

MINUTES



OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL

On Tuesday 17 October 2023

**At 6.30 PM in the
Mount Alexander Shire Council Chamber,
Civic Centre
Corner Lyttleton Street and Lloyd Street, Castlemaine VIC
3450.**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

To start the official proceedings

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Djaara country of which the members and elders of the Djaara community and their forebears have been custodians for many centuries and have performed age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.

Mayor Rosie Annear read the following statement:

The result of the Referendum on the weekend means many things to many people. In Mount Alexander Shire, we've seen a different result than that at a state and national level, with almost 60% of community members voting YES and 40% NO. With this in mind, we know that many people within our communities are feeling disappointed, sad, angry, and many other things.

Whilst we all take some time to reflect, we ask our whole community to remain respectful and kind, check in with each other, and give people the time they need to feel what they need to feel.

At Council, we remain deeply committed to reconciliation locally through important initiatives such as the Indigenous Roundtable, which helps guide and shape our work towards recognition and reconciliation. I am honoured to chair this group beside Uncle Rick Nelson, and appreciate his partnership, leadership and spirit.

An important example of this guidance is in our new Reconciliation Plan, which we look forward to sharing with the community shortly. This Plan builds on the work we have done so far, and sets our priorities and commitments into the future for true reconciliation.

As always, we will be guided by the wishes of our First Nations' community, on how best to support them through the coming weeks and months

Council Meetings are audio and video recorded and are made available to the public via electronic media including YouTube.

1. PRESENT

Councillors: Tony Cordy, Matthew Driscoll, Christine Henderson, Stephen Gardner, Gary McClure, Bill Maltby and Rosie Annear.

Officers: Chief Executive Officer (Darren Fuzzard), Director Infrastructure Development (Michael Annear), Director Corporate and Community Services (Lisa Knight), Manager Governance and Risk (Leanne Brown) and Communications Coordinator (Anne-Marie Middlemast).

2. APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Councillor Cordy noted that he will be on leave for approximately 4 weeks but would not miss any formal Meetings of Council.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

4.1. Meeting of Council - 19 September 2023

The unconfirmed minutes of the Meeting of the Mount Alexander Shire Council held at 6.30 pm on 19 September 2023 at the Mount Alexander Shire Civic Centre have been circulated to Councillors.

The unconfirmed minutes have also been posted on the Mount Alexander Shire Council website, pending confirmation at this meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Mount Alexander Shire Council held on 19 September 2023 be confirmed.

Subject to the following amendment for Item 6 of the Minutes being that the motion to suspend standing orders was seconded by Councillor Maltby and that the motion to resume standing orders was seconded by Councillor Henderson.

MOVED COUNCILLOR GARDNER

That the recommendation be adopted

SECONDED COUNCILLOR MALTBY

CARRIED

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nil.

6. PUBLIC TIME

MOVED COUNCILLOR MALTBY

That standing orders be suspended at 6.39 pm.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR HENDERSON

CARRIED

Statement read by Mayor Annear

a. Ms Laurel Kanost

Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy

I raise for Council meeting the suggestion that incorporated in the above strategy AND OR the homelessness actions the following be examined for suitability and reported back to council for discussion.

Every township needs to create temporary safe housing which is central, well serviced, safe and available on foot.

This means that by taking action, each town offers roughly the same homeless/crisis short term solution which is cost effective for the shire and visible to the residents it serves.

The Country Fire Authority properties which are already Government properties offer the following unique advantages for container-style temporary accommodation:

- Trained emergency staffing proficient in setting up temporary accommodation, water, sanitation points
- Well lit, open spaces central to town with large unused land, usually fenced
- Government owned, vacant spaces
- CFA is walking distance to town amenities in every single town
- Generally used as emergency spaces already
- Accessible for trucking in of container-style accommodation (3-5 depending upon space available)
- Already financed by the local community and this would add to sustainability by the fulsome use of already paid for properties
- Staff usually present on a regular basis even in smaller towns
- The CFA employees and volunteers already know their own town residents

-
- Short term lease format could allow desirable terms which meet council needs (resident needs) and be rolled out for all councils

By leading this strategy in a trial, Castlemaine could author a new chapter in homelessness temporary accommodations, which would provide all of Australia with a useful, low-cost solution to a set of temporary accommodations.

- The Director Corporate and Community Services (DCCS) responded as follows:

Thank you Laurel for your question.

Discussions have been undertaken with various agencies in recent months in response to a homelessness service mapping exercise undertaken by Officers – and it is acknowledged that there is a significant shortage of social and affordable housing across the Shire. Additionally, there is a significant shortage of place-based services in the Shire – hours of operation are also often limited, with some key services located out of the Shire.

Mount Alexander Shire Council does not own or manage homelessness or housing services.

Your suggestion to provide temporary safe housing on CFA land which is central, well serviced safe and available on foot will be taken on notice. This suggestion requires further consideration and discussion with CFA – as a State Government Authority.

- The Director Infrastructure and Development (DID) also advised that with regard to the use of possible vacant land. Council is advocating to the State Government and agencies to make available surplus land for affordable housing. Any land identified would need to be further assessed in relation to land use requirements, as would proposed accommodation forms to ensure proposal are in line with the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

b. Mr John Taylor

Mr Taylor presented to Councillors a statement and map before speaking.

I understand that the current draft Housing Growth and Neighbourhood Character Strategy being undertaken by Council does not include Rural Living Zones (RLZ). I suggest that it would be advantageous to Council and the community if the review were to include RLZs.

For example, take the area of Wheeler, McKendry, Coulthard and Preshaw Streets (see map):

- The majority of landowners in McKendry Street would like the opportunity to subdivide their land. This is supported by the petition we recently provided to Council.
- While the current residential blocks in this area are in the RLZ, this is an anomaly as the area is not used for rural activities.
- For all intents and purposes the area is a part of the Castlemaine township. It is characterised by traditional residential housing and is about one kilometre from the town centre.
- Including the area in the Strategy would be an opportunity to make residential land available with minimal impact on the location, as the land fronts bitumen roads, with readily available services including water, electricity, gas and communications.

-
- This approach is consistent with the Victorian Government's recent Housing Statement, encouraging councils to make more land available for housing.
 - A change to the planning scheme to make the area General Residential and perhaps Low Density Residential for the area adjacent to Castlemaine Diggings Heritage Park would provide immediately available and accessible land for housing.
 - The Director Infrastructure and Development (DID) responded that the scope in the draft Housing Growth and Neighbourhood Character Strategy included only properties within residential zoning, which is in line with State Government planning policy. He also advised that in early 2024, Council will undertake a Rural Living Assessment, which will consider land similar to what Mr Taylor outlined in his statement.

MOVED COUNCILLOR MALTBY

That standing orders be resumed at 6.45 pm.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR HENDERSON

CARRIED.

7. PETITIONS AND LETTERS

Council has received a petition regarding the Draft Housing Growth and Neighbourhood Character Strategy with 14 signatories. In line with clause 12.2.3 of the Governance Rules 2023 - If a petition or joint letter relates to a 'statutory matter', planning matter' or any other matter for which there is a community engagement process already in place, the petition or joint letter will be acknowledged and the lead signatory advised that it will be considered and responded to in accordance with those processes.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Nil.

9. OFFICER REPORTS

9.1. Community

9.1.1.ADOPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

This Report is For Information

Responsible Director: Director Corporate and Community Services, Lisa Knight

Responsible Officer: Manager Communications and Customer Services, Ed Butler

Attachments:

1. Communications and Engagement Strategy - 2023 [9.1.1.1 - 20 pages]
2. Action Plan - Communications and Engagement Strategy - August 2023 [9.1.1.2 - 15 pages]
3. Communications and Engagement Strategy - Consultation Report - 2023 [9.1.1.3 - 28 pages]

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the Communications and Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) for adoption, following extensive consultation within Council and the wider community.

