

MINUTES

Of the Meeting of Council

Tuesday 17 March 2026



Held 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.

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

1. PRESENT

Councillors: Matthew Driscoll, Tony Cordy, Lucas Maddock, Philip Walker, Rosalie Hastwell, Toby Heydon, and Rosie Annear.

Officers: Chief Executive Officer (Darren Fuzzard), Director Infrastructure Development (Michael Annear), Director Corporate Services (Julie Landy), Director Healthy Communities (Lisa Knight) and Manager Governance and Risk (Leanne Brown).

2. APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Councillor Bill Maltby

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Mayor Toby Heydon declared a Material Conflict of Interest with known Public Time Statement and Item 9.3.1 of the Agenda.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

4.1. Meeting Of Council - 17 February 2026

The unconfirmed minutes of the Meeting of the Mount Alexander Shire Council held at 6.30 pm on 17 February 2026 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 17 February 2026 be confirmed.

MOVED COUNCILLOR ANNEAR

The recommendation be adopted.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR WALKER

CARRIED.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

5.1. Director Healthy Communities - Lisa Knight

On behalf of the Council and organisation, the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer extended their deep gratitude and appreciation for the significant contributions that Lisa Knight, as Director Healthy Communities and previously as Director Corporate and Community Services, has made to the Mount Alexander Shire community and organisation over the past nine years.

6. PUBLIC TIME

MOVED COUNCILLOR CORDY

That standing orders be suspended at 6.44 pm.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR HASTWELL

CARRIED.

a. Stephen and Kym Cross

- Mayor Heydon advised the following:

In accordance with sub-clauses 12.1.6 (b), (c), (d) and (k) of the Governance Rules 2023, the Mayor deemed the question / statement unacceptable for the following reasons:

- (c) is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff;
- (d) relates to personnel matters;
- (k) relates to any other matter which the Council considers would prejudice the Council or any person.

He advised that Stephen and Kym Cross will receive a response in writing from the Director Infrastructure and Development on the matters they have raised.

b. Peter Veenhuizen, Maldon Traffic Safety Group.

Mr Veenhuizen read the following question:

My question relates to the classification of two residential roads in Maldon.

The roads comprising Hornsby and Morris Streets were identified in 2024 by a MASC officer at the time, as a 'designated Link Road'.

The Mount Alexander Shire Council Road Management Plan 2025 describes a 'Link Road' as 'providing a strategic link between identifiable points of interest, may carry a large volume of vehicles, have a high percentage of heavy vehicles, and a high percentage of vehicles will be travelling the entire length of the road'.

I suggest that Hornsby Street and Morris Street do not meet this description. They are residential streets, many under Heritage Overlays, and not the town truck bypass route. There is a speed limit of 50K, then 80K, and part way along Hornsby becomes a dirt road. It is obvious that few vehicles travel the entire length of this road 'between identifiable points of interest'. (What are the identifiable points of interest?)

In late 2024, a MASC officer undertook traffic monitoring along this section of the road, and the significant number of heavy vehicles was noted. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) was notified. As a result, NHVR restrictions as to the movement of heavy vehicles were placed on 'Hornsby and Morris Street between Allan's and Reef Streets'. However, significant numbers of heavy vehicles continue to travel along these roads.

As Hornsby and Morris Streets do not meet their definition of a 'Link Road', could MASC, as Road Manager of this section of the road, review their classification please?

- The Director Infrastructure Development (DID) thanked Mr Veenhuizen for his question.

He advised that the sealed section of Hornsby and Morris Streets have been assessed as Link Roads, due to:

- The volume of traffic that uses the roads, which has been most recently confirmed in 2024.
- The routes are used as a connection between the Maldon town centre and Bendigo via the Bendigo - Maldon Road.

He noted that compliance with the heavy vehicle restrictions established by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator is the Regulators responsibility and that Council Officers will share your concerns with the Regulator and local Police. He also recommended to contact the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and local police to share concerns if trucks are still using this route.

c. Cam Walker (read by Councillor Walker).

"I appreciate the motion being put forward by Councillor Maddock (Notice of Motion 006/2026 - Rising Costs and Impacts of Climate Change).

As someone who works across a range of climate related disaster fields and as an active local volunteer firefighter, I can see that the economic, environmental, public and mental health impacts of weather related disasters (including heatwaves, floods, and fires) are steadily increasing. This is corroborated by mainstream consensus science.

Without meaningful co-ordinated action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the latest science, countries like Australia will continue to suffer from more regular and costly climate change related events.

It is clear that fossil fuels are one of the key drivers of global heating (human induced climate change). It seems only reasonable that Council support the four points in the motion urging the Australian Government and Parliament to fully consider the action points outlined in section 2 of Councillor Maddock's motion, including the call for a 'Climate Pollution Levy on coal, gas and oil corporations, to raise the funds necessary to pay for the climate damage these corporations are causing'.

A levy on fossil fuel corporations could deliver major sources of new income for disaster response and recovery and resilience building. This would provide an alternative source of funds for state funded emergency services and hence would assist in taking the burden off farming communities who are compelled to contribute to the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund. If Council champions the idea of a levy being imposed on fossil fuel companies, it will demonstrate support for farming families and communities who are struggling to pay the ESVL."

d. Malcolm Robbins.

Mr Robbins stated the following:

Question: How can MASC help deliver Climate Justice to our community?

The problem:

Every local community is paying the price of accelerating anthropogenic climate change, while big coal, oil and gas corporations externalise the true cost of their activities - shifting the burden of climate damage onto communities, local businesses, and families.

It's time to rectify that injustice and I believe that those most responsible for climate damage must adequately contribute to repairing it.

Fossil fuel corporations are responsible for 75% of Australia's climate pollution but are not contributing their fair share to climate repair.

Instead, communities and governments in Australia are forced to pay the price for climate change through increasing insurance costs, food prices, and increased recovery costs from storms, drought, bushfires and floods.

This is one of the more blatantly unjust examples of inequity faced by Australian society and directly attributable to rapid anthropogenic climate change resulting from activity of fossil fuel corporations.

A Climate Pollution Levy as a just proposal to successfully address these apparently intractable problems.

All local, state and federal government levels urgently need to cooperate to:

- Establish a national Climate Pollution Levy on corporations involved in extracting processing or exporting fossil fuels to adequately reimburse the community for the climate damage and loss caused by their activities.
- Use this levy to create a Climate Compensation Fund to address the needs of communities suffering climate damage impacts and households facing rising costs from climate pollution, including funds for First Nations and Pacific peoples.
- Rapidly end all fossil fuel subsidies and close related tax loopholes.

Collecting payment as a levy can ensure appropriate targeting of funds.

The proposed Climate Compensation Fund can be used to deliver necessary support to climate-impacted communities, and to fund a fast and just implementation of necessary societal climate change resilience.

Question: How can MASC help deliver Climate Justice to our community?

Recent polling shows 68% support for a Polluter Pays Levy and this campaign is already gaining significant traction within the community.

Many countries have already put a price on climate pollution and the concept is proven.

I ask MASC to actively and publicly support this campaign on behalf of our community.

More details of how this policy would work can be found here:

<https://www.makebigpolluterspay.org.au>

e. Bronwyn Machin.

Ms Machin spoke in favour of Councillor Maddock's Notice of Motion 006/2026, noting that she spent decades working or volunteering in roles aimed at changing systems and policies that hinder action on climate change. She voiced strong support for Councillor Maddock's resolution, noting that the people who suffer the most from climate related destruction are often those with the least power to reduce its impacts.

Ms Machin noted her experience working at the front desk of Community House and serving on its Committee of Management, she described the significant stress placed on local community groups and volunteers who are trying to manage these challenges. She also highlighted financial pressures faced by these organisations, including delays that limit their ability to raise funds.

Ms Machin noted that this situation represents a classic example of cost shifting onto those least able to bear it. She noted data from the Australia Institute showing that fossil fuel subsidies reached \$16.3 billion in the past year, an increase of 9.4%, outpacing growth in

programs like the NDIS. She noted that the Federal Government's fuel credit scheme alone costs \$10.8 billion and is projected to grow faster than spending on key social services such as the NDIS, childcare subsidies, and aged care.

Ms Machin noted that the fossil fuel industry can clearly afford a climate pollution levy and suggested that reducing subsidies to major polluters, not farmers, would be a reasonable way to fund necessary climate responses. Ms Machin asked councillors to support the resolution to protect both community wellbeing and council resources.

f. Susie Burke

Ms Burke noted support for the Notice of Motion on the rising costs and impacts of climate change. She noted her work as a psychologist and member of the Victorian Government's Emergency Psychosocial Services Panel, her extensive experience working in disaster-affected communities and her research on the psychosocial impacts of climate change. Ms Burke noted that psychological and social costs such as depression, PTSD, suicide risk, family violence, substance misuse, stress, and unemployment are so significant that they approximately double the total economic cost of natural disasters. Ms Burke requested an amendment to the Motion to explicitly include the term "psychosocial" when referring to climate-related costs.

She also suggested splitting one section of the motion into two separate points; one focused on proactive maintenance and upgrading of infrastructure, and another specifically addressing investment in community resilience, disaster preparedness, and adequate psychosocial support before, during, and after disasters.

- Councillor Maddock

Councillor Maddock thanked the members of the public who spoke to his Motion noting that he was preparing to include Ms Burke's changes in the Motion.

g. Lawrence Abou Khater

Mr Khater asked if the Mayor, Chief Executive Officer, or Councillors attended a Victorian Local Government forum on antisemitism and social cohesion. He noted that two years earlier he had raised concerns that Council lacked a cultural diversity policy and anti-racism training, and he argued that Council appeared willing to engage on issues affecting one community, while avoiding discussion of other forms of discrimination.

- Mayor Heydon

The Mayor responded that he had attended a forum at Glen Eira Town Hall focused on various anti-racism measures, including antisemitism, and that this attendance was publicly declared. When Mr Khater reiterated concerns about selective engagement, the stalled cultural diversity policy and Council's Formal Positions Policy. The Mayor stated that he was not on Council when the Policy was adopted, but believed it related to international matters, and rejected the claim that the Council supported one community over others. He added that work on cultural diversity initiatives was ongoing and offered to meet with Mr Khater to discuss the issues in more detail outside the Meeting.

h. Max Lesser

Mr Lesser spoke of a lack of community involvement in Council matters and presented Council with a number of gifts and games directed at community engagement in Council matters.

The Mayor left the Chamber at 7.13 pm due to a declared conflict of interest and in accordance with Clause 7.2.2 of the Governance Rules 2023, Deputy Mayor Driscoll took the Chair.

i. James McLinden

Mr McLinden, a directly affected neighbour and representative of the opposing petition, spoke against the proposed 25-year lease and development at 65–67 Templeton Street. He stressed that the objection was not to affordable housing itself, but to the lack of information required for Council to make an informed long-term decision. He argued that Council was being asked to approve a peppercorn-rent lease before key details, such as final designs, planning pathways, infrastructure impacts, and governance arrangements, were known.

