MP LTE - SHRCC Villers Bretonneux trip [2.1.2 - 1 page]

## Options

Council may choose to adopt or amend the recommendation.

1. Continue with the resolution as per the December 2023 meeting
2. Amend the resolution to refer to Villers-Bretonneux in place of Yamagata as the approved destination
3. Amend the resolution to enable the Mayor to attend both
4. Support another Councillor to attend the alternative location to the location attended by the Mayor for 2024 (at their own cost)
5. Support another Councillor to attend the alternative location to the location attended by the Mayor for 2024 (at Council's cost)

## Recommendation/s

### That Council:

1. **Setup an alternating sequence of sister city visits, to ensure equal attention is given to both sister city relationships when Councillors are permitted to travel;**
2. **Formally thank the Mayor of Villers-Bretonneux for the invitation to Swan Hill Rural City Council's Mayor;**
3. **Authorise the Mayor to accept the invitation to visit Villers-Bretonneux in 2024.**

### 3 Close of Meeting

There been no further business the Mayor, Councillor Cr King closed the meeting at 12:02 pm