The Strategy includes a comprehensive series of actions and is intended to elevate our ability to speak to and hear from the community. It will also build trust and connection within the shire and enable projects to be undertaken with more support and collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Adopts the Communications and Engagement Strategy.**
- 2. Notes the feedback report and action plan.**

MOVED COUNCILLOR HENDERSON

That the recommendation be adopted

SECONDED COUNCILLOR MALTBY

CARRIED

Context

Delivery of a Communications Strategy and a “Deliberative Engagement Strategy” are noted as strategic objectives within the Council Plan 2021-2025. Given the connection of communications and engagement, a combined Strategy has been developed.

The principal focus of this Strategy's development has been to model best-practice community engagement.

During phase one of consultation between February and March 2023, a range of opportunities to engage and provide feedback were provided. These included:

- eleven pop-up consultation sessions across the Shire
- an online community survey which ran for one month and was promoted through all available channels
- distribution of hard copy versions of the online survey
- two targeted workshops with the Get Lost Creative Network and the Youth Advisory Group
- three staff pop-up consultation sessions
- two targeted digital workshops at an All Staff meeting and with Council's internal engagement community of practice
- one targeted, in-person, workshop with Councillors.

This resulted in 471 contributions from the community and Councillors, and hundreds more from staff. This provided an enormous body of evidence on which to base the objectives in the Strategy.

The consultation identified ten key themes of community, staff and Councillor input – these themes could be identifying barriers to overcome, or opportunities to pursue.

The consultation undertaken by the Communications and Engagement team was previously not attempted for a document such as this.

Efforts were made to reach previously unheard voices by physically attending community events – most importantly in smaller towns throughout the Shire – and outreach to stakeholder groups, to accompany a comprehensive digital engagement effort.

Hard copies of the survey were also provided to ensure the consultation met (and exceeded) all accessibility and inclusion requirements.

The results of the consultation have been incorporated into the Strategy in a clear and direct way.

In July 2023, the draft Strategy was placed on public exhibition for further community feedback.

During this time, 15 contributions were received which responded to the question – *do you think we've captured everything you told us in the first round of engagement?* 82% of respondents said yes, and 18% said no.

There were a small number of comments made in Phase Two which directly resulted in changes to the both the Strategy and the Action Plan.

Specifically, one piece of feedback received was a concern that there are no actions in the draft Strategy that target diversity, e.g., LGBTIQ+ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and young people.

This feedback has been considered and the following objective was added under the Strategy principle 'Together':

- Explore opportunities to increase diverse voices in engagement, in alignment with Council priorities.

A new action has also been included in the Action Plan that relates to this objective.

It is important to note that diversity underpins all our work and will be operationalised through several strategy objectives. These include:

- build relationships and networks to broaden the reach of our communications and engagement materials
- partner with the community to collect a cross-section of views
- increase delivery of face-to-face engagement
- more inclusive language and content

Two other comments received during phase two have resulted in changes to the Action Plan and final Strategy.

This Strategy has been prepared with an open time frame. The principles and objectives in it have long – and often ongoing – timeframes. As such, the Strategy will be reviewed on a four-yearly basis, to identify whether objectives still align with community expectations (gathered from ongoing consultation across all Council activities) and amended accordingly. Action Plans will be prepared on a regular basis to ensure strategic objectives remain in place.

All the community input heard during both Phase One and Phase Two of consultation, has been summarised into the Strategy's Consultation Report, which is presented alongside the Strategy. The key themes identified in the consultation with community, staff and Councillors will be connected between each document through visual markers. These markers will identify which objectives in the Strategy address which areas of community input.

Along with the Strategy, there is also an Action Plan for noting. This Plan outlines deliverables attached to each objective, with priority levels and roles and responsibilities. This document is an important companion piece, ensuring that not only does this Strategy identify and address community interests, but it also provides a roadmap to meeting these objectives.

Issues

Strategy themes

The community and organisational input into the Strategy led to a wide variety of information for this Strategy. This has been divided into ten 'themes':

1. Methods of communication and engagement
2. Channels of communication and engagement
3. Content of communication
4. Councillors and Councillor involvement
5. Close the loop – demonstrating how feedback is used
6. Community expectations (understanding and communicating scope)
7. Customer experience and Council reputation
8. Unrelated feedback
9. Motivation to engage
10. Timeliness

Extensive desktop research of best practice communications and engagement was also conducted, consulting with other Councils with large engagement and communications units.

Communications with external experts was also undertaken, such as Mosaic Lab and Capire, both large, established engagement organisations.

Strategy principles

From engagement and research undertaken, four key principles of communications and engagement were developed, under which our objectives could be sorted:

Principle 1: GENUINE

Deliver genuine communications and engagement. Value the community's input and believe every community member has the right to know about and contribute to decisions that affect them. We commit to consultation which will inform our planning and decision making. We also commit to 'closing the loop', letting the community know how input was used.

Principle 2: RELEVANT

Communications and engagement are timely, and relevant to community needs. We will make our content easy to read and accessible, and ensure it accurately represents diverse views. We will make our information available through appropriate methods to reach the right people, at the right time.

Principle 3: TOGETHER

We deliver communications and engagement together. Good communication and engagement should be a shared goal and responsibility for Councillors, staff and the community. We recognise the power and willingness of the community to help drive greater engagement across the shire.

Principle 4: ACCESSIBLE

We deliver accessible, open and transparent communications and engagement. As owners of important information and decisions that impact the community, we will ensure communication and engagement activities are accessible, open and transparent. We will meet, and aim to exceed, all accessibility standards, in line with our Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

These principles incorporate and expand upon the six principles in the Community Engagement Policy. This policy is due for review in February 2024, and as such a revised policy will be presented together with the Communications and Engagement Strategy, ensuring consistency across all documents, and to include current community input.

Strategy actions

All input received has identified a wide range of possible actions to be undertaken, resulting in a Strategy that balances our aspirations along with the realities of staffing and resourcing.

Key actions and barriers to emerge from this intensive consultation are:

- Internal efforts to improve knowledge sharing are critical
- Council reputation is a challenge when encouraging wider engagement from the community
- Focusing resources on major engagements is a key means of getting valuable data without causing 'engagement fatigue'
- Reactive communications are impeding our ability to support community understanding of our achievements
- Simple, plain English is critical
- The community itself is a crucial vector for driving engagement and communications efforts; there is enormous energy and potential for collaboration.
- Councillor visibility is desired across the community, as is more face-to-face engagement and communication.

Finance and Resource Implications

The implementation of the Mount Alexander Shire Council Communications and Engagement Strategy will be predominantly undertaken with existing Council resources. Partnership and in-kind support may also be sought where appropriate.

Numerous actions in the Strategy are contingent on funding being secured. Where possible; this funding should be included in wider project budgets, as is the case for major infrastructure projects, and large engagements such as the Council Plan 2021-2025. In other instances, there may be a requirement to seek additional funding.

Several items may require dedicated funding to deliver. In these cases, funding will be sought through grants and through the Council budget process.

In general, increased funding for communications and engagement efforts is to be funded from the dedicated allocation for such actions already provided for in project budgets.

Delivery of many of the engagement deliverables will be contingent on the continued retention of a Community Engagement Coordinator.

In all instances, this Strategy is drafted with a clear understanding of organisational financial constraints. Likewise, this Strategy is clear that if funding is not available in a likely resource-constrained future, then certain objectives and actions may prove difficult to achieve.

Risk Analysis

The main risks identified as impacting the implementation of this Strategy are:

- an inability to deliver the actions, through insufficient funding
- sustained engagement of the community
- whole-of-Council ownership of the strategy
- the ability to source partnerships and in-kind support where appropriate.

These risks will be addressed by:

- Working with the Executive Team regarding implementation requirements.
- Developing an internal communications approach to make clear good communications and engagement are a whole-of-Council responsibility. It will also support internal awareness of this Strategy, improve understanding of its actions, and how they intersect with other parts of the organisation.
- Community expectations - community engagement activities are subjective as their performance is largely determined by personal expectations. We will collaborate with the community through the establishment of an engagement reference group.
- Dedicating efforts of the communications and engagement unit to building connections with the community to build our ability to collaborate.