Mr McLinden noted that although Council's survey reported 80% support, this was based only on a high-level concept and was contradicted by a petition of around 100 signatures from local residents, which represented a significant majority of directly affected neighbours. He highlighted that many concerns he had identified in Council's own report; such as building height, heritage fit, overlooking, privacy, parking, tenancy management, and construction impacts remain unresolved.

He stated that assurances about minimised earthworks and future transparency could not be meaningfully assessed without detailed plans, especially given the scale of a four-storey development in a heritage streetscape and the potential for an underground car park. While financial and operational risks may be shifted away from Council, he argued that physical and social impacts; such as strain on infrastructure, sewer capacity, parking, and waste management, would fall on neighbours.

McLinden emphasised that a 25-year lease is a significant, irreversible decision, that should not be made while major elements of the project remain undefined. He urged Council to complete design work, clarify impacts, and enable informed community input before entering into a binding agreement. He concluded by urging Councillors to vote against the proposal in its current form, arguing that it is the wrong location and does not yet meet the standards of transparency, sequencing, and due diligence expected by the community.

The Mayor returned to the Chamber at 7.21 pm and took the Chair.

MOVED COUNCILLOR CORDY

That standing orders be resumed at 7.22 pm.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR HASTWELL

CARRIED.

7. PETITIONS AND LETTERS

7.1. Petition – Templeton Street Housing Project

A petition regarding the matter included at Item 9.3.1 of the Meeting Agenda was received on 10 March 2026 and all Councillors received a copy on that date. In accordance with Clause 12.2.3 of the Governance Rules 2023, this petition will be considered as part of the feedback received during the community engagement process undertaken for that project and the decision of Council on Item 9.3.1 will be communicated to the lead petitioner.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Nil.

9. OFFICER REPORTS

9.1. Communities

9.1.1. Goldfields Library Corporation - Approving the New Constitution to Transition to a Not-For-Profit Company Limited by Guarantee

This Report is For Decision

Responsible Director: Director Healthy Communities, Lisa Knight

Responsible Officer: Director Healthy Communities, Lisa Knight

Attachments:

1. GLC Collective Model Transition Risk Assessment [9.1.1.1 – 13 pages]
2. GLC Division of Items between new Constitution and existing Agreement [9.1.1.2 - 5 pages]
3. Proposed Constitution - Central Victorian Public Libraries Ltd [9.1.1.3 - 29 pages]

Executive Summary

With current Regional Library Corporations no longer encompassed under the *Local Government Act 2020*, all Councils currently covered by a Regional Library Corporation service, are required to transition their public library service to a new model by 2030. This includes Mount Alexander Shire Council as a member Council of the North Central Goldfields Library Corporation, trading as Goldfields Library Corporation (GLC).

The purpose of this report is for Council to approve and agree to sign a new Constitution for a Not-for-Profit Company Limited by Guarantee, known as Central Victorian Public Libraries Ltd. This legal entity change is required to participate with the other three founding member Councils (Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Loddon Shire Council and City of Greater Bendigo) in becoming a Beneficial Enterprise, as prescribed within sections 110 and 111 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **Notes that Council have previously assessed the proposal to participate in a beneficial enterprise and are satisfied that Council has met, and can continue to meet, the requirements of sections 110(1) and 111 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.**
2. **Notes the risk assessment, management and mitigation strategies to address risks set out in Attachment 9.1.1.1.**
3. **Pursuant to section 110(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, resolves to participate in the formation of, and become a founding member of, Central Victorian Public Libraries Ltd. (a public not for profit company limited by guarantee) on the terms of the Central Victorian Public Libraries Ltd. Constitution as set out in Attachment 9.1.1.3.**
4. **Appoints the following two natural persons as the inaugural Directors of Central Victorian Public Libraries:**
 - a) **Councillor Rosie Annear**

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- b) Director Lisa Knight.
5. Appoints the natural person, Lisa Knight, Director Healthy Communities, as its Corporate Representative.
 6. Instructs the Chief Executive Officer to sign a Resolution of Members to be Founding Members of Central Victorian Public Libraries Ltd.
 7. Notes that the Goldfields Regional Library Corporation will be wound up in accordance with section 330(4) of the *Local Government Act 2020* and a Beneficial Enterprise be established in accordance with section 110 of the *Local Government Act 2020* to deliver library services on behalf of the City of Greater Bendigo, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Mount Alexander Shire Council and Loddon Shire Council.
 8. Notes that the Goldfields Regional Library Corporation will continue to provide library services under the current model, while Officers from the member Councils and Goldfields Regional Library Corporation negotiate and finalise the terms of the Central Victorian Public Libraries Agreement which will govern the service delivery relationship between the Member Councils and Central Victorian Public Libraries Limited.

MOVED COUNCILLOR ANNEAR

The recommendation be adopted.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR MADDOCK

CARRIED.

Context

The introduction of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) initiated a requirement for Regional Library Corporations to be wound up in accordance with section 330(4) of the Act and a beneficial enterprise established in accordance with section 110 and 111 of the Act.

All four GLC member Councils (Mount Alexander Shire Council, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Loddon Shire Council and City of Greater Bendigo) have since undertaken due diligence with respect to confirming that a beneficial enterprise model represents best value. Each member Council has approved the development of a draft Constitution that provides for Council to become a founding member of a beneficial enterprise.

On behalf of member Councils, Goldfields Library Corporation has engaged appropriate legal services to undertake the development of a draft Constitution and prepare a risk assessment in accordance with section 111 of the Act and Legal services were engaged and have provided the draft constitution, risk assessment and a draft library agreement for review.

Legal services advised that the draft constitution, risk assessment and draft transfer of business agreement accord with section 110 of the Act and they are satisfied that what is proposed will meet the requirements of section 111 of the Act.

Based on external legal advice and review of documentation, Council has met, and will continue to meet, the requirements pursuant to section 110(1) and section 111 of the Act.

Section 111 states the following requirements in becoming a party to a beneficial enterprise:

Council will:

- Assess the total investment involved and the total risk exposure and ensure that its total risk exposure does not exceed its total investment.
- Ensure the new corporation is a limited corporation.
- Have regard to the risks involved and establish risk management arrangements.
- Implement regular performance monitoring and reporting arrangements.
- Ensure any changes to the operation or purpose of the beneficial enterprise are reported to Council.
- Identify and manage any risks associated with any changes to the operation or purpose of the beneficial enterprise.
 - A Council must report on operations and performance of each beneficial enterprise in its annual report.

GLC has ensured through the company's Constitution that:

- The new Corporation is limited by guarantee.
- Risk management arrangements have been established.
- Regular performance monitoring and reporting arrangements in relation to the beneficial enterprise are implemented.
- Any changes to the operation or purpose of the beneficial enterprise are reported to Council (and indeed controlled by member Councils).
- Risks associated with any changes to the operation or purpose of the beneficial enterprise are identified and managed.

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- A report on the operations and performance of the beneficial enterprise will be included in Council's Annual Report.

These requirements have all been met as part of the due diligence work completed and the development of the draft Constitution.

At the GLC Board meeting on 12 December 2025, the GLC Board endorsed a draft Constitution and approved the following motion:

That the Board:

- *Approves the Constitution for consideration by Member Councils.*
- *Requests our Member Councils to:*
 - *consent to be the founding Members of Central Victorian Public Libraries Ltd and instruct their Chief Executive Officer to sign a Resolution of Members to reflect that intent.*
 - *approve the Central Victorian Public Libraries Constitution.*
 - *appoint their proposed Board Members as the initial Directors of the Board and a Body Corporate Representative as described in the Constitution.*

Issues

Council's original participation in the collective library service model started in January 1996 with the establishment of the North Central Goldfields Library Corporation (known generally as GLC) by the four Member Councils, in accordance with section 196 of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

The GLC Board governs the Corporation in accordance with the relevant provisions of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the Regional Library Agreement and other adopted policies and procedures.

The Board is made up of two nominated representatives from each Member Council with one Councillor and one senior Council staff member. The day-to-day management of the Corporation is the responsibility of the GLC CEO and the GLC Management Team.

GLC member Councils comprise of City of Greater Bendigo, Macedon Ranges Shire, Mount Alexander Shire and Loddon Shire.

GLC publishes its own annual report and develops a four-year Library Plan, which outlines strategic objectives. The timing of these documents aligns with Council reporting and planning processes.

The introduction of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires Regional Library Corporations to transition to a Beneficial Enterprise structure within ten (10) years by 1 July 2030. Several have successfully completed this transition.

All four GLC member Councils undertook due diligence work to confirm the best way to progress the transition of library service delivery for the Regional Library Corporation model and broadly approved the following approach at Meetings of Council in 2024:

1. An agreement by all to be founding members of a Beneficial Enterprise, endorsing the continuation of a collective approach to library service delivery as the most efficient method.

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2. Instruction to GLC and the GLC Board to develop a draft Constitution to form a Not-for-Profit Company Limited by Guarantee that would be registered with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission.
 3. That the new Constitution be based on the parameters and conditions of the existing Regional Library Agreement to ensure continuity of conditions and service.
 4. A draft Constitution has been developed for the proposed NFP Company and is presented as *Attachment One* to this report. The Constitution also allows the Company to be a registered charity and attract tax deductible gift recipient status.
 5. This report provides details on the proposed Constitution and recommends that Council approve the Constitution in conjunction with the other founding member Councils.

The new Constitution maintains all rights of each Council that currently exist.

The Constitution maintains the fundamental principles, conditions and requirements of the existing Regional Library Agreement, covering the following key points:

1. The Founding Member Councils for the new Company are the same as the existing GLC Councils.
2. The Board structure remains the same, with equal voting rights for each Council, providing for two Board Directors from each Council, a Councillor and Council Officer.
3. The procedure of an Annual General Meeting, the development of an Annual Report and independent auditing remains the same and aligns with Council and State Government requirements.
4. Directors of the Board from each Council are elected for one (1) year, in line with Council requirements for reviewing representation on Boards on an annual basis.
5. The new Constitution also allows for a "Body Corporate Representative" that provides for each Council to appoint a person to act on behalf of Council in relation to the operation of the Board and Constitution and to attend Annual General Meetings. This can be one of the appointed Board Directors or a third individual. Each Council has power to revoke the appointment of a representative and appoint a new representative.
6. The Constitution stipulates that all rules, policies and procedures of the GLC will become the rules and policies of the Company at the date of the Incorporation of the Company and will remain in force until such time as they are amended or revoked by the Company. This ensures a smooth transition of all current conditions and allows any new Board to change policies and rules as required over time.
7. The Constitution details requirements such as meeting quorum and frequency, minute keeping and declarations of interest to align with current GLC requirements and Council requirements.
8. Insurance and indemnity of Officers is detailed, aligning with current requirements for professional indemnity and loss or injury liability.
9. Financial reporting and processing currently provided by City of Greater Bendigo is to remain in place and the Constitution allows for this arrangement.
10. Liability to members (Councils) is limited to \$1.00.
11. Members (Councils) may remove themselves from the Company with 12 months' notice, in the same way that Councils could remove themselves from GLC with 12 months' notice. This gives complete flexibility to Councils in terms of their ongoing commitment to the collective model approach.

