



Council Meeting

Minutes

Thursday 8 May 2025

Commencing at 5:00 am
via teams

Wayne O'Toole
Chief Executive Officer



ORDER OF BUSINESS

1 COUNCIL WELCOME AND STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	3
2 RECEIPT OF APOLOGIES	3
3 DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	3
4 GENERAL BUSINESS	4
4.1 FINANCIAL REPORTS.....	4
4.1.1 DRAFT 2025/26 BUDGET	4
4.2 ORGANISATIONAL REPORTS	10
4.2.1 DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN	10
4.2.2 DRAFT REVENUE AND RATING STRATEGY	14
5 MEETING CLOSE	17

Minutes of the Meeting held on 8/05/2025.

CHAIRPERSON:

Cr Alan Getley (Mayor)

Mallee Ward

COUNCILLORS:

Cr Stephen Barratt

Lower Avoca Ward

Cr Bruce Stafford

Lower Avoca Ward

Cr Graeme Milne (Deputy Mayor)

Mount Jeffcott Ward

Cr Charmaine Delaney

Mount Jeffcott Ward

OFFICERS:

Wayne O'Toole

Chief Executive Officer

Jenna Allan

Director Corporate and Organisational Performance

Gaynor Atkin