Change risk:

A significant portion of the actions in the Strategy are being delivered by 'collaboration' or 'advocacy'. Communications and engagement are Council-wide operations, led and supported by the Communications and Engagement team.

Building that understanding, capacity and willingness in the organisation will require sustained and concerted change management within the organisation.

While there is a risk that actions within the Strategy cannot be delivered without change, there is equally a benefit to the organisation to improve change management.

Reputation risk:

The importance of consultation and engagement with the community cannot be underestimated. Having consulted on numerous Strategies, Plans and Surveys, the importance of consulting is clear but there is always room for improvement. This Strategy has been undertaken in response to community feedback. Failure to fully commit to improvements will potentially damage our reputation with the community.

Alternatively, successful implementation of this Strategy can lead to enormous improvements in community satisfaction with Council's performance.

Social risk:

This Strategy will attempt to mitigate social risk. There have been increasing reports from staff and the Customer Service Unit of growing antagonistic behaviour from the community since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A stronger community engagement practice is a crucial element in rebuilding trust and connection between Council and the community, leading to greater community support and support for the projects we aim to deliver.

Climate Impact Statement

This Strategy intends to support organisational efforts to address the climate emergency. By continuing to improve our ability to integrate the community's calls for climate action in a coherent and integrated manner, it will help reduce our climate impact.

Efforts to increase face-to-face engagement with the community, and community requests for an increase in printed materials, will have a minor climate impact through an increase in paper usage and car travel to towns around the Shire.

Alternate Options

Delivery of this Strategy is an action in the Council Plan 2021-2025. Actions or objectives within the Strategy are, in themselves, a variety of options which Council will address over time. Based on feedback from Council and community, these can be removed, amended, or added to in order to deliver on the community's desire for greater engagement.

Communication and Consultation

A comprehensive Communications Plan for the release of the Strategy has been completed, and results of engagement have been incorporated into the Strategy.

Involve:

We will work with our community to ensure concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.

Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

The Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) calls for deliberative engagement on four major projects:

- Council Plan
- Community Vision
- Asset Plan
- Financial Plan

A strong Engagement Strategy will support us to meet our obligations under the Act.

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2021-2025

Principle - We are always improving.

- Council is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves.

Principle - We are delivering together.

- We are working across Council, government, local partners and across community to meet the varied needs of our region.

Principle - We are engaging genuinely with the community.

- Our community feels heard and is able to influence and participate in the decisions that impact them.

Declarations of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

9.1.2. COMMUNITY GRANTS AWARDED 2023 - ROUND 2

This Report is For Information

Responsible Director: Director Corporate and Community Services, Lisa Knight
Responsible Officer: Social Equity and Inclusion Officer, Sarah Gradie
Attachments: CONFIDENTIAL - Community Grants Program 2023 - Round 2 -
Funded Projects [9.1.2.1 - 3 pages]

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the outcomes of the Community Grants Program 2023 - Round 2 and to outline the decision process undertaken by Officers for the allocation of funds.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the allocation of funding for Community Grants Program 2023 - Round 2, being 16 applications for a total allocation of \$49,016.

MOVED COUNCILLOR MCCLURE

That the recommendation be adopted

SECONDED COUNCILLOR DRISCOLL

CARRIED

Context

Council's Community Grants Program (the Program) seeks to promote partnerships within the community by providing financial support to new and emerging projects and initiatives that are consistent with the Council Plan 2021-2025.

The Program is funded by an annual allocation in Council's Operating Budget. The adopted budget for the 2023/2024 Program is \$100,000, which is split into two Community Grant rounds of \$50,000 each.

Issues

The Community Grants Program 2023 - Round 2 received 27 eligible applications requesting a total of \$80,874 from the Community Grants budget of \$50,000.

Twenty-six applications were for the Small Grant stream and one was for the Partnership stream. One applicant withdrew their application after applications were assessed.

Each application was assessed against the following criteria:

- 25% Project alignment with Council plans and strategies (scored 0-5)
- 50% Needs/Benefits of the project to the community (scored 0-10)
- 25% Ability to plan and deliver the project (scored 0-5)

resulting in a total assessment score out of 20.

Applications scoring 13 and above were approved for funding, totalling \$49,016.

The below table summarises the eligible applications received, the amount of funds sought, the number of applications approved for funding and the approved funding allocation.

Community Grants Program 2023 - Round 2.

Funding Stream	Eligible Applications Received	Amount Sought	Applications Approved for Funding	Allocation of Funds
Small Grants	26	\$70,874	15	\$39,016
Partnership Grants	1	\$10,000	1	\$10,000
Total	27	\$80,874	16	\$49,016

The number of grant applications received this round continues to indicate the not-for-profit and volunteering sector is active and responsive to identified community and organisational needs. The quality of the applications was high with most scoring highly for their strong alignment to Council's Plans and Strategies.

This round includes diverse project ideas that represent a broad range of interest areas, from across all three of the Council Pillars, including creative industries, environmental initiatives, tourism and recreation and social inclusion.

Of the 27 applications received, 13 requests related to equipment, representing just under 50% of applications overall. Those funded include requests for essential pieces of equipment to save lives, to run workshops, or to enhance or expand successful initiatives.

The table below provides a complete list of the 16 successfully funded applications.

Organisation	Project Title	Funded Amount
Castlemaine Circus Inc.	Social Circus Castlemaine	\$3,000
Castlemaine Historical Society Incorporated	Update brochure: A Drive Through Historic Castlemaine	\$616
Castlemaine Rites of Passage	Castlemaine Rites of Passage	\$3,000
Castlemaine Surrounds Women's Shed	Purchase tools to equip our Tradie Trailer	\$3,000
Connecting Country (Mount Alexander Region) Inc.	Leanganook Nature Kids	\$10,000
Cycling Without Age Australia - Castlemaine Branch	Trishaw Support Equipment	\$2,000
D-tour Silent Discos	D-Tour Silent Discos	\$3,000
Harcourt Progress Association	"Green Hub: Climate, Gardening, Equipment Access"	\$3,000
Maldon Golf Club	Provide improved 'All Gender' / disability friendly toilet facilities.	\$3,000
Maldon Toy Library	Maldon Toy Library	\$1,000
Pony Cam Collective	Youth In Public Space Performance Project	\$3,000
The Art of Grieving	The Art of Grieving Workshop Series	\$3,000
The Castlemaine Institute	MAS Plant Selection Tool for thriving neighborhoods	\$3,000
The Hub Foundation	YIMBY consults	\$3,000
Uncle Rick Nelson	Waa Inc. - Brand and web setup	\$3,000
Wesley Hill Hall Committee of Management	Wesley Hill Hall defibrillator	\$2,400

Finance and Resource Implications

The 2023/2024 Annual Budget, Community Grants Program adopted a budget of \$100,000, to be split into two rounds of \$50,000 for the year.

Based on the funding recommendations, the Community Grants Program - Round 2 2023 will be underspent by \$84.

Risk Analysis

Reputation risk:

There is a potential for reputational risk regarding unsuccessful applicants being dissatisfied with the decision.

Climate Impact Statement

The Officers' decisions will have a positive impact as several of the proposed projects intend to deliver favourable environmental and sustainability outcomes.

Alternate Options

There are no alternate options as this Report is for information only.

Communication and Consultation

Consultation and promotion undertaken.

The Community Grants Program 2023 - Round 2 was widely promoted through Council's website and Facebook page, local media, and directly to previous grant applicants, not-for-profit service providers, event organisers and other community groups.

The Community Grants Council Officers were available throughout the three weeks opening period, Monday to Friday, 9.00 am – 5.00 pm, and contactable via phone and email for all enquiries and to discuss potential projects and initiatives and provide tailored advice.

Council Officers spoke to a total of 33 community groups or individuals throughout August 2023 to discuss potential applications and the application process.

Inform:

We will keep our community informed.

Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2021-2025

Community - A healthy, connected and inclusive community.

