

Agenda

Submitters Committee Meeting
Wednesday 21 February 2024 at 7:00 PM
Held online and livestreamed at mrsc.vic.gov.au

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1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, and present.

Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.

2 RECORDING AND LIVESTREAMING OF THIS COMMITTEE MEETING

This meeting is being recorded and streamed live on the internet, in accordance with Council's 'Live Streaming and Publishing Recordings of Meetings' policy, which can be viewed on Council's website.

3 PRESENT

4 APOLOGIES

5 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

6 PURPOSE OF SUBMITTERS DELEGATED COMMITTEE

Council receives written submissions on a variety of matters which need to be considered by Council during the decision-making process. The Submitters Delegated Committee affords people who have made a submission a specific opportunity to appear in person to expand on their submission, if they wish to do so, for the nominated matters above as outlined in the instrument of delegation.

7 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

NIL

8 REPORTS

8.1	HEARING OF SUBMITTERS IN RELATION TO THE BUDGET 2024/25 AND COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2031 (YEAR FOUR)
Officer:	Travis Harling, Manager Finance and Reporting
Council Plan relationship:	4. Delivering strong and reliable government
Attachments:	1. Summary of Written Submissions (under separate cover) 2. Summary of Survey Submissions (under separate cover)

Summary

Council invited the public to contribute to the development of the Budget 2024/25 and Council Plan 2021-2031 (Year Four) through a community engagement consultation process that ran from 24 October to 22 November 2023. Preparing Council's annual budget requires many inputs, and this opportunity was provided to ensure that Council understands the community's current priorities to strike the right balance and allowing the community to share ideas and feedback, to suggest or support projects, infrastructure, and initiatives year-round.

One hundred and eleven (111) submissions were received prior to the advertised closing period, and additional an additional three (3) were accepted as a late submissions in the following days.

The purpose of this meeting is to hear from those submitters who have expressed a desire to make a verbal presentation in support of their submission. Council will then consider the submissions as part of the Budget 2024/25 and Council Plan 2021-2031 (Year Four) at the Scheduled Council Meeting in May 2024.

Recommendation**That the Committee:**

- 1. Notes the submissions received for inclusion in the Draft Budget 2024/25 and Council Plan 2021-2031 (Year Four) and the supporting verbal presentations;**
- 2. Notes that these submissions will be referred for determination at the Scheduled Council Meeting at which the draft Budget 2024/25 and Council Plan 2021-2031 (Year Four) are presented for adoption; and**
- 3. Notes that responses and recommendations on the submissions received will be prepared for Council's consideration at that meeting.**

Background

In accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act* (2000 and 1989) and consistent with Council's *Community Engagement Policy*, the community was invited to provide ideas, feedback, and initiatives to support the development of the Budget 2024/25 and the Council Plan 2021-2031 (Year Four).

Discussion

The Local Government Better Practice Guide Planning Model Budget 2023-24, issued by the Victorian Government, states that the budget is a short-term plan that specifies the required resources to fund Council's services and initiatives over the coming 12 months and subsequent three financial years, and that it should be consistent with the first four years of the Financial Plan. The Model also outlines the requirements for containing both strategic and operational information covering details of services and initiatives to be funded and the objectives to be achieved, as well as indicators and performance outcomes.

Finally, it specifies that the budget should outline major initiatives and priorities and the funding of services through financial statements detailing income, expenditure, assets, liabilities, equity, cash and required capital works.

In a change to previous years, the opportunity for public consultation was offered once during the months of October and November 2023. The consultation included both Council's 2024/25 Budget and Council Plan 2021-2031 (Year 4). Unlike previous years, a second round of consultation in relation to the Council's 2024/25 Budget and Council Plan 2021-2031 (Year 4) will not be undertaken, although the final draft budget will be available to the public prior to adoption at the relevant Council meeting.

The preparation of these documents with a single consultation period remains consistent with the requirement of Section 90 and 94 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and forms part of the Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework developed as Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The earlier adoption of the Budget and Council Plan is becoming more prevalent in the Local Government sector and provides Council with the ability to better prepare in the lead up to 1 July 2024 and the start of a new financial year.

Summary of Submissions

The 114 submissions which were received (111 timely, 3 late), are presented as an attachment to this report. Submissions are presented in the order they were received, and in accordance with privacy principles, submitters' personal details have been redacted. Councillors have been separately provided with an un-redacted version of each submission.

Consultation and engagement

This year, Council implemented an innovative approach to gather feedback: this process was facilitated through Council's website but also through a structured online survey designed to facilitate the collection of further input, with officers available to members of the community to support them with their submissions if required. This process was actively promoted on various social media platforms and through targeted print advertising campaigns. All submissions received were formally acknowledged, an invitation provided to each submission to speak at the Submitters Delegated Committee.

Collaboration

Officers have worked with the community to seek their contributions and input as part of shaping key documents. These contributions, collected during this engagement period have been reviewed and continue to be considered by Councillors and officers as they develop the Budget and Council Plan. This approach ensures that the community's needs and priorities can be reflected in the financial planning and decision-making process, to best represent and serve the interests of the community.

Innovation and continuous improvement

The Budget and Council Plan are an important part of Council's integrated strategic planning, as outlined to Council on 16 December 2020. The Budget and Council Plan forms one of the key elements to Council's overall Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework.

Relevant law

Section 94 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires councils in Victoria to prepare a budget for each financial year. The *Local Government (Performance Reporting and Accountability) Act 2014*, and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*, specify the requirement for a budget to include major initiatives and the Regulations prescribe the relevant information disclosure requirements.

Section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires councils in Victoria to prepare and adopt a Council Plan for a period of at least four financial years after a general election in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices. The *Local Government (Performance Reporting and Accountability) Act 2014*, and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*, specify the requirement for a Council Plan in relation publicly advertising the Council Plan and requirements around annual reporting of the Council Plan actions.

Relevant regional, state and national plans and policies

Nil

Relevant Council plans and policies

The preparation of these document supports Council's priority of strong and reliable government.

Financial viability

Community submissions will be reviewed and considered in conjunction with internal priorities and the provision of current day to day services to the community. All internal and external submissions are evaluated for potential inclusion in the annual budget, it is important to ensure a balanced budget is maintained annually.

Sustainability implications

Council funding of services continues at similar levels to previous years.

Officer declaration of conflicts of interest

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect conflict of interest in this matter.

It should be noted that several Council officers are ratepayers of Macedon Ranges Shire Council.