

BUDGET FINANCIAL YEAR 2025-2026 PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS HEARING

Report Author: Manager Financial Services (CFO)

Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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 the 27 March 2025, Council resolved that the draft 2025-2026 Budget and Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 be advertised for public consultation.

These 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 until midnight on 27 April 2025.

A total of 48 public submissions were received during this period and the purpose of the Delegated Committee Meeting is to hear a number of presentations from Submitters in relation to their submissions. Also, for the Delegated Committee to review and consider the written submissions received alongside draft responses to each written submission as prepared by Officers. 16 of the submitters have also requested to speak to their Submissions at the Hearing of Submission Meeting, 6 May 2025.

We thank all submitters for their time, constructive submissions and feedback.

RECOMMENDATION

1. *That the Committee, having considered the written and verbal submissions received, accept the response to each submission as per Attachment 1.*
2. *That the responses in Attachment 1 are submitted to Council as the recommendations of the Committee for the Council Meeting on 10 June 2025 for the purpose of considering the adoption of the 2025-2026 Budget and 2025-2029 and the Revenue and Rating Plan.*
3. *The confidential matters within this report to remain confidential indefinitely as it relates to matters specified under Section 3(1)(f) of the Local Government Act 2020.*
4. *Acknowledges presentations made to the Committee and thanks all submitters.*

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

On 27 March 2025, Council resolved that the draft 2025-2026 Budget and 2025-2026 and Revenue and Rating plan be advertised on 27 March 2025 for public comment and consultation.

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Background

Yarra Ranges Council has engaged its community and Councillors to develop and review the Council Budget and Revenue and Rating Plan. 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 an annual budget that contains financial statements and other matters by no later than 30 June each year this document also contains 3 year forecasts. 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 10 June 2025.

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 10 June 2025 for the purpose of considering the adoption of the 2025-26 Council Budget and Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029

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

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The two documents outline:

- 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 further 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 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 2025-26 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 positively sound assuming the local government sector continues to receive the fair and necessary external funding required from industry partners.

Social Implications

The draft 2025-26 Budget and Council 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 2025-2026 Budget and Council 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 documentation also provides 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 27 March 2025 to 27 April 2025, with the community invited to submit feedback for consideration by a Delegated Committee of Council.

Throughout the year we hear from the community in a variety of significant 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 received from the community has provided valuable input to the draft 2025-2026 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 2025-26 Budget and Revenue and Rating Plans 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