- Our community feels safe, regardless of identity or circumstance.
- Our community is inclusive and connected.
- Our community is physically and mentally healthy

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- Services in our community are accessible and coordinated.

Economy - A resilient and growing local economy.

- Our local economy is diverse and resilient.
- We are attracting and building investment in our cultural and creative community.
- We are helping businesses make their work simpler and more sustainable.
- We are supporting continuous learning and personal growth.

Environment - A flourishing environment for nature and people.

- Our community is growing in harmony with nature.
- We are facilitating managed growth of our towns while protecting natural assets.
- We are focused on the housing affordability challenge in our community.
- We are maintaining, improving and celebrating our places and spaces.
- We are working locally to address the climate emergency.

Principle - We are always improving.

- Council is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves.

Principle - We are delivering together.

- We are working across Council, government, local partners and across community to meet the varied needs of our region.

Principle - We are engaging genuinely with the community.

- Our community feels heard and is able to influence and participate in the decisions that impact them.

Declarations of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

9.2. Environment

9.2.1. ALLOCATION OF LAND AT MALDON AND NEWSTEAD FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO WINTRINGHAM HOUSING LIMITED

This Report is For Decision

Responsible Director: Chief Executive Officer, Darren Fuzzard

Responsible Officer: Housing Solutions Broker, Clare Richards

Attachments: 1. Housing in Castlemaine designed and delivered by Wintringham Housing [9.2.1.1 - 1 page]
2. SGS Previous Design Concepts [9.2.1.2 - 2 pages]

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to undertake community consultation on a proposal to enter into two 49-year peppercorn leases over 10 Steele Street Maldon and 2A Canrobert Street Newstead with Wintringham Housing Limited for the purpose of building and operating affordable rental housing.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. In accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 and Council's Community Engagement Policy, undertakes community consultation for a period of four weeks on its intention to enter into two 49-year ground leases at peppercorn rent over 10 Steele Street, Maldon and 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead to Wintringham Housing Limited to enable the submission of grant applications for affordable rental housing development on those sites by Wintringham Housing Limited.
2. Notes that the outcome of the community consultation process will be presented in a future Council report seeking a decision on whether or not to proceed with the proposed ground leases described in 1.

MOVED COUNCILLOR GARDNER

That the recommendation be adopted

SECONDED COUNCILLOR DRISCOLL

CARRIED

Context

Wintringham Housing Limited

Wintringham Housing Limited (Wintringham) are a Housing Association and provide housing and related support services exclusively for people over 50 years of age who meet the priority need criteria of the Victorian Housing Register (the statewide housing waitlist managed by the Victorian government).

Wintringham own or manage over 850 units, including 271 in regional Victoria. Units are designed to allow older residents to age-in-place, provide 7 star Environmentally Sustainable Design outcomes and no less than 'silver' status when assessed against the Livable Housing Design Guidelines. Wintringham further provide in-home support to residents of their properties.

Wintringham are an established Community Housing Provider in the Shire. Wintringham built and now operate the social housing tenancies that run along Lyttleton Street and down Lyttleton Avenue, Castlemaine. The design of these properties, the tenancies and management of the properties are all well regarded in the community.

Funding Opportunity

The challenges of securing appropriate housing for people across Victorian and Australia has led the Victorian State Government and the Federal Government to create new funding opportunities for housing providers to access.

Informal indicators from the Victorian State Government are that there may be a post-Commonwealth Games funding round open via Homes Victoria towards the end of 2023. Although the terms of the likely grant round are not yet released, capital grants for delivery of affordable rental housing usually cover the costs of developing the land and building the housing.

Officers have identified the opportunity for the development of affordable housing at 10 Steele Street, Maldon and 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead, under a likely Homes Victoria grant round.

It is anticipated that independent applications could be made for each site in-line with the grant procedures; with the potential for one, both or neither projects receiving funding.

Discussions with Wintringham have indicated an interest to partner with Council to develop these sites for affordable housing for people aged 50 and above. However due to the cost of developing the application, which is in the vicinity of \$50,000 plus per application, Wintringham has requested that Council formally commit to a long-term (49 year) peppercorn lease arrangement prior to this work commencing.

Wintringham has requested this commitment of Council due to a previous experience in another Local Government Area. In a previous Big Housing Build round, a Council voted against use of Council land after grant applications and funding approvals had been given.

Wintringham is committed to design and develop affordable housing that is sensitive to the neighbourhood character of both sites. Its existing housing in Castlemaine is testimony to the sensitivity of this design work (see photo at Attachment 9.2.1.1).

Meeting Local Need for Affordable Housing in Maldon and Newstead

Wintringham is committed to allocating the proposed units to people aged 50 and over who are living locally and on the Victorian Housing Register priority waitlist.

The extent of local need is reflected broadly in the June 2023 Victorian Housing Register data release which indicates the first preference location request of applicants. If Wintringham is successful in obtaining funding, they will at that point be able to go deeper into the Victorian Housing Register data, to determine who is currently living locally in the Shire, and in each township. The June 2023 Victorian Housing Register data shows 342 people on the priority waitlist have listed Castlemaine district (broadly equivalent to our Shire boundary), as their preference for a 1-bedroom unit. It is thus anticipated that there will be sufficient local need amongst people over 50 to fill the proposed units at Maldon and Newstead.

Recent consultation by Council's Strategic Planning team was undertaken in Maldon and Newstead to inform Council's Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy for these towns. Key themes expressed by participants in the consultation included:

- More small-scale housing is needed for older residents and single and couple households.
- New housing should be close to services and facilities to encourage healthy lifestyles and to reduce impacts on the natural environment.
- Housing affordability.

The population of the Shire is ageing, with the median age in the Shire increasing from 47 in 2011 to 51 years of age in 2021. The proportion of people aged over 60 has increased since 2011, while the proportion of young people aged between 0 and 24 years of age has reduced since 2011. Maldon is the oldest locality in the Shire with a median age of 60 years.

As at the 2021 Census in the Shire, the most common household type was 'Lone persons' (32.4%). From 2016 to 2021, 'Lone persons' households increased by 16.4% from 2,325 to 2,706 (REMPLAN Housing, 2023).

Meanwhile, almost half (47%) of all private dwellings in the Shire have 3 bedrooms, with a further quarter (24.6%) being 4-bedroom houses. Thus, there is a mismatch between typical household size (1-2 persons) and the size of homes (3-4 bedrooms), with insufficient 1-2-bedroom housing stock to match the number of 1-2 person households. This is particularly significant for lone person households on low fixed income such as the Aged Pension, as it is exceedingly difficult to obtain smaller affordable rental homes in our Shire due to their scarcity in relation to demand.

Scope of lease / project

This report and recommendation apply only and specifically to the anticipated State funding round of late 2023 / early 2024 through Homes Victoria. If the funding round does not occur, or if application to the funding round is not successful, there are no future commitments to the use of these sites or to their allocation to Wintringham. This will therefore allow for flexibility in considering future uses of the sites in relation to funding and partnership opportunities.

Intersection with other Council housing initiatives

This paper recommends commencing community consultation on the allocation of 49-year ground leases for 10 Steele Street, Maldon and 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead to Wintringham to deliver affordable housing.

This proposal does not replace or preclude the negotiations already occurring with a potential philanthropic funder for delivery of affordable housing on these sites.

Grant funding for one or both sites is not guaranteed, and neither is philanthropic funding yet secured.

Should one or both sites not obtain grant funding, they can be proposed to the philanthropic funder for development. Likewise, preparing these sites for a likely State funding round late 2023 reduces the risk of relying on the prospect that philanthropic funding for housing on these sites will be provided.

In addition, preparing 10 Steele Street, Maldon and 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead for a likely end of year grant round, does not preclude submitting the Templeton Street project to the same grant round. Homes Victoria considers each separate site submitted on its own merits. The Templeton Street sites will produce higher yields, are centrally located within Castlemaine, and are also higher cost and so will require a greater portion of available grant funds.