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12. The Constitution can be amended by the member Councils as part of any general meeting (generally, but not limited to, the Annual General meeting). This gives flexibility in changing the conditions and requirements of the Company governance to Councils.

Key difference to the new Constitution to meet requirements of the Corporations Act 2001

The most significant difference between GLC governance and the proposed Company Constitution is the obligations that appointed Directors will have under the *Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001*.

These include the following:

1. A Director must have a Director's Identification Number. This is a process designed to ensure that Directors of companies are identified as real people. The easiest process is to undertake an online application where ATO or Centrelink records are connected to and verified by each Director. A Director's ID can almost be immediately obtained if this process is achievable.
2. A Director cannot appoint a proxy to attend meetings on their behalf.
3. Reflecting codes of conduct within the *Local Government Act 2020*, a Director commits an offence if they use their position dishonestly with the intention of directly or indirectly gaining an advantage for themselves, or someone else or causing detriment to the Company, or recklessly as to whether the use may result in themselves or someone else directly or indirectly gaining an advantage or in causing detriment to the Company.
4. A Director must disclose a material personal interest to the other Directors and not participate in any discussion or voting about the subject matter of personal interest.
5. Unlike the *Local Government Act 2020* which provides a maximum jail penalty of 5 years for misuse of position, the *Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001* provides a maximum jail level offence of 15 years.

It is recommended that Councillors and Council Officers, appointed as Directors, receive a one-hour training session on their obligations immediately prior to commencement, to be provided by the Company.

Next Steps in the Process

Once all four member Councils have approved the Constitution, the company will be registered with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

Following the company being registered, the following steps will be taken:

1. A new agreement will be presented for Councils to sign – this will outline the funding model and responsibilities of the new company to operate as a public library service. All four member Councils and the new Company will be the parties signing this agreement. This agreement will reflect the funding model and principles outlined in the existing Service and Funding Agreement.
2. A consultative process with community will be undertaken to suggest trading names for the company (i.e. Goldfields Libraries) and a rebranding exercise will take place.
3. Agreements, licenses, employment contracts, Enterprise Agreement conditions and assets of Goldfields Libraries will be transferred to the new Company.
4. Winding up proceedings will begin for Goldfields Libraries which will involve a final audit.
5. The new company will begin library service operations.

The aim is to use the 2026 (30 June-1 July) financial year changeover as the most convenient date for completion of all tasks; however, based on any complications that may arise, this is not necessary as a start/finish date.

Councils will be updated on progress as the Board and Goldfields Libraries finalise these processes.

Finance and Resource Implications

Funding for the NCGRL Corporation (and the transition to a public not for profit company limited by guarantee) is provided for in the current budget and each year, agreement is reached on an equal per capita contribution, based on an annual budget and 10-year financial plan developed by the Corporation.

Risk Analysis

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment (Attachment 9.1.1.1) has been completed which identifies strategic risks associated with the change in company structure to comply with the Act.

Importantly, GLC has allowed time for movement in the public library industry to be part of the analysis in considering risk for member Councils in moving to the proposed model. This has allowed other services to practically test processes and new models of management to ascertain possible risk and consider mitigation to reduce risk and impact based on this specific not- for-profit company approach.

The risk assessment considers the likelihood, impact and mitigating factors of the following business risk categories:

- Strategic: Addressing decisions concerning the business structure and objectives.
- Compliance: Ensuring compliance with laws, regulations, standards and codes of practice.
- Financial: Reviewing our financial position, transparency and systems.
- Operational: Our operational and administrative procedures.
- Environmental: Considering internal and external factors that impact our business and the controls we have in place to manage these.
- Reputational: Protecting the character and community trust in our business.

Given the work that has now been undertaken by several Regional Library Corporations in shifting to a beneficial enterprise model, there are identified mitigating actions that provide expert and experienced guidance through the process of business transfer. These are identified in the risk assessment and broadly include:

- Use of expert accounting and legal consultants to oversee transfer of business and development of constitution and service agreement.
- Appropriate training for members of any new Board structure.
- Time for the GLC Board to scrutinise any new agreements for services and funding structures.
- Support work from the GLC Board, CEO and Executive Team to transition the business.
- Consistent work with staff and union.

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- A coordinated communication plan for staff and community.
 - Ensure third party service agreements are transferred seamlessly for business continuity.

Climate Impact Statement

This report does not directly impact climate change, however, libraries disseminate objective knowledge in relation to climate change and embody social responsibility by incorporating sustainable practices into library operations.

Gender Equity Statement

A Gender Impact Assessment has not been completed for this report.

Mount Alexander Shire Council and the GLC Library actively promote the importance of Gender equity and equality, this approach is embedded and evidenced in strategic priorities and are noted as core foundational principles in the GLC Library Plan, the 2025 -2029 Council Plan and the 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. Additionally, many programs, projects and initiatives from both organisations provide support and resources to families, educators, partner agencies and organisations that educate and raise awareness of the importance of appropriate access to literature, resources and learning spaces – for all genders and all ages. This approach enables alignment and compliance with the *Gender Equity Act 2020* and the Charter of Human Rights.

Alternate Options

Council may choose to undertake an alternate option as a legal entity for library arrangements across the Shire and/ or, may choose to not provide library services. These are not recommended alternate options. Extensive research, analysis and legal advice over the last 18 months have been undertaken to evaluate, analyse and recommend the most appropriate option for Mount Alexander Shire Council and its community. Library services are a much loved and needed service for the Mount Alexander Shire community, and this has been a key consideration as part of this project and recommendation. With current Regional Library Corporations no longer encompassed under the *Local Government Act 2020*, all Councils currently covered by a Regional Library Corporation service, are required to transition their public library service to a new model by 2030. This includes Mount Alexander Shire Council as a member Council of the North Central Goldfields Library Corporation (trading as Goldfields Library Corporation (GLC)).

Communication and Consultation

The signing of the Constitution and registering of a Not-for-Profit Company Limited by Guarantee with ASIC, has not required community consultation; however, once approved and registered, there is an opportunity to consult with the community about a new trading name for the library service.

In the same way the North Central Goldfields Library Corporation trades as 'Goldfields Libraries', we would look to rebrand under a new logo and trading name.

Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Regional Library Corporations to be wound up in accordance with section 330(4) and a beneficial enterprise established in accordance with section 110 and Council to comply with section 111.

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2025-2029

Focus Area: Communities - Healthy, connected and inclusive communities.

- A strong, connected network of community-led wellbeing initiatives.
- Vibrant townships, reflecting local spirit and aspirations.
- Services and initiatives are delivered equitably.
- Council decisions, services, planning are actively informed by the diverse voices of all people from across the Shire.

This report supports the continuity and development of efficient public library services and contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

- Healthy, connected and inclusive communities
- Appropriate, accessible and climate-resilient infrastructure
- Thriving economies that serve the wellbeing of people, place and the environment
- A responsive, trusted and effective Council

Child Safe Standards

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place to support employees, volunteers and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

Declarations of Conflict of Interest

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

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. Chewton Wesleyan Church Usage

This Report is For Decision

Responsible Director: Director Corporate Services, Julie Landy

Responsible Officer: Manager Engagement and Customer Experience, Ed Butler

Attachments: 1. Community Engagement Summary - Future use of the former Wesleyan Church - October 2025 [9.1.2.1 - 12 pages]

Executive Summary

In the 2021/2022 Budget, Council committed to the restoration of the old Wesleyan Church (the Church) located at 205 Main Road, Chewton, after an extensive consultation with the Chewton community.

The Church restorations were completed early in 2025. During August 2025, Council undertook significant community engagement regarding the community's preferred usage of the Church.

This report outlines the consultation undertaken and makes recommendations on future options for the Church, and for the broader precinct, including the Chewton Senior Citizens' Centre.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Notes the results of the community engagement undertaken regarding the use of the old Wesleyan Church, located at 205 Main Road, Chewton.**
- 2. Approves the use of the Church as a publicly available and bookable venue, to be managed by Council's Venues and Events team.**
- 3. Approves the proposed booking rates for the Church, as per Table 1 in this report.**

MOVED COUNCILLOR WALKER

The recommendation be adopted.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR HASTWELL

CARRIED.

Context

An allocation was made in the 2021/2022 Council Budget to restore the old Wesleyan Church (the Church) at 205 Main Road, Chewton. This followed significant community consultation during 2019-2021, which indicated a community preference to retain the Church building. A decision was not made at this time regarding the future use of the Church. Since 2021, substantial works have been undertaken by the Building Projects team to restore the Church to a safe, usable condition. These works were completed in early 2025.

Following completion of the works on the Church, Council requested that the community be consulted on preferred use of the newly available building.

In August 2025, Council consulted with the community on the Church's future use, via the following methods:

- An online suggestion tool (with physical option available) on the Shape platform. The page was visited 323 times, with 11 pieces of input provided.
- Two dedicated Councillor listening posts in Chewton and Wesley Hill.
- A dedicated community consultation session hosted at the Church, with an estimated 35-40 people in attendance.

Prior to the community consultation, relevant Council Officers convened to discuss preferred and practical uses of the space. This session was attended by representatives from the following teams:

- Venues and Events
- Community Partnerships
- Economy and Culture
- Building Projects.

Issues

Results from Community Consultation

A sense of gratitude to the Council for funding the restoration was expressed by several respondents, with a sense of optimism and excitement for the potential of the site.

The key priorities for the community were that the space was flexible and that it would be available to the public. They saw potential for community use in wellbeing, civic, arts, and culture contexts, and they expressed an appetite to be involved in, and lead, these uses.

Respondents also expressed interest in the value of an outdoor space for activities such as a community garden, or for events such as community markets.

Community members also expressed value in the combined use of the Church and Senior Citizens Centre as a wider precinct for larger events.

A full summary of community responses can be found in the attached *Community Engagement Summary - Future use of the former Wesleyan Church Chewton – 2025*.

Officer Review

Council Officers examined a broad range of potential uses for the Church, including permanent or semi-permanent functions, such as a co-working space for local businesses, or

daycare and/or playgroup services for families in Chewton and Wesley Hill. Options for cultural and artistic use, or operation as a heritage museum, were also explored.

These uses are not currently recommended by Officers due to the significant opportunity cost of limiting the space to a single use. In addition, significant upgrade would be required to make the Church building fit-for-purpose for any of these potential uses.

Outcome

Community consultation highlighted strong support for the Church to be made available as a flexible public space. Council Officers' review supports this use of the facility. Given these outcomes, the Officer recommendation is that the Church be managed by the Venues and Events team as a publicly available and bookable venue.

