

## **BUDGET FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/2025 PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS HEARING**

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Report Author: Manager Financial Services (CFO)

Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

This item is to be considered at a Hearing of Submission Committee meeting that is open to the public.

### **SUMMARY**

On 23 April 2024, Council resolved that the draft 2024-25 Budget and Plan 2025-2026 to 2027-2028 (including the draft 2024-2025 to 2033-2034 Capital Expenditure Program and draft 2024-2025 Fees and Charges) be received and advertised on 24 April 2024 for public comment.

The documents outline the future strategic direction and key activities that will be undertaken by Council and how the activities will be funded.

The documents were made available for public inspection and written submissions were sought from interested parties by lodgement time of midnight on Sunday 19 May 2024.

A total of 22 public submissions were received, and the purpose of this Delegated Committee meeting is to hear a number of presentations from submitters in relation to their submissions, and for the Committee to review and consider the written submissions received as well as the draft responses to each written submission as prepared by officers.

## RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the Committee, having considered the written and verbal submissions received, accept the response to each submission as per Attachment 2 (published separately).***
- 2. That the responses in Attachment 2 are submitted to Council as the preliminary recommendations of the Committee for the Council Meeting on 25 June 2024 for the purpose of considering the adoption of the 2024-2025 Budget and 2025-2026 to 2027-2028 Plan, 2024-2025 Fees & Charges, and the 2024-2025 to 2033-2034 Capital Expenditure Program.***
- 3. The confidential Attachments 2 and 3 to this report remain confidential indefinitely as it relates to matters specified under Section 3(1)(f) of the Local Government Act 2020.***

## RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

On 23 April 2024, Council resolved that the draft 2024-2025 Budget and 2025-2026 to 2027-2028 Plan, including the draft 2024-2025 Capital Expenditure Program and 2024-2025 Fees and Charges schedule be reviewed and advertised on 24 April 2024 for public comment.

## DISCUSSION

### ***Purpose and Background***

Yarra Ranges Council has engaged its community, Councillors and Council officers to develop and review the Council Budget, as well as the Capital Expenditure Program and Fees and Charges. These documents were made available to the community for inspection and written submissions were sought to ensure these documents continue to reflect the goals, aspirations and needs of the community.

Council must prepare and adopt a 4-year budget that contains financial statements and other matters by no later than 30 June each year. The purpose of this report is to present the submissions received to the Committee, together with management responses, for consideration prior to the final Budget being considered by Council for adoption scheduled for 25 June 2024.

### ***Recommended option and justification***

It is recommended that the responses to submissions in Attachment 2 are the preliminary recommendations of the Committee to be considered at the Council Meeting on 25 June 2024 for the purpose of considering the adoption of the 2024-25 Council Budget, 2025-26 to 2027-28 Budget Plan and the 2022-23 to 2031-32 Capital Expenditure Program.

In Officers' view, there are no key issues arising from the submissions received in relation to the draft Budget documents.

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

The Budget outlines:

- Council's management of financial resources for a four-year period; and
- The proposed resources allocated to the delivery of proposed initiatives, capital works, delivery of services and funding for key community priorities.

The consideration of the community submissions helps to inform the development of the Council's budget.

## **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

Council's Vision 2036 articulates the future aspirations for our community and the municipality. The 2021-25 Council Plan sets a clear direction for Council and articulates the focussed key initiatives and projects to be undertaken by Council.

Council's Community Engagement Policy 2021 sets out that Council will engage with the community for participation in the development of, and feedback on the Annual Budget.

## **RELEVANT LAW**

Council must prepare and adopt a budget for each financial year and the subsequent three financial years by 30 June each year in accordance with section 94 of the Local Government Act 2020.

The annual budget must be in the format outlined in the model prescribed by the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

The draft 2024-25 budget shows a small underlying operating deficit. However, future financial projections indicate that this will only apply to the short term, with Council's longer term financial sustainability returning to positive assuming the local government sector continues to receive the fair and necessary external funding required from industry partners.

### ***Social Implications***

The draft Budget and Plan allows for the implementation of priority actions arising from the Health and Wellbeing Plan including: mental health, physical health, social recovery, climate change and impacts on health, reduce harm from alcohol, health impacts of emergencies and gender equity.

### ***Environmental Implications***

The draft Budget and Plan includes a number of key environmental initiatives, including the implementation of Year 1 initiatives in the Nature Plan 2024-2034 to contribute to the vision of a healthy, resilient and connected natural living landscape.

The draft Budget and Plan also provide for continued work on energy saving initiatives to reduce resources and energy consumption through environmental best practice.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy, the draft Budget documents were advertised from 24 April to 19 May 2024, with the community being invited to submit feedback for consideration by a Delegated Committee of Council.

Throughout the year we hear from the community in a variety of ways, including roadshows and community pop-ups held across the municipality, our online feedback portal 'Shaping Yarra Ranges', via Councillors, at Council meetings and from customer feedback.

The information we receive from the community has provided valuable input to the 2024-25 Draft Budget development process, helping ensure resources are being allocated to priority areas identified by the community, while also ensuring Council can continue to meet its legislative obligations.

### **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The draft 2024-25 to 2027-28 Budget and Plan, including the Capital Expenditure Program, have been prepared through rigorous consultation with Councillors and Council officers. These documents have been developed to respond to the current and future needs of the community.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Consideration of the draft budgets needs to balance the needs and desires of all members of the community, the vitality and well-being of the municipality as a whole, and the future sustainability of Council. There is a risk that these competing objectives cause tension in the context of a diverse and complex community environment with scarce resources available.

### **CONFLICTS 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*.

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

1. Council Budget Submissions – Summary
2. Council Budget Submissions – Summary with Management Responses  
(Confidential)
3. Council Budget Submissions – Full (Confidential)