The 10 Steele Street, Maldon and 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead sites, are in major towns of the Shire and are smaller projects that require a smaller portion of available State grant funds. It is recommended these two projects are prepared for submission to a grant round should it open, so that the Shire has several options for securing funding for affordable housing ready to submit.

Site Feasibility

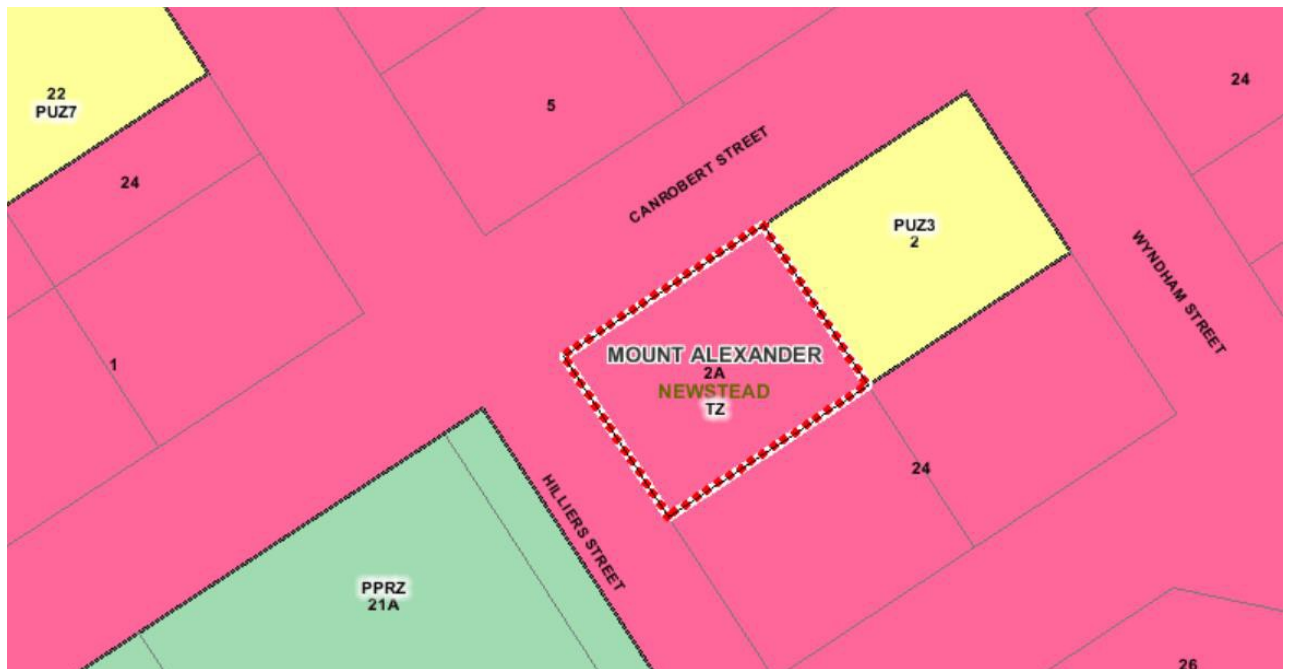
10 Steele Street, Maldon and 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead were assessed for delivery of affordable housing, in the report Mount Alexander Social and Affordable Housing Feasibility Study Final Report of April 2021, by SGS Economics. The feasibility study found there was opportunity to provide up to 4 two-bedroom units on the 10 Steele Street, Maldon site, and up to 8 two-bedroom units on the 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead site.

The following information was provided by SGS Economics in their Mount Alexander Social and Affordable Housing Feasibility Study final report. Please note the design drawings for each site at Attachment 9.2.1.2 are indicative and not representative of what Wintringham may finally deliver, as they will undertake their own site assessment and design process. As Wintringham focus on housing single older persons they are likely also to be delivering one-bedroom units.

2A Canrobert Street, Newstead

This site is in the Township Zone which allows for residential development and a range of commercial, industrial, and other uses in small towns (see Figure 1). This zone encourages development that respects the neighbourhood character of the area. A permit is required for the construction of two or more dwellings on a lot.

Figure 1: 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead – Planning Zones



Source: DELWP, 2021.

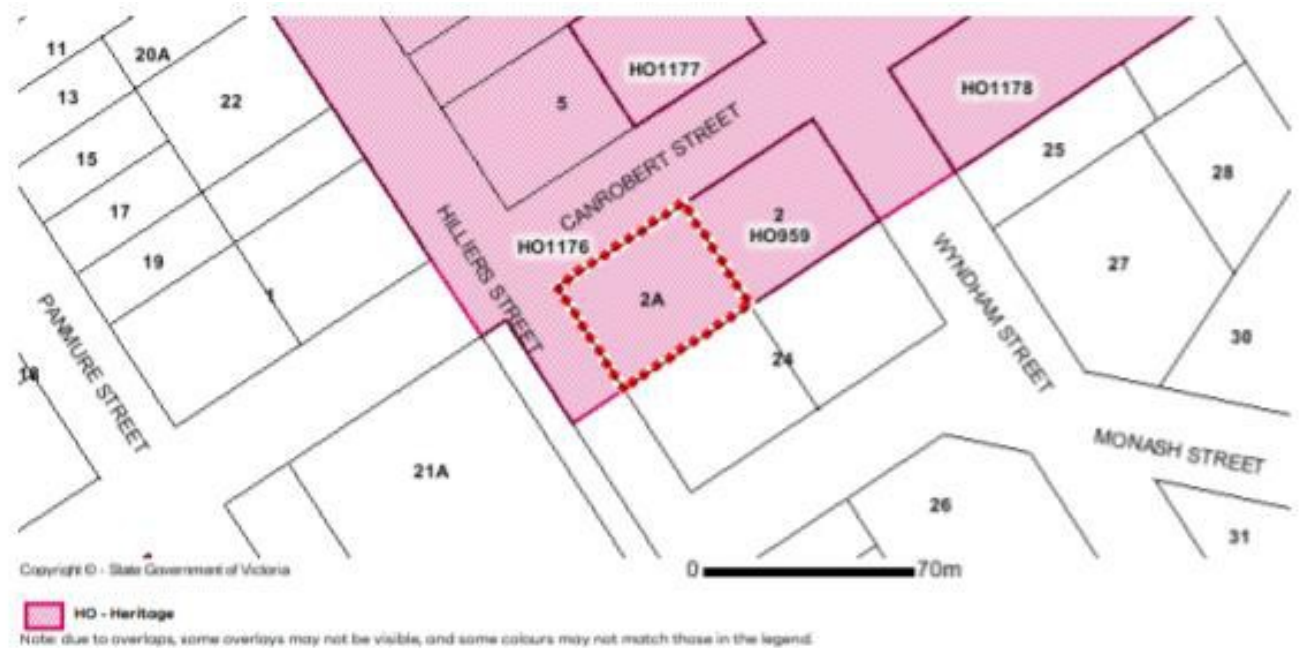
The site is adjacent to the old Newstead Court House (at 2 Canrobert Street), and has a heritage overlay applied, which requires a permit to subdivide the lot and/or demolish or remove a building (see Figure 2). The site also falls within a Bushfire Prone Area and special bushfire construction requirements may apply.

The Court House at 2 Canrobert Street is of State significance and listed on the Victorian Heritage Register as H1705. Any development that affects the setting of this property must be referred to Heritage Victoria. The subject site at 2A Canrobert Street is also locally significant to the Shire, as a contributory building at the southwest end of the Newstead Heritage Precinct HO1176. A planning permit is required from Council for any development of this land.

Some of the heritage design parameters to consider are:

- The development should not exceed 1 level and respect the rural setting and special layout of its surrounds- avoiding excessive densification.
- The design should refer to the adjacent courthouse building – without mimicking historical detail. The design may respond to the roof pitch, materiality, setbacks, form, orientation to the street, and/or fenestration.

Figure 2: 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead – Heritage Overlay



Source: DELWP, 2021.