Should this be approved by Council, the Church would be made available on Council's online booking platform, with the following recommended rates of hire:

Area hired Purpose of charge	Hourly	Daily
Main Hall Commercial	\$60	\$240
Main Hall Community	\$42	\$168
Main Hall - packaged with Chewton Seniors Commercial	\$100	\$400
Main Hall - packaged with Chewton Seniors Community	\$65	\$260
Additional charge - Public Liability Insurance	\$23 flat rate	

Table 1. Proposed Rates of Hire

These rates have been developed according to comparable charges for buildings of similar capacity and condition in Castlemaine, as well as comparable venues in the Macedon Ranges Shire, such as the Bluestone Theatre and Mechanics Institute. While the charges are not identical due to the differing capacity, condition and style of the venues, they serve as markers against which the above fees have been set.

If the Church is approved by Council as a publicly available and bookable venue, Council Officers will aim at making the wider precinct also available to book, suitable for larger events.

Additional considerations

Facilities:

As with any building, there are limits on the potential use of the space, based on available facilities. The restorations funded by the Council in 2021 allowed for the building to be brought up to the appropriate safety standards but did not include focused investment in facilities such as toilets, heating and cooling, lighting or kitchen appliances. Consideration of these factors is important regarding potential use of the site.

The space currently has one unisex accessible toilet, which provides for an event for approximately 100 patrons. If alcohol is to be served at an event, or the event is of long duration, the number of patrons served by a single toilet will decrease to 60.

The space also presently has no heating or air conditioning and does not have sufficient insulation or other measures to moderate temperature, rendering it cold in winter and hot in summer.

Community members and Council Officers identified acoustic treatments, lighting, storage, and kitchen facilities to support possible future uses; however, Officers are not recommending additional expenditure on building facilities at this time. Any upgrades to this facility will be conducted in alignment with existing budget and facility management and prioritisation processes.

Naming:

While there was interest from the community in proposing names for the Church and its wider precinct, this was not identified as a key theme from the engagement process. Undertaking further engagement in a naming process is not recommended as a priority at this time. Any engagement in a naming process would require considerable organisational resources and would be conducted in compliance with the requirements of Geographic Names Victoria (GNV).

Finance and Resource Implications

The cost of community consultation undertaken to date has been incorporated into the operational budget of the Engagement and Customer Experience Unit, including catering, resource materials and Officer time.

Opening the venue to public booking will require modest investment in facilities such as fire extinguishers, tables, chairs and drafting of emergency plans. These costs can be funded, to a basic standard, by the Venue Coordination budget.

Management of bookings can occur within the operational budget of the Venues and Events Team.

Use of the facility will result in increased cleaning and security requirements. While the additional security can be accommodated within the existing operational budget, the increased cleaning costs have been included in a 2026/2027 Budget Officer Submission, to meet increased cleaning requirements at venues throughout the Shire.

Additionally, further improvements to the building, as indicated by the consultation results, may be proposed through future budget submissions and in alignment with facility management processes. These improvements (heating/cooling, improved toilets and kitchen facilities, garden improvements, etc.) would improve the amenity of the space and potentially increase the hire fees that could be charged by Council.

Risk Analysis

Reputational Risk

The community consultation undertaken regarding this venue created an opportunity (or positive risk) for Council to genuinely engage with community and consider community views regarding the future use of the Church.

The Church facility also presents positive risk, as community members expressed gratitude for Council's restoration of the site and recognised various uses of the site that would benefit community. Council may further enhance reputation and community trust through responding to the identified priorities of the community for the space to be flexible and available to the public.

It is noted that the current building facilities are not able to support larger events and may not be suitable for use in particularly hot or cold weather conditions. There is a risk that the community may not find this suitable for their needs. Clear communication of available facilities will be vital during the booking process to help mitigate the risk of dissatisfied users finding that the venue does not meet expectations.

Operational and Financial Risk

There is a risk of underuse of the building, if community demand does not meet demand expressed in consultation and/or if the available facilities are not considered adequate for desired usage. While a significant investment in facilities (split system, kitchen upgrades, toilet upgrades) may mitigate the risk of underuse, this would require significant financial investment. Booking rates will be monitored to determine the level of demand for this space in its current form.

Climate Impact Statement

The use of this venue has minimal impact on climate outcomes. Power usage is an additional climate impact that previously did not exist when the building was not in use, but Council's net-zero emissions plan ensures that the emissions will be offset.

Gender Equity Statement

It is considered that this report does not contribute to the promotion of gender inequalities, as outlined in the *Gender Equity Act 2020*. Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to meeting its obligations as stated in the Act and to further promoting the right to equality as set out in the Charter of Human Rights.

A Gender Impact Assessment was not required.

Alternate Options

Council may choose to not approve the use of the Church as a publicly available bookable venue and may choose to pursue another use for this venue. Based on community consultation and Officer review, this option is not recommended by Officers.

Council may choose to not approve the proposed rates of hire for the venue. As these rates were developed based on charges for venues of comparable capacity and condition within the Shire, and benchmarked against venues in neighbouring shires, this option is not recommended.

Council may choose to explore the opportunity to develop the precinct as a high-value location, capable of being hired out at commercial rates. An investment in quality facilities, beyond making it viable for community use, could provide the prospect of additionally booking the venue out for events such as weddings and large parties, among other prospects. This could potentially create a revenue stream based on commercial rates. (For reference, Buda House charges between \$1200 and \$3000 for use as a wedding venue). At present, demand for a high value venue and a business case including costings and potential booking rates for premium uses has not been developed. If Council wishes to explore this option, consideration will need to be given to whether the Church would be the appropriate venue to develop for commercial rates hire and significant investment would be required in the development of a business case. This option is not recommended as a priority at this time.

Communication and Consultation

The *Community Engagement Summary - Future use of the former Wesleyan Church Chewton – 2025* is attached.

Consult:

We will keep our community informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision. We will seek community feedback on drafts and proposals.

As noted in the Context and Issues sections, comprehensive community consultation was undertaken to inform the recommendations of this paper.

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2025-2029

Focus Area: Communities - Healthy, connected, and inclusive communities.

- Vibrant townships, reflecting local spirit and aspirations.

This project delivers on the objective to build vibrant townships by collaborating with them in a genuine and transparent fashion.

Focus Area: Organisation - A responsive, trusted, and effective Council.

- A responsive and transparent Council.

Child Safe Standards

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

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. Natural Environments

Nil.

The Mayor left the Chamber at 7.43 pm due to a declared conflict of interest and in accordance with Clause 7.2.2 of the Governance Rules 2023, Deputy Mayor Driscoll took the Chair.

9.3. Infrastructure

9.3.1. Lease of Land: 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and Stage 2 Area of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon

This Report is For Decision

Responsible Director: Chief Executive Officer, Darren Fuzzard

Responsible Officer: Housing Project Officer, Lenka Thompson
Housing Solutions Broker, Clare Richards

- Attachments:
1. Staged Site Plan for Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon [9.3.1.1 - 1 page]
 2. Allocation of Air Rights at 30A and 65 Templeton Street, Castlemaine - Council Meeting Resolution - 18 October 2022 [9.3.1.2 - 13 pages]
 3. CONFIDENTIAL: Maldon & District Community Bank BIG Project and the MAAHT - Confidential Meeting Resolution - 19 August 2025 [9.3.1.3 - 8 pages]
 4. CONFIDENTIAL: Lease report for 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and Stage 2, Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon [9.3.1.4 - 5 pages]
 5. 65-67 Templeton Street Castlemaine - Preliminary Massing for Regional Modular Housing [9.3.1.5 - 6 pages]
 6. 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine - Community Engagement Report [9.3.1.6 - 11 pages]
 7. CONFIDENTIAL: 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine - 2026 Online Survey Responses [9.3.1.7 - 12 pages]
 8. 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine - Heritage Context Report - December 2025 [9.3.1.8 - 9 pages]
 9. Letter of Support - Funding Bid - Tarrangower Tomorrow - 65 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and Lot 8 165 High Street, Maldon [9.3.1.9 - 1 page]

Executive Summary

This report seeks conditional approval to establish lease agreements over two Council-owned sites.

The first site is 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and the second is the Stage 2 area of the *Big Project* development at Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon (Attachment 9.3.1.1).

This report references (and should be read alongside) the previous Council reports titled "Allocation of Air Rights at 30A and 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine" and "Maldon & District Community Bank Big Project and the Mount Alexander Affordable Housing Trust" (Attachments 9.3.1.2 and 9.3.1.3).

The purchase of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon was settled in late February 2026. The site has capacity for five, two-bedroom units and two are currently funded under the Community Bank Maldon & District *Big Project*. The area for the three additional units is identified on the site plan as Stage 2 (Attachment 9.3.1.1) and these units are currently unfunded.

The proposal for development of housing at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine is substantially the same as that supported previously by Council. It retains ownership of the

property title by Council and Haven Home Safe remains the proposed ongoing tenancy manager of the dwellings. The same yield of 21 homes from the development is also proposed.

The key change is the introduction of a second registered housing agency (Unison Housing Limited) to lead funding applications, hold the leases over the land, and to manage the development of housing on the sites (Attachment 9.3.1.4).

Previously, Council approved the allocation of a lease over 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine to Haven Home Safe and a lease over Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon was not required.

If approved, this proposal will enable the inclusion of 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and the Stage 2 area of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon in current and future funding applications made by Unison Housing Ltd.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Notes the outcome of community engagement activities undertaken in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* regarding the proposed leases and developments.**
- 2. Acknowledges and considers the petition received on 10 March 2026 regarding this proposal and notes that the lead petitioner will be advised of Council's decision.**
- 3. Reconfirms its desire for Loddon Mallee Housing Service Limited (Haven Home Safe) to be the ongoing tenancy manager of social and affordable dwellings to be delivered at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and Stage 2 of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon.**
- 4. Approves Unison Housing Limited (including any Special Purpose Vehicle entities created by it for the purpose of funding applications and hereafter referred to as The Applicant), as the delivery partner to design and construct new dwellings at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and Stage 2 of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon.**
- 5. Approves granting 25-year leases to the Applicant at peppercorn rent for the properties at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and Stage 2 of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon subject to the following conditions:**
 - 5.1. The Applicant is responsible for obtaining all planning and building approvals for each development.**
 - 5.2. Any further financial contribution agreed by the Chief Executive Officer to enable the developments to proceed will thereafter be reported to Council.**
 - 5.3. The Applicant must ensure that the buildings and associated land included in the leases are maintained in good order for the life of the lease agreements.**
 - 5.4. A suitable legal agreement is concurrently established that considers (subject to funding conditions) matters including:**
 - 5.4.1. A *first right of refusal* option to permit Mount Alexander Shire Council (or Council's preferred registered housing agency partner) to take ownership of the buildings on expiry of the leases should it so choose.**
 - 5.4.2. A clawback mechanism in the event of a release from obligations by either party during the leases.**

5.4.3. Council input to tenancy selection at each site throughout the life of the leases.

- 6. Approves the Chief Executive Officer negotiating and entering leases in accordance with the above conditions.**
- 7. Resolves that, unless otherwise extended by Council, should the Applicant not secure funding within 36 months of this resolution, or the Chief Executive Officer and the registered housing agency partners are unable to agree final terms in the proposed leases and associated agreements, this decision lapses.**

MOVED COUNCILLOR MADDOCK

The recommendation be adopted.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR CORDY

CARRIED.