Attachment 9.2.1.2 shows the previous high-level concept planning for 2A Canrobert Street commissioned by SGS Economics. The plans suggested the site could accommodate 8 two-bedroom ground level units, each with a carpark. Standard site setbacks of 6m have been applied.

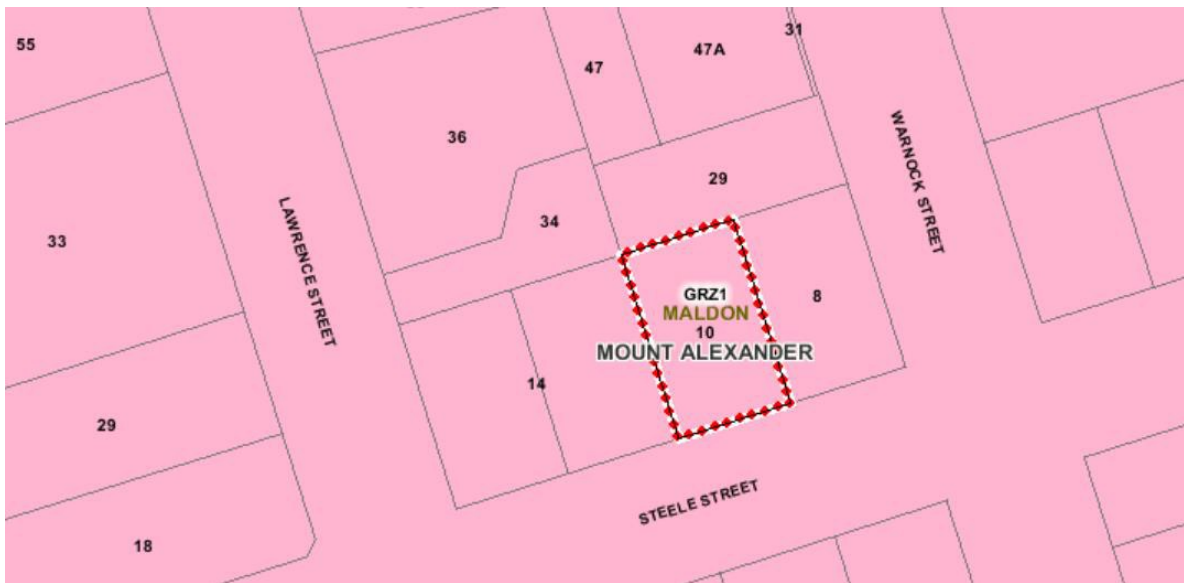
10 Steele Street, Maldon

This site is in the General Residential Zone which allows for a diversity of housing types and housing growth, particularly in locations offering good access to services and transport (see Figure 3). Development is encouraged that respects the neighbourhood character of the area.

The site is covered by a Bushfire Management Overlay, which ensures development is only permitted where the risk to life and property from bushfire can be reduced to an acceptable level. Any development must meet the requirements specified in the overlay to this zone.

No other overlays cover this site. The site is one of few sites not situated with the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO1), and therefore the Maldon Design Guidelines do not apply in this instance.

Figure 3: 10 Steele Street Planning Zones



Source: DELWP, 2021.

Attachment 9.2.1.2 shows the previous high-level concept planning for 10 Steele Street commissioned by SGS Economics. The plans suggested the site could accommodate 4 two-bedroom ground level units, each with a carpark. Standard site setbacks of 6m have been applied.

Finance and Resource Implications

The community consultation regarding the allocation of 49-year ground leases over 10 Steele Street, Maldon and 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead to Wintringham, will require the professional contributions of the Housing Solutions Broker and Communications team members, to undertake the consultation and analyse the feedback.

Council is not required to make a financial contribution towards the preparation of the grant applications. However, Council may consider sealing the Steele Street road section between Lawrence and Warnock Streets to facilitate accessibility for the site. Typically, Homes Victoria look favourably on Council contributing to such infrastructure upgrade without cost to the project. Estimated cost of sealing the road between Lawrence and Warnock Streets will be provided along with outcomes of community consultation activities in a future report to Council.

If the two sites are developed, on cessation of these leases, use of the land and ownership of the improvements on the land would revert to Council. It would at that point be a choice of Council as to how these improvements are managed. That is, whether a lease is renewed with Wintringham or other housing provider, or other use made of the improvements, or removal of the improvements.

Neither 10 Steele Street, Maldon or 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead are currently being utilised by Council for any purpose. This proposed project does not ask for a financial or capital commitment from Council. Council is not at risk of losing income by releasing one or both sites under 49-year ground leases, as neither site currently generates income. Thus, apart from the opportunity of sale of these sites, there is no lost opportunity for Council.

Risk Analysis

Financial and Project Delivery Risk

Registered Housing Agencies are highly regulated organisations. Central to that regulation are stringent requirements upon them regarding financial probity and sustainability. Wintringham has a long history of successfully delivering affordable housing projects in rural and regional Victoria.

Wintringham work on a capital grant funding model and do not leverage debt funding. Wintringham therefore do not have debt on the balance sheet and thus risk of insolvency is low.

In the event Wintringham fail to complete the redevelopments, or became insolvent once operating the housing, Council's rights to the assets developed on the Council land at 10 Steele Street Maldon and 2A Canrobert Street Newstead, would be subordinate to the rights of the Director of Housing, who would likely allocate the project to another Registered Housing Agency or directly manage it under Housing Victoria.

Reputation Risk

This Project is an opportunity for Council to deliver on the commitment in the Council Plan 2021-2025 to progress affordable housing. It has the potential to demonstrate a substantial commitment from Council to directly alleviating housing pressures in the Shire.

Equally, it is an opportunity to build community goodwill amongst the many people concerned about the impacts of declining affordability and availability of housing on the wellbeing and structure of the community.

This project can also send a strong message to other levels of government and other stakeholders in the housing sector, that Council is active and innovative in its response to this common challenge.

There is a risk that some members of the community may be concerned with the allocation of the use of Council land for affordable housing, as this has not recently been an activity of Local government. However, across many recent community consultations, affordable housing is being raised as a major issue of concern by community members, regardless of whether this has been a focus or question within the consultation. We therefore know that our community has widespread concern of the impacts of the lack of secure, appropriate and affordable housing, on the residents of the Shire.

The nationwide housing crisis is requiring the reconsideration of the role of every level of government in relation to planning for, facilitating and delivering affordable housing. Mount Alexander Shire Council is one of many Councils across Victoria and the nation repositioning its role in the delivery of affordable housing. This reorientation is in recognition of the crippling impact that the lack of available and affordable housing is having on local economies, communities, families, and individuals. Addressing these issues is requiring concerted and coordinated efforts across all three levels of government.

Communication and Consultation

If approved, consultation is intended to commence in the following week via the Shape platform and promoted through local media channels, as well as including face-to-face sessions in Maldon and Newstead. Specifically, the community will be asked if they agree to the allocation of 49-year peppercorn leases to Wintringham Housing Limited over the

nominated sites to build and manage affordable rental housing, for people aged 50 years and over, who meet Victorian Housing Register eligibility requirements.

Legislation

Heritage Act 2017

Heritage considerations apply to 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead which is adjacent to the Newstead Courthouse building. There is no Heritage overlay on 10 Steele Street, Maldon.

Housing Act 1983

If pursued, the Homes Victoria funding opportunity referred to in this report is for the provision of social housing. This means that all residents in the buildings would be drawn from the Victorian Housing Register (the 'waiting list' for social housing), who nominate a preference to live in Mount Alexander Shire.

Local Government Act 2020

Direct appointment of Wintringham as the preferred provider and partner for this project occurs under the provisions of sections 114 to 116 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The rationale for the direct appointment follows other precedents (such as the direct appointment of Haven Home Safe for the 30A and 65 Templeton Street development, and by Yarriambiack Shire Council).