Context

This report proposes a revised partnership model for the affordable housing project at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and the inclusion of an additional three units at Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon to this revised arrangement.

In partnership with Haven Home Safe, Council Officers have sought to obtain funding for affordable housing developments on 30A and 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine since October 2022. (Attachment 9.3.1.2).

To date, under the funding schemes offered by the State and Federal Governments, the business model for the Templeton Street developments has been unviable due to the higher cost-per-dwelling of delivering apartments in a rural setting, the limits placed on the capital investment component of such schemes and/or the target market specified for the dwellings.

Notwithstanding this, the partnership with Haven Home Safe has remained strong and so too its commitment to see affordable housing delivered on the sites.

To that end, in mid-2025 Haven Home Safe proposed to involve another registered housing agency, Unison Housing Limited (hereafter referred to as The Applicant) to secure the required finances and to deliver the planning and construction phases of the projects. Haven Home Safe remains committed to the tenancy management role following construction.

The Applicant has advised that securing leases over 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and the Stage 2 area of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon would enable it to seek funding opportunities with the level of tenure certainty that is required by other levels of government and commercial lenders.

Such funding opportunities include strong confidentiality requirements and for this reason, a detailed analysis of The Applicant and its proposed approach to seeking funding has been included as a confidential attachment to this report (Attachment 9.3.1.4).

The proposed building envelope and lot yield is provided at Attachment 9.3.1.5

Communication and Consultation

A key aspect to improving the likelihood of grant funding being attracted to these projects is the demonstration of community support for them.

Given the passage of time since the community was last consulted on the Templeton Street projects and the proposed change in delivery partner, Council officers undertook a series of additional community consultation processes between December 2025 and February 2026, inclusive. The full Community Engagement Report for this new consultation is included as Attachment 9.3.1.6.

Since December 2025, Council's Housing Project Officer has undertaken the following consultation activities regarding the Templeton Street project:

- letterboxing of all residents and businesses surrounding the site
- face to face meetings with interested residents, businesses, and stakeholders
- conducted an online survey available to the whole community
- emailed all respondents in the 2022 consultation to advise of the 2026 consultation opportunity

-
- continued open communication with surrounding residents via meetings, phone calls, texts, and emails.

Letter Box Drop

The Housing Project Officer delivered letters to surrounding residents in December 2025. Twenty-four letters were delivered to letterboxes surrounding the 65-67 Templeton Street site in Templeton, Hargraves and Campbell Streets, Castlemaine.

The letter sought to consult residents about affordable housing development at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine. It also provided background from the 2022 consultation and invited residents to meet with Officers to discuss the project in more detail.

Resident Face to Face Meetings

As a result of the above letter, many residents sought to meet with the Housing Solutions Broker and Housing Project Officer.

The resident meetings occurred on 15 December 2025 (with five residents attending) and on 16 December 2025 (where a group session involving 10 residents occurred).

Further face to face meetings also occurred with residents and organisations because of the initial promotion of the project.

Online survey 2026

As indicated below, 80 percent of 2026 survey respondents are supportive of the proposal to lease 65-67 Templeton Street for provision of affordable rental housing.

Council's Templeton Street Affordable Housing Project website page hosted the online survey of community at <https://www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/Building-and-Planning/Planning-for-the-future/Affordable-housing/Templeton-Street-Affordable-Housing>.

This link was directly sent (via email, text message, and hard copy delivered) to the surrounding residents of the project site. It was also sent to all respondents to the 2022 consultation and to key stakeholders such as My Home Network and Council's Connectors Network group.

The question put to the community during the consultation period between 20 January and 8 February 2026 was:

Do you support Council providing lease over 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine for 25 years or more for provision of affordable rental housing?

The following pie charts compare the 2022 and 2026 online survey responses to similar questions about a possible lease of 65-67 Templeton Street for social and affordable housing. As shown, the recent results are consistent with the 2022 community consultation results.

The 2022 online survey had 129 responses, and the 2026 online survey had 110 responses.

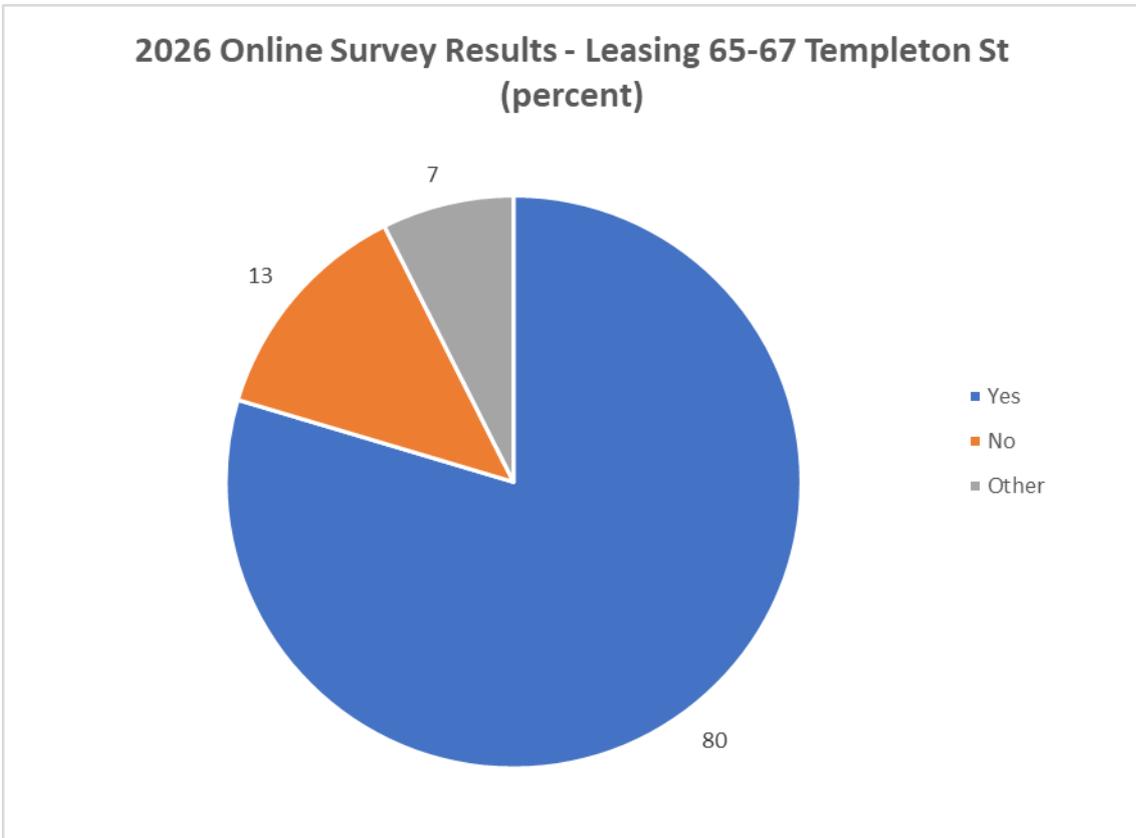
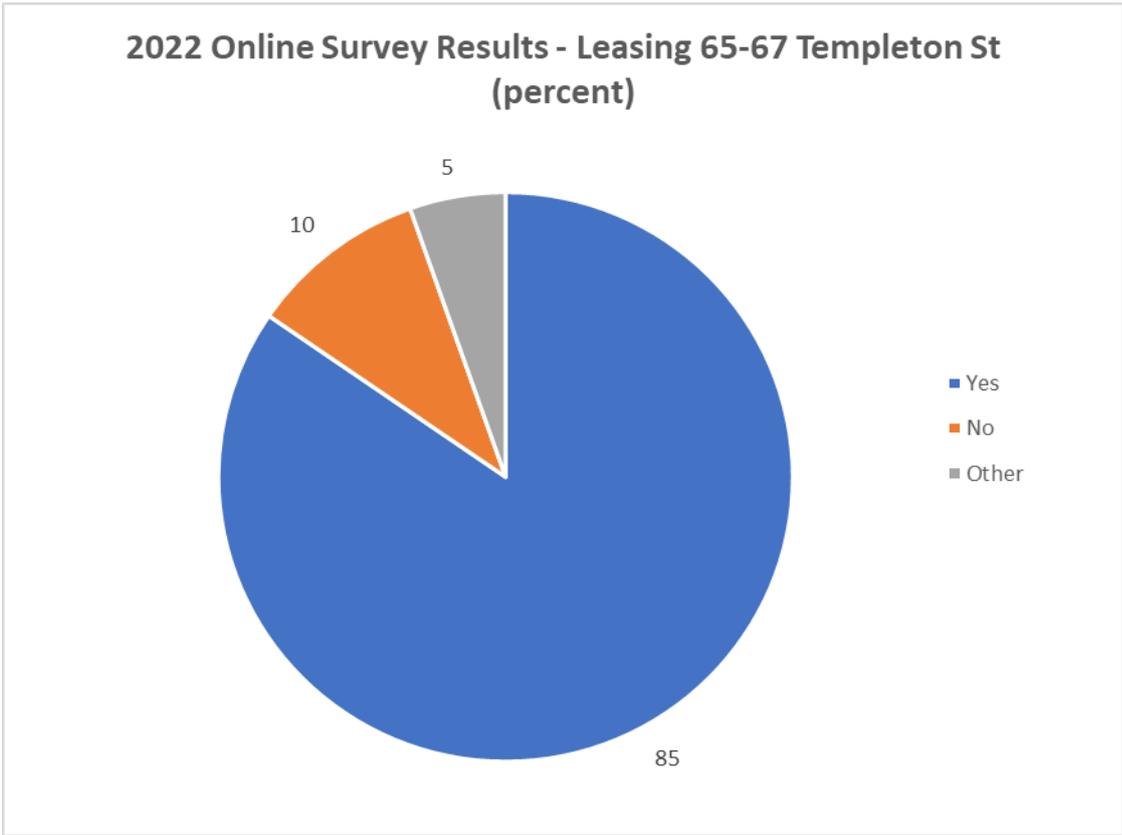


Figure 1: Pie charts comparing the 2022 and 2026 surveys about the community's view on Council leasing 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine for the purposes of social and affordable housing.

Indicative comments from those who support the current proposal include:

"I had to move to Melbourne age 67 for affordable housing. Left family, friends, and a place I'd lived and worked in 15 years. More units required."