Planning and Environment Act 1987

The impacts of the State government's recent changes to the Planning Act, and delivery of the Housing Statement are not yet fully clear. However, their intention is to facilitate faster and increased delivery of affordable housing. There is capacity within the changes for the Minister to call in projects if they face barriers at the local government level in community acceptance and/or planning approval. It is therefore anticipated that these recent changes will facilitate rather than hinder delivery of projects such as that proposed at 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead and 10 Steele Street, Maldon.

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2021-2025

Pillar - Environment - A flourishing environment for nature and people.

- Objective - We are focused on the housing affordability challenge in our community.

The allocation of 49-year leases over 2A Canrobert Street, Newstead and 10 Steele Street, Maldon would directly action the above objective of the Council Plan.

Declarations of Conflict of Interest

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

9.3. Economy

9.3.1. ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023

This Report is For Decision

Responsible Director: Director Corporate and Community Services, Lisa Knight

Responsible Officer: Communications Coordinator, Anne-Marie Middlemast

Attachments:

1. Mount Alexander Shire Council Annual Report 2022-2023 [9.3.1.1 - 166 pages]
2. Annual Report 2022-2023 - Communications Plan - August 2023 [9.3.1.2 - 3 pages]

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Report 2022/2023 for adoption.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopts the Annual Report 2022/2023.

MOVED COUNCILLOR HENDERSON

That the recommendation be adopted

SECONDED COUNCILLOR GARDNER

CARRIED

Context

The Annual Report 2022/2023 outlines Council's performance for the financial year including progress and delivery of the strategic objectives of Council. The report contains statutory information and includes the Financial and Performance Statements.

Section 98 of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) requires Council to prepare an annual report in respect of each financial year. The Annual Report must be presented to a Meeting of Council by 31 October 2023.

The Act no longer requires Council to submit their Annual Report to the Minister for Local Government.

Issues

In 2022, the Communications team introduced a streamlined, simpler format to the Annual Report which continues in the Annual Report 2022/2023.

The Report of Operations section remains tightly focused to emphasise the Year in Review and case studies. This approach enables the highlighting of our successes succinctly, whilst efficiently utilising staff resources in the document's preparation.

Another significant use of staff resources includes the design time dedicated to presenting the financial and performance objectives.

Like last year, this data is presented in a simpler format, ensuring that the organisation's business-as-usual design requirements can still be met, whilst this Report is being prepared.

Finance and Resource Implications

The completed Annual Report includes the audited annual Financial and Performance Statements was adopted 'in-principle' at the Meeting of Council on 19 September 2023. The Report of Operations includes a financial snapshot which highlights the financial results.

Given the preparation and production of the report is an annual task, allocation of resources and budget will be absorbed within the Communications team annual base budget.

Risk Analysis

Regulatory risk:

The Annual Report is a mandatory report that the organisation collates and communicates to the State Government.

Requirements for compliance include:

- Presenting the Annual Report at a Meeting of Council within 4 months of the end of the financial year

We are on track to meet these timeframes, and there is no associated risk regarding compliance of reporting requirements.

Climate Impact Statement

Production of the Annual Report has negligible climate impact.

Each year, a concerted effort is made to limit the number of printed copies, further minimising the impact.

Efforts to streamline the Report mean that the total number of printed pages will remain low.

Alternate Options

There are no alternate options for the Annual Report. The Annual Report is a statutory reporting requirement.

Communication and Consultation

The Communication and Consultation plan is attached.

Below, under 'Inform' is an outline of how the community will be notified of the Annual Report and its key content.

Inform:

We will keep our community informed.

An item was placed in Council's weekly newspaper advertisement in the Midland Express in the first week of October 2023 noting consideration by Council of the Annual Report.

Further notification was provided on Council's website 14 days prior to consideration at the Meeting of Council on 17 October 2023, in accordance with the Act.

Information was provided on the website advising that copies of the report can be found at the Civic Centre. The community was encouraged to follow the link to Council's website to access the Annual Report 2022/2023.

The adopted Annual Report will be uploaded to Council's website. The community will be informed through local media and a summary of achievements will be included in the third rates notice instalment reminder distributed to rate payers in February 2024.

Mandatory information collected as part of the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) will be made available to view and compare on the Victorian Government's 'Know Your Council' website.

Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

Council has a statutory obligation to prepare an Annual Report in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020. The Act no longer requires each Council to submit their annual report to the Minister for Local Government. Each Council must comply with its own Public Transparency Policy and the public transparency principles in section 58 of the Act.

In alignment with the Act, the Annual Report must include a Report of Operations and Service Performance Indicators, a Governance and Management Checklist, and audited Financial and Performance Statements. While the format of the Report of Operations is not prescribed, the Act and regulations set out information that must be contained as a minimum.

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2021-2025

Community - A healthy, connected and inclusive community.

- Our community feels safe, regardless of identity or circumstance.
- Our community is inclusive and connected.
- Our community is physically and mentally healthy
- Services in our community are accessible and coordinated.

Economy - A resilient and growing local economy.

- Our local economy is diverse and resilient.
- We are attracting and building investment in our cultural and creative community.
- We are helping businesses make their work simpler and more sustainable.
- We are supporting continuous learning and personal growth.

Environment - A flourishing environment for nature and people.

- Our community is growing in harmony with nature.
- We are facilitating managed growth of our towns while protecting natural assets.
- We are focused on the housing affordability challenge in our community.
- We are maintaining, improving and celebrating our places and spaces.
- We are working locally to address the climate emergency.

Principle - We are always improving.

- Council is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves.

Principle - We are delivering together.

- We are working across Council, government, local partners and across community to meet the varied needs of our region.

Principle - We are engaging genuinely with the community.

- Our community feels heard and can influence and participate in the decisions that impact them.

The Annual Report outlines Council's performance for the 2022/2023 financial year. It includes a report on strategic objectives in the 2021–2025 Council Plan under the pillars of:

- a healthy, connected and inclusive community
- an environment for people and nature
- a resilient and growing local economy

The report includes a summary of annual achievements, actions completed in the Annual Plan, a report on the Annual budget, summary of Council policies and other statutory information.

Declarations of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

9.3.2. AUDIT AND RISK BIENNIAL REPORT 1 JULY 2022 TO 31 DECEMBER 2022

This Report is For Information

Responsible Director: Chief Executive Officer, Darren Fuzzard

Responsible Officer: Manager Governance and Risk, Leanne Brown

Attachments: 1. Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report - 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022 [9.3.2.1 - 10 pages]

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by Council's Audit and Risk Committee for the period 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the contents of this report on the work of the Audit and Risk Committee for the period 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022.

MOVED COUNCILLOR DRISCOLL

That the recommendation be adopted

SECONDED COUNCILLOR MALTBY

CARRIED

Context

In accordance with section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act):

- (1) Council must establish an Audit and Risk Committee.
- (2) An Audit and Risk Committee is not a delegated committee.
- (3) An Audit and Risk Committee must -
 - (a) include members who are Councillors of the Council; and
 - (b) consist of a majority of members who are not Councillors of the Council and who collectively have -
 - (i) expertise in financial management and risk; and
 - (ii) experience in public sector management; and
 - (c) not include any person who is a member of Council staff of the Council.
- (4) The chairperson of an Audit and Risk Committee must not be a Councillor of the Council.
- (5) Sections 123 and 125 and Division 2 of Part 6 apply to a member of the Audit and Risk Committee who is not a Councillor as if the member were a member of a delegated committee.
- (6) A Council may pay a fee to a member of an Audit and Risk Committee who is not a Councillor of the Council.

The Audit and Risk Committee assists Council to discharge its responsibilities under the Act to:

- Monitor Council's financial and performance reporting
- Monitor Council's internal controls environment
- Monitor and provide advice on risk management
- Monitor and provide advice on fraud prevention systems and controls
- Review and monitor internal audits and the internal audit contractor
- Oversee external audit functions
- Monitor the compliance of Council policies and procedures with:
 - the overarching governance principles
 - the Act and the regulations and any Ministerial directions; other relevant legislation and regulations

The Audit and Risk Committee Charter as endorsed by Council at the Meeting of Council 21 February 2023, provides further detail regarding the above-mentioned responsibilities. As per the Charter, the Committee is required to provide biannual reports to Council on the activities and findings of the Committee.