"I support but previously noted concerns regarding the building appearance, parking, selection process of occupants (and ongoing monitoring), and the greening of the area."

"I'm a Castlemaine resident and I strongly support provision of all housing, including these affordable rentals, in the centre of Castlemaine, within walking distance to shops, train and other amenities. This is great!"

"It's a great idea and would be especially visionary if they were made built to standards to meet affordable energy needs, by incorporating energy efficient design and solar."

"Any steps to increase the supply of housing have my wholehearted support. Housing is a human right; it should not be used as a tool to increase personal wealth."

"This is an important opportunity to offer affordable housing in central Castlemaine, close to services, transport and employment opportunities."

Indicative comments from those who do not support the proposal include:

"This is heritage precinct and is a total conflict of interest with local heritage rules and regulations in relation to the area."

"Affordable housing will bring an element of community which threatens the safety and wellbeing of the local residents which have lived and resided in Castlemaine for over 50 plus years of their lives."

"My concerns: 25 year lease. I do not support such a long lease without knowing the terms of the lease. I would also like to know if the 'owner' or organisation responsible for the building and people living there, will be subject to all the same Mt Alexander Shire rules and regulations as those of us living nearby? Or will there be separate rules and regulations which will influence the terms of the proposed 25 year lease?"

Other comments from those not supporting the proposed lease included discussion of the importance of drawing design elements for the building from the surrounding heritage landscape.

A full list of comments received is included as Attachment 9.3.1.7.

The consultation has reinforced that the following matters will need to be addressed in the design process if it proceeds, and/or in future communication:

- Height/Heritage/Overlooking
 - concerns about the three-level height and worried it will not fit with heritage aesthetic
 - concerned with windows and tenants overlooking private open space.
- Design (Attachment 9.3.1.8)
 - belief that the apartments were going to be built on top of the TAFE building
 - wanted plans to look at and comment on
 - need to ensure there is good landscaping and green space

-
- want to feed into the design process.
 - Tenancy
 - concern that the development will be a homeless shelter or going to be used as emergency accommodation
 - want to know who would be accountable for the tenants that move in and who would ensure that the grounds are maintained
 - want to know what wrap-around services would be provided to tenants.
 - Planning
 - want to understand the planning process and if third party appeal rights will be waived, and if residents can influence the design or planning process
 - concern about the impact on surrounding property values
 - want to know the construction method and timeline.

Notwithstanding the further work required in the design stages, Officers have already attempted to address some of the above with further information on Council's website page about the project, and through further direct engagement with residents.

Specifically, residents have been advised the following:

- Concerns about impacts on the surrounding properties such as building height, heritage value and overlooking of private areas will be considered in the design process.
- Earthworks at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine will be minimised as much as possible.
- Work on the heritage context of the project is the first piece of work that the architects have produced, and the design will be responsive to its heritage setting.
- There is no emergency or transitional housing planned for the site.
- Registered housing agencies such as Haven Home Safe provide wrap-around services to residents.
- The proposed property manager (Haven Home Safe) will be required to maintain the grounds, and this will be included in any lease agreements.
- Plans will be shared with surrounding residents once the design process commences.
- The planning pathway has not yet been determined but, regardless, residents' concerns will be fed into the design process.
- Modern Methods of Construction will be used to deliver the building. This will reduce the build time overall and the time on site compared to conventional build processes.

Petition

On 10 March 2026, all Councillors received a copy of a petition expressing concern about various matters associated with the proposed development.

It is considered that each of the matters raised have been identified in the community engagement processes undertaken in 2022 and/or 2025/26 and a response has been incorporated into this report for Council's consideration. In accordance with Clause 12.2.3 of the Governance Rules 2023, Council's decision on this matter will be provided to the lead petitioner.

On-going Consultation

The Housing Project Officer has conducted targeted engagement of surrounding residents between December 2025 and February 2026 and proposes to continue such engagement throughout the duration of the project.

If approved to proceed, ongoing engagement will focus on the priorities of nearby residents and feeding these into the design and approval processes undertaken by The Applicant.

Engagement regarding Stage 2 of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon

As noted in the decision paper regarding purchase of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon for worker housing, this project was initially led by the *Tarrangower Tomorrow Affordable Housing Group*. It arose from the group canvassing the community about housing needs in Maldon and its consequent awareness of the acute need for affordable worker housing in Maldon.

Tarrangower Tomorrow Affordable Housing Group has provided a letter of support for the inclusion of the Stage 2 area of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon in funding applications for housing (Attachment 9.3.1.9).

Finance and Resource Implications

The proposal to enter into long term leases and associated legal agreements for the two Council-owned sites with The Applicant will require the engagement of legal services if progressed. The work to date on progressing this new lease proposal and partnership has substantially involved officer time. A further contribution of at least \$25,000 towards consultancy work is anticipated should any funding application be successful.

Such costs are also anticipated to be covered by the normal operating budget of the Housing Solutions Unit.

Risk Analysis

Financial Risk and Opportunity

Registered Housing Agencies (RHA) are highly regulated organisations. Central to that regulation are stringent requirements upon them regarding financial probity and sustainability. Haven Home Safe has a long history of successfully managing social and affordable housing projects in rural and regional Victoria.

Haven Home Safe introduced Unison Housing Limited as a potential partner due to its financial capacity and history of successful social and affordable housing development and management in Victoria.

In the event that Unison Housing Limited failed to complete the redevelopments, or became insolvent once operating the housing, Council's rights to the assets developed on the Council land at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and Stage 2 of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon may be subordinate to any residual commercial or government finance and to any rights set out under funding terms.

For this reason, a "clawback" mechanism is proposed to be included in a legal agreement, alongside the lease agreements to protect Council's interests. Such mechanisms are considered standard.

The financial risk to Council of these projects is being substantially mitigated by transferring it to external funders and developers. In turn, these risks are being mitigated through the

proposed funding arrangements, building design and methods of construction discussed in the confidential attachment.

If it proceeds, the proposed project will deliver substantial new assets to 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and the Stage 2 area of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon. To enable Council the future option to own these assets, a *first right of refusal* mechanism is proposed.

Reputational Risk and Opportunity

This project offers a significant opportunity to respond to the commitment included in the Council Plan 2025-2029 to progress affordable housing.

It is also a significant opportunity for Council to enable a demonstration project of *density done well in a rural context*.

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

The project proceeding would also send a strong message to other levels of government, and other stakeholders in the housing sector, that this Council is an active and innovative participant in responding to the housing needs of its community.

Contrarily, some members of the community may be concerned at Council's investment in housing in this way, as it is not a legal responsibility of local government to do so. However; as the surveys of 2022 and 2026 have demonstrated, it is considered that this is a minority view and the proposed approach minimises the financial contribution by Council.

A critical component to ongoing community support for the project will be open and clear communication as it moves through each stage of development and delivery. While much of this work will be addressed by The Applicant, the Housing Solutions Broker and Housing Project Officer will continue to ensure that community concerns and ideas are heard and fully considered.

Climate Impact Statement

If it proceeds, this project will deliver climate-appropriate affordable rental housing in Castlemaine and Maldon. In addition, the modern methods of construction that are proposed by The Applicant will minimise construction time and maximise resource efficiency.

Gender Equity Statement

It is considered that this report goes towards promoting gender equity principles as outlined in the *Gender Equity Act 2020* and does not contribute to the promotion of inequalities. Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to meeting its obligations as stated in the Act and to further promoting the right to equality as set out in the Charter of Human Rights.

Two cohorts that are intended to benefit from this project are older women in housing precarity and single parent families in need of housing. For this reason, Officers have recommended the inclusion of a mechanism for Council to contribute to the criteria for tenancy selection.

Alternate Options

Council may choose not to enter into leases on one or both sites, or to do so with a different partner.

Substantial work by the Housing Solutions Unit and the Chief Executive Officer has been required over many years to develop partnerships that have the potential to deliver appropriate housing solutions into the Mount Alexander Shire.

The combined resources of Haven Home Safe and Unison Housing Limited are considerable, and both are demonstrated ethical and capable deliverers of housing solutions for people in need. Both have also shown a strong commitment to the Mount Alexander Shire community. Proceeding with the proposed leases is therefore recommended.

Legislation

Heritage Act 2017

Heritage considerations apply to 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and the Maldon Design Guidelines apply to Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon. The first piece of work conducted by the architects for 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine has been to consider the heritage context (Attachment 9.3.1.8). Unison Housing Limited and Haven Home Safe are aware of the application of the Maldon Design Guidelines in Maldon and will account for the Guidelines in design of the dwellings.

Housing Act 1983

Both proposed providers are Registered Housing Associations under the Victorian *Housing Act 1983*.

The intended tenure mix at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine is both social and affordable housing and Stage 2 of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon is all affordable housing.

Social housing tenancies will be filled from the Victorian Housing Register waitlist and prioritising local people. Affordable housing tenancies at 65-67 Templeton Street, Castlemaine and the Stage 2 area of Lot 8, 165 High Street, Maldon will be filled by a selection mechanism developed by the tenancy manager (intended to be Haven Home Safe), in accordance with funding conditions. As previously noted, it is proposed that Council will contribute to the development of this selection mechanism.

Local Government Act 2020

Direct appointment of The Applicant 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 by Yarriambiack Shire Council) and Council's own previous decisions.

Community engagement regarding the proposed leasehold tenure was conducted according to Council's Community Engagement Policy (section 55 of the Act).

Planning and Environment Act 1987; Heritage Act 2017

Subject to Council's formal decision on this matter, heritage matters will be addressed and planning permits sought by The Applicant in accordance with the above Acts.

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2025-2029

The recommendations of this report align with the strategic direction to address housing affordability and availability and to support diverse housing options, including social and affordable housing, to meet community needs.

Child Safe Standards

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place to support employees, volunteers and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

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.

The Mayor returned to the Chamber at 8.11 pm and took the Chair.

9.4. Wellbeing Economies

Nil.

9.5. Organisation

9.5.1. 2025/2026 Financial Report - Quarter 2

This Report is For Information

Responsible Director: Director Corporate Services, Julie Landy

Responsible Officer: Manager Finance, Keith Caldwell

Attachments: 1. Finance Management Report - Quarter 2 - December 2025 [9.5.1.1 - 26 pages]

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the Finance Report for the six-month period ended 31 December 2025.

The Finance Report is presented to Council on a quarterly basis. This report has been presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on 24 February 2026.

This Report provides a concise summary of financial performance against Council's Budget for the period, including an explanation of any material variances. This reporting assists in monitoring Council's achievement of objectives in the Financial Plan 2025-2035 and Annual Budget 2025-2026 whilst ensuring that Council is financially sustainable in the long term.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the Finance Report for the six-month period ended 31 December 2025.

MOVED COUNCILLOR CORDY

The recommendation be adopted.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR WALKER

CARRIED.

Context

Regular review of financial performance and reporting of Council activities provides an overview as to how different programs and projects are being delivered. This reporting assists in monitoring Council's achievement of objectives in the Financial Plan 2025-2035 and Annual Budget 2025/2026 whilst ensuring that Council is financially sustainable in the long term.

The Finance Report is presented to Councillors at a Councillor Briefing and a Meeting of Council on a quarterly basis.

The Finance Report presented includes the following information:

- Income Statement
- Statement of Capital Works in Progress
- Balance Sheet
- Financial Ratios
- Investments
- Cash Flow Statement

Issues

The Finance Report provides a snapshot of the year-to-date financial performance for the 2025/2026 financial year. The current budget includes adopted amounts for carry forward projects (capital projects, special projects, and operating items)

Finance and Resource Implications

The Finance Report gives a concise summary of the financial performance against Council's Budget for the period.

Risk Analysis

Financial Risk

In developing the Annual Budget, Council is prudently and proactively managing its financial obligations, sustainability, and risk. This Finance Report provides information on the organisation's performance against budget and, where material variances occur, an explanation is provided.

Climate Impact Statement

In developing the annual Budget, Council can choose to allocate funds to address the impacts of climate change directly or indirectly. As this report is an overview of Council financial performance per se, no overall consideration has been given to the impacts of climate change. However, there may be one-off or capital projects that address the impact of climate change. These projects may not be specifically discussed in this report, but they are subject to additional oversight processes within the organisation.

Gender Equity Statement

It is considered that this report goes towards promoting gender equity principles as outlined in the *Gender Equity Act 2020* and does not contribute to the promotion of inequalities. Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to meeting its obligations as stated in the Act and to further promoting the right to equality as set out in the Charter of Human Rights.

A Gender Impact Assessment was not required; however, gender equity principles have been considered in the development of the project / initiative to the advancement of gender equality.

Alternate Options

A quarterly budget report must be presented as soon as practicable after the end of each quarter of the financial year in accordance with section 97(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. As this is a legislated requirement, there are no alternative options.

Communication and Consultation

Not Required.

Inform:

We will keep our community informed.

Explanations of major variances are provided by Council Officers responsible for the services and are summarised in the Finance Report.

Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

Section 97(1) of the Act requires the Chief Executive Officer to ensure that a quarterly budget report is presented to Council at a Meeting of Council which is open to the public.

Section 97(2) of the Act states that the quarterly budget report must include:

- A comparison of the actual and budgeted results to date.
- An explanation of any material variances
- Any other matters as prescribed by the regulations.

As no quarterly financial reporting regulations have been prescribed for the Act, Council Officers have continued to use the same format of reporting as in previous quarters.

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2025-2029

Focus Area: Organisation - A responsive, trusted and effective Council.

- A responsive and transparent Council.

Councillors will promote and ensure responsible financial management by receiving and reviewing quarterly financial reports, using agreed project management processes for large projects, and conducting regular internal audits of Council activities.

Child Safe Standards

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and

training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

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.

9.5.2. Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 Progress Report - Quarter 2

This Report is For Information

Responsible Director: Director Corporate Services, Julie Landy

Responsible Officer: Corporate Reporting Officer, Sarah Smith

Attachments: 1. Council Plan - Annual Plan Actions 2025/2026 Progress Report – Quarter 2 [9.5.2.1 - 13 pages]

Executive Summary

The Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 (the Annual Plan) outlines the actions for the financial year that will be undertaken as priorities, in alignment with the strategic priorities of the 2025-2029 Council Plan. Included in the Annual Plan are 24 current-year actions.

It is noted that this is the first progress report for the Annual Plan, as the 2025-2029 Council Plan was finalised in September 2025 and Annual Plan actions for 2025/2026 were not finalised until November 2025.

In quarter two of 2025/2026, seven actions were completed prior to or by the due date, and all 24 actions remain on track to be completed by 30 June 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 Progress Report - Quarter 2.

MOVED COUNCILLOR WALKER

The recommendation be adopted.

SECONDED COUNCILLOR DRISCOLL

CARRIED.

Context

The Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 (the Annual Plan) outlines the actions for the financial year that will be undertaken as priorities, in alignment with the strategic priorities of the 2025-2029 Council Plan. Included in the Annual Plan are 24 current-year actions.

A quarterly progress report is prepared each quarter to inform Councillors and the community on progress toward agreed actions in the Annual Plan.

Issues

The quarterly report provides an update on:

- the status of each project
- its progress towards completion
- if completed, the date completed, which is compared to the target completion date
- an overall comment.

It is noted that this is the first progress report for the Annual Plan, as the 2025-2029 Council Plan was finalised in September 2025 and Annual Plan actions for 2025/2026 were not finalised until November 2025.

Quarter Two Reporting

The Council Plan Annual Plan 2025/2026 Progress Report - Quarter 2 (the Progress Report) includes a dashboard indicating action status and action completion in chart form, and a detailed report of each action including a comment of progress undertaken in quarter two of 2025/2026.

In summary, the Progress Report notes that:

- seven actions have been completed by the scheduled due date
- twelve actions are on schedule
- four actions are not due to commence until quarters three or four
- one action is behind schedule, but can be recovered this financial year
- no actions have a status of behind schedule – not recoverable.

The seven actions completed in quarter 2 are:

Action Code #	Action	Focus Area
CP 1.3.5a	Increased and more effective local service provision implemented	Communities
CP 1.4.1a	Successful Specialisation Verification programs achieved and maintained	Communities
CP 2.2.2a	Year One - Carbon offsetting for 2025/2026 invested in local carbon offsetting, circular economy, biodiversity and habitat rehabilitation action	Natural Environments

Action Code #	Action	Focus Area
CP 4.3.3a	Business Awards Presented	Wellbeing Economies
CP 5.1.1a	Domestic Animal Management Plan adopted	Organisation
CP 5.3.2a	Workforce Plan developed and approved	Organisation
CP 5.4.2a	A revised MOU for 2025-2029 with Nalderun Education Aboriginal Corporation implemented	Organisation

As at 31 December 2025, all actions are on schedule to be completed by 30 June 2026.

Finance and Resource Implications

Projects and initiatives contained in the Annual Plan are fully funded in the 2025-2026 Budget. They are funded via the capital works program, annual operating budgets or funded as one-off initiatives. In some cases, funding has been sourced and secured through grant funding.

Risk Analysis

Financial Risk

Managing financial risk for the Annual Plan commences by allocating special or operational funds to resource the delivery of Annual Plan actions. Projects are only selected where funding has been allocated through the annual budget process, which includes grant funding that has been or will be received within the financial year the project is scheduled to commence. Selecting projects this way mitigates the risk of projects not being fully funded.

Allocated budgets are analysed monthly and half yearly ensuring funds are tracked throughout the project lifecycle. Managing projects this way ensures funds stay within allocated budgeted amounts, and/or changes are identified early enabling project review.

Reputation Risk

Presentation of the Progress Report involves reputation risk and opportunity. While there is reputational risk associated with the reporting of incomplete items, this report also presents an opportunity to communicate and celebrate the achievement of completed actions in alignment with the objectives of the Council Plan 2025-2029.

Climate Impact Statement

The Annual Plan actions contained within this Progress Report were implemented as priorities from the Council Plan 2025-2029. The Council Plan recognises the climate emergency and reflects Mount Alexander Shire Council's ongoing commitment to addressing climate change.

In preparing the Annual Plan, Council can choose to allocate funds to address the impacts of climate change directly or indirectly. In the Annual Plan, six actions directly address climate change:

- Biodiversity Strategy
- Local Carbon Drawdown Projects
- Tree Management
- Public EV Charging
- Mount Alexander Business Awards
- Four Stream Waste and Recycling Service.

Gender Equity Statement

It is considered that this report goes towards promoting gender equity principles as outlined in the *Gender Equity Act 2020* and does not contribute to the promotion of inequalities. Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to meeting its obligations as stated in the Act and to further promoting the right to equality as set out in the Charter of Human Rights.

All projects selected for the Annual Plan must consider gender equity principles as a standard process when they are initiated. This process ensures that projects undertaken are aligned with Council's commitment to meet its obligations and to promote gender equality.

Alternate Options

There is no legislative requirement for Annual Plan reporting to be undertaken on a quarterly basis, however, in the interest of transparency, regular reporting of such information to our community is good practice.

Communication and Consultation

Some of the individual projects within the Annual Plan involve community consultation or consultation with relevant stakeholders. Where consultation is required, projects undertaken will follow Council procedure regarding community consultation as outlined in the Community Engagement Policy.

Inform:

We will keep our community informed.

The Meeting of Council minutes are published on Council's website and include all attachments, including the Progress Report.

Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

Council has adopted a Council Plan for 2025-2029 in accordance with section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), together with a budget for 2025/2026, in accordance with section 94 of the Act.

The Council Plan sets out the aspirations of Council and the strategies and objectives to achieve Council's vision for Mount Alexander Shire: Working together for a healthy, connected shire. The budget allocates resources to the activities and services that Councillors have identified as important to achieve Council's vision.

The Annual Plan is prepared each year, with progress in delivering projects reported to Councillors and the community each quarter. Progress and outcomes are reported annually in the Annual Report in accordance with the Act. The Annual Plan is structured around the five focus areas of the Council Plan:

- Communities - Healthy, connected and inclusive communities.
- Natural Environments - Enhanced and protected natural environments.
- Infrastructure - Appropriate, accessible and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Wellbeing Economies - Thriving economies that serve the wellbeing of people, place and the environment.
- Organisation - A responsive, trusted and effective Council.

Strategies and Policy Impacts

Council Plan 2025-2029

Actions in the Annual Plan progress the outcomes of the Council Plan.

Climate Change Strategy

The following eight actions of the Annual Plan directly align with the goals of the Climate Change Strategy:

- Biodiversity Strategy
- Local Carbon Drawdown Projects
- Tree Management
- Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment
- Public EV Charging
- Mount Alexander Business Awards
- Four Stream Waste and Recycling Service.

Active Transport Strategy

The following two actions of the Annual Plan directly align with the goals of the Active Transport Strategy:

- Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment
- Shared User Path – Castlemaine to McKenzie Hill.

Economic Development Strategy

The following 15 actions of the Annual Plan directly align with the goals of the Economic Development Strategy:

- Homelessness Project
- Childcare Feasibility Study
- Inclusive Practices for Marginalised Aged Care Communities
- Local Carbon Drawdown Projects

-
- Maldon Worker Housing Project
 - Mount Alexander Affordable Housing Trust
 - Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment
 - Shared User Path – Castlemaine to McKenzie Hill
 - Maldon Playspace Design
 - Public EV Charging
 - Industrial Land Strategy and Design Guidelines
 - Public Art Commissions
 - Mount Alexander Business Awards
 - Nalderun Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Waste Management Strategy

The following actions of the Annual Plan directly align with the goals of the Waste Management Strategy:

- Local Carbon Drawdown Projects
- Four Stream Waste and Recycling Service.