Issues

The attached report has been prepared in accordance with the Committee Charter and has been reviewed and approved by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting held on Friday 24 March 2023.

In summary, the number of activities undertaken within the reporting period include:

Reporting Requirement Category	No. of activities completed	No. of activities rescheduled for operational reasons (& in progress)	No. of activities not applicable for this reporting period
Financial and Performance Reporting	5	-	1
Internal Control Environment	3	2	-
Risk Management	-	6	-
Fraud Prevention Systems and Controls	2	1	-
Internal Audit	6	-	4
External Audit	4	1	1
Compliance Management	5	-	1
Totals	25	10	7

Finance and Resource Implications

There are no new financial resource implications arising from this report.

Risk Analysis

The Audit and Risk Committee oversees all risks related to the organisation. Under the Act Biannual Reports must be tabled at Meetings of Council. In doing so, Council is meeting its legislative obligation. From a community perspective, this is also a transparency mechanism for the Audit and Risk Committee.

If reports were not tabled, Council would be in breach of its legislative obligation and consequently would experience reputational damage.

Climate Impact Statement

This report does not attempt to address the impacts of Climate Change.

Alternate Options

Provision of biannual reports to Council is a requirement under the Act. Council may choose to:

- Maintain the status quo with 2 reports per year
- Request quarterly reporting from the Committee in alignment with the frequency of Committee meetings

At this point in time, it is recommended Council maintain the status quo.

Communication and Consultation

The report was tabled at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 24 March 2023.

Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2021-2025

Principle - We are delivering together.

- We are working across Council, government, local partners and across community to meet the varied needs of our region.

Declarations of Conflict of Interest

Under section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

No conflicts of interest

The Officers involved in reviewing this report, having made enquiries with the relevant members of staff, report that there are no conflicts of interest to be disclosed.

10. DELEGATES REPORTS

Meetings attended by CEO and Mayor from 20 September 2023 to 17 October 2023.

MEETING	CEO	MAYOR
Attended Municipal Association of Victoria, Loddon Campaspe Mallee, Regional meeting (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	
Meeting with property owner to discuss the Campbells Creek trail project (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer) – (Paul Diss, Acting Director Infrastructure and Development; Kerrie Eldridge, Acting Manager Engineering also in attendance)	✓	
Attended Mount Alexander Community Enterprise's AGM		✓
Gold Central Vic radio interview (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	
Met with representatives of WINC (Older Women in Co-housing) on site to discuss their vision		✓
Meeting with representatives of Nalderun, DJAARA, Department Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and Parks Victoria to discuss a local cultural initiative (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	
Meeting with representatives from Castlemaine Art Museum (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer) – (Merryn Tinkler, Manager Economy and Culture also in attendance)	✓	
Attended Run the Maine event		✓
Gold Central Vic radio interview (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	
Attended joint State Government and Local Government CEOs monthly forum (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	
Meeting with representatives from Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to discuss local resident's proposed business venture (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	
Attended Early Years Steering Group meeting		✓
Attended Victorian Seniors Festival Country concert		✓
Attended Loddon Campaspe Regional Growth summit (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	
Attended Rural Councils Victoria annual general meeting (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	

MEETING	CEO	MAYOR
Attended internal audit meeting with Mount Alexander Shire's audit consultant (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	
Attended meeting for the Bulortj Children and Youth Network		✓
Attended Indigenous Roundtable agenda planning meeting		✓
Gold Central Vic radio interview (Michael Annear, Acting Chief Executive Officer)	✓	
Attended photo opportunity for Whole Loddon Love promotion		✓
Attended meeting of Chief Executive Officers (or representatives) from six Loddon Campaspe councils; working group representatives and consultant to discuss proposed Visitor Economy Partnership (Merryn Tinkler, Manager Economy and Culture also in attendance)	✓	
Attended Municipal Association Victoria's annual conference and dinner	✓	
Interview for local podcast, <i>Candid Tiny House</i>		✓
Attended Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel meeting		✓
Attended Municipal Association Victoria's State Council Meeting (Cr Tony Cordy also in attendance)	✓	
Attended Emergency Expo		✓
Attended Chewton Primary School's 150 th anniversary celebrations		✓
Attended Whole Loddon Love concert in Baringhup		✓
Interview for local podcast, <i>Saltgrass</i> (Clare Richards, Housing Solutions Broker also in attendance)		✓
Meeting with Executive Officer, LEAD Loddon Murray to discuss upcoming sponsorship opportunity for local residents	✓	
Gold Central Vic radio interview	✓	
Meeting with new Regional Director, Loddon Mallee, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire	✓	
ABC Central Victoria radio interview		✓

Councillor Cordy advised that he attended the MAV Annual Conference and General Meeting over two days recently. He spoke of the history of the MAV and that they were the peak body representing the 79 Local Government Associations in the State. Councillor Cordy made mention of some of the speakers at the conference, in particular, the Hon Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories. He advised that in her opening statement, the Minister made mention of Mount Alexander Shire and the Boorp Boorp Boondyil exhibition at the Castlemaine Market Building. He also noted other speakers, such as Rodney Carter, CEO, Dja Dja Wurrung; Roberta Skiros, Assistant Auditor-General, Financial Audit, VAGO; Peter Maddison, Founding Director, Maddison Architects, Host Grand Designs Australia and Marion Terrill, Transport & Cities Program Director, Grattan Institute.

Councillor Cordy advised that there were many positive motions passed at the General Meeting; however, also noted that an interchange adjacent to Calder Park was rejected. He advised that he was pleased to represent Mount Alexander Shire at these events.

Councillor Gardner advised that he attended Whole Loddon Love event at Baringhup on Sunday. The event was part of a series of celebrations to provide support to those that were severely affected by flooding in 2022. He noted that a smoking ceremony was conducted by Uncle Rick Nelson and noted his dedication to the community.

Mayor Annear noted that she attended Run the Maine, which is a fundraiser for Dhelkaya Health. She also attended and did the opening speech for the country concert held for the Seniors Festival and advised that the concert was very much enjoyed.

The Mayor noted that she had recently completed podcasts around housing, *Candid Tiny House* and *Saltgrass*. She advised that she enjoyed attending the Emergency Expo over the weekend and it was attended by a lot of families. She noted that she attended the Chewton Primary School 150 years celebrations. The Mayor also attended Whole Loddon Love and commented on what a lovely event it was.

The Mayor attended her last Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel Meeting. The Panel consists of Mayors from large and small Shire's and it reports directly to the Minister for Local Government. This meeting focussed on the outcomes and the recommendations from the IBAC report, Operation Sandon and Local Government financial sustainability.

Councillor Henderson congratulated the Mayor for being on the Mayoral Advisory Panel and representing Mount Alexander Shire Council

The CEO thanked Councillors and staff for their efforts and work whilst he was on leave. He also thanked Councillors for their appreciation and acknowledgement of the Annual Report, which was tabled tonight.

He noted meeting with the Executive Officer, LEAD Loddon Murray to discuss upcoming the sponsorship opportunity for local residents and encouraged the community to be part of the leadership program.

The CEO spoke of meeting with Steve Hamilton, the new Regional Director, Loddon Mallee, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)

Director Annear advised that he had met with residents and property owners to discuss the Campbells Creek trail project, which was positive. The next stage is to get permits in place and to progress to the completion of the trail.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

Nil.

12. URGENT SPECIAL BUSINESS

Nil.

13. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

These reports are confidential in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, which permits the meeting to be closed to consider confidential information.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council closes the Ordinary Meeting of Council 17 October 2023, in accordance with Section 66 (2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020, in order to consider confidential information, as it contains as defined in the Local Government Act under Section 3, Definitions – Confidential Information:

- (a) Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released**

MOVED COUNCILLOR MALTBY

That the recommendation be adopted

SECONDED COUNCILLOR GARDNER

CARRIED

14. MEETING CLOSE

Meeting closed at 7.50 pm.