Child Safe Standards

Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

All children who come in contact with Councillors, employees, contractors, and volunteers from the organisation have a right to be and feel safe. We have specific policies, procedures, and training in place to support employees, volunteers, and contractors to achieve these commitments.

We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

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 the CEO and Mayor from 18 February 2026 to 17 March 2026.

MEETING	CEO	MAYOR
Attended Rural Councils Victoria training, networking and state election platform launch	✓	
Attended Destination Central Victoria's brand launch (Councillors Hastwell and Walker; Michael Annear, Director Infrastructure and Development; Merryn Tinkler, Manager Economy and Culture also in attendance)		✓
Attended Castlemaine Gift's official opening		✓
Meeting with Maree Edwards MP to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire	✓	✓
Attended Harcourt Business Recovery Event		✓
Meeting with Castlemaine Mail journalist to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire	✓	✓
Gold Central Vic radio interview	✓	
Attended Antisemitism Forum Hosted by Glen Eira Shire Council		✓
Attended Community Waste Reference Group Meeting		✓
Attended Loddon Campaspe Shire Councils Mayors and CEOs meeting		✓
Gold Central Vic radio interview	✓	
Attended Mapping Our Futures session hosted by local community members		✓
Meeting with CEO and Recovery Director–West Region, Emergency Recovery Victoria regarding Ravenswood/Harcourt/Walmer fires on 9 January 2026	✓	
Attended launch of new permanent stage at James Park, Harcourt		✓
Introduction meeting with new Regional Director, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire	✓	
Held listening post at the Market Building, Castlemaine		✓
Attended Applefest Festival	✓	✓
Attended Taradale Springs Festival		✓

MEETING	CEO	MAYOR
Gold Central Vic radio interview	✓	
Attended media announcement for MASC's purchase of property in Maldon for first Affordable Housing Trust project (Councillor Rosalie Hastwell, Clare Richards, Housing Solutions Broker also in attendance)	✓	✓
Attended Loddon Campaspe Councils CEOs meeting	✓	
Meeting with CEO, Dhelkaya Health and Principal, Castlemaine Secondary College to discuss matters of common interest for Mount Alexander Shire	✓	
Meeting with Castlemaine Croquet Club representatives to discuss potential for new location		✓
Attended Municipal Association of Victoria's monthly connect meeting for CEOs	✓	
Participated on judging panel for Local Government Professional's Positive Ageing awards	✓	
Meeting with Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY) representatives (Michael Annear, Director Infrastructure and Development also in attendance)	✓	
Attended Newstead Flood Study and Mitigation Strategy - community engagement session		✓
Gold Central Vic radio interview	✓	
Judge at Castlemaine Idyll		✓

Councillor Hastwell noted that she attended Gender Equity Victoria's International Women's Day event at RMIT University and the VLGA conference on incivility in Local Government.

Councillor Walker attended the Harcourt Applefest, Harcourt community meetings, Taradale Mineral Springs Festival, and a CFA Fundraiser.

Councillor Driscoll held a listening post in Newstead, attended the Harcourt Applefest, ChillOut in Daylesford, met with Castlemaine Maryborough Rail Trail Chair and Committee Members, and the Newstead Flood Study Community Engagement Forum.

Councillor Cordy met with the founder of Blaze Aid and the recovery efforts being undertaken.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

11.1. Notice of Motion 006/2026 - Rising Costs and Impacts of Climate Change

MOVED COUNCILLOR Maddock

1. Notes with concern:

- a. That Mount Alexander Shire Council, its communities, and natural environment are highly vulnerable to climate change related impacts.
- b. The rising costs—financial and otherwise, including psychosocial—experienced by households, businesses, organisations and communities, including farming communities, in mitigating and responding to climate change related impacts and risks, including the:
 - i. Losses and disruptions directly attributed to local natural disasters, including human life, homes, businesses, income, properties, livestock, infrastructure, natural environment, wildlife and First Nations Cultural Heritage
 - ii. Increasing insurance premiums affecting local households, businesses and organisations, contributing to cost-of-living pressures and housing and business insecurity
 - iii. Compounding effects of housing loss on the broader housing crisis including broader worker and family displacement
 - iv. Increasing costs of energy bills
 - v. Costs associated with mitigating increased fire and flood risk, including building retrofitting and resilience measures in new developments
 - vi. Personal costs and sacrifices of our First Responders and volunteers
 - vii. Income losses and increasing business precarity, especially as experienced by primary producers.
- c. The rising costs to Council budgets for public services, as a result of costs of mitigating and responding to climate-change-related impacts and risks, including:
 - i. Co-ordinating responses and responding to community needs during and after extreme weather events and natural disasters
 - ii. Disruptions to work plans due to diverted resources
 - iii. Increasing insurance premiums
 - iv. The repair and replacement of damaged infrastructure
 - v. The proactive maintenance and upgrading of infrastructure to improve climate resilience.
 - vi. The proactive investment in community resilience and disaster preparedness through the provision of adequate social supports, including psychosocial support, during and post disaster to protect the mental and social health and wellbeing of people and communities.
- d. That existing constraints on local government revenue-raising, and shortfalls

in Financial Assistance Grants, mean councils cannot address these increasing costs without significantly compromising other essential local services.

2. **Calls on the Australian Government and Parliament to fully consider:**
 - a. **Establishing a Parliamentary Inquiry into the adequacy of the 2025 National Adaptation Plan, specifically addressing the lack of additional funding for local governments to deliver mandated adaptation responses.**
 - b. **Establishing a National Climate Compensation Fund to meet the needs of communities on the frontline of climate impacts and everyday households facing rising costs from climate change.**
 - c. **Ensuring the National Climate Compensation Fund includes a dedicated funding stream for local governments, commensurate with the scale of the financial risks identified in the 2025 National Climate Risk Assessment.**
 - d. **Introducing a Climate Pollution Levy on coal, gas and oil corporations, to raise the funds necessary to pay for the climate damage these corporations are causing.**
3. **Directs the Mayor/CEO to write to the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy and the Federal Member for Bendigo expressing the above, and for this Council to submit Items 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d of this Notice of Motion as motions to the MAV State Conference to ‘call on the Victorian Government’s support and advocacy for’ these initiatives under their enabling Priority Area 9 ‘Resilience & Recovery’.**

SECONDED COUNCILLOR WALKER

CARRIED.

Rationale

Like most communities, Mount Alexander Shire is already paying dearly for the effects of climate change. The Bureau of Meteorology reports that “the past decade has seen record breaking extremes contributing to natural disasters that are exacerbated by anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change...”¹

The Australian National Climate Risk Assessment states: “Australia is experiencing more frequent and severe extreme weather events due to the changing climate. The impact of these is already being felt by every part of our society.”²

We are well aware of the costs of natural disasters here in Mount Alexander. In the last five years alone, we’ve suffered the January 2026 fires, the 2025 drought, the 2024 hailstorm and the 2022 floods. These events have caused deep pain and grief, alongside severe financial strain on households and this Council.

The Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services (2024) (The Inquiry) found that “Extreme weather events driven by climate change are a significant cost pressure on Victorian councils.”³ They go on to note the Municipal Association of Victoria’s

¹ Bureau of Meteorology, *State of the Climate 2024*.

² Commonwealth of Australia, *Australian National Climate Risk Assessment*, 2025.

³ Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee, *Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services, Committee Final Report*, 2024 — Finding 14.

submission stating extreme weather events: 'strain emergency response systems; necessitate costly infrastructure repairs [and]; disrupt council services'.⁴

The Inquiry's Final Report notes that damages in Greater Melbourne to council-owned community assets due to climate hazards could increase by a further 150% by 2050.⁵ It is reasonable to expect that rural communities will be impacted even more significantly. The most recent JLT Public Sector Risk Report has both climate change and 'disaster' in the top ten risks to local councils – highlighting 'limited disaster recovery funding' and the need for 'federal and state government support to bolster resilience...'⁶ Of course, this is affecting our households too. A recent report from Actuaries Institute acknowledges significant home insurance premium increases and states that these 'impacts are consistent with our expectations that climate change will increase pressures on home insurance affordability.'⁷

Directly or indirectly, every member of our community is now paying a high price for climate change and projections show these costs will escalate. Meanwhile, those most responsible, the fossil fuel corporations, continue to benefit from billions of dollars in taxpayer funded subsidies and often pay little or no tax. This systemic imbalance means those most responsible for climate pollution contribute the least to its costs.

The MAV notes " ...that a \$10 billion fund is required to support local governments and communities across Australia to address climate change..."⁸ Without such a fund, the burden will continue falling disproportionately on local councils and everyday Australians.

It's only fair that it is the big polluters who foot this bill. Without decisive action to ensure they do; it will be local communities, and councils like ours, who continue to pay for the climate damage out of our own pockets.

Officer Comment

Mount Alexander Shire Council has been undertaking action to address our changing climate long before we were legally required. We take action because it is critical for the health of our community, our land and our economy now and into the future.

There are many reasons why climate change is a critical factor for Council to consider. These include:

- prioritising best outcomes for our community, including future generations;
- supporting economic, social and environmental sustainability across our Shire;
- Council's financial sustainability: small investments today will avoid larger costs in the future'
- the planning for and mitigation of climate change risks;
- strong community expectation that local governments are preparing for climate change;

⁴ Municipal Association of Victoria, *Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services, Submission No. 105*, page 51.

⁵ Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee, *Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services, Committee Final Report, 2024*, page 150.

⁶ JLT Public Sector, *Risk Report, 7th Edition, 2025*, page 1

⁷ Actuaries Institute, *Home Insurance Affordability and Home Loans at Risk Report, 2024*

⁸ Municipal Association of Victoria, *Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Services, Submission No. 105*, page 52.

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- the co-benefits of adaptation responses. These include improved health and wellbeing, lower energy bills, and lower maintenance costs; and rising insurance premiums and liability issues.

In 2019, Mount Alexander Shire Council declared a climate emergency, recognising the need for urgent and ongoing action. In 2023, Mount Alexander Shire Council adopted a Climate Change Strategy (the Strategy); which includes six overarching goals that focus on integrating climate action, supporting just and equitable transitions, enhancing our natural environment, incorporating climate into our infrastructure planning and renewal, supporting community connections, and moving toward a circular economy. Importantly, the Strategy acknowledges, while Council cannot do it all, we commit to using our connections and resources to their full effect.

In line with Mount Alexander Shire Council's Climate Change Strategy, Council has committed to maximise its impact through advocating to State and Federal Governments where we do not have the legislated powers to effect change. Should the Notice of Motion be carried, Council Officers will write to the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy and the Federal Member for Bendigo, highlighting the climate change impacts within Mount Alexander Shire and seeking their consideration of the items listed in point two.

12. URGENT SPECIAL BUSINESS

Nil.

13. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Nil.

14. MEETING CLOSE

The Meeting closed at 8.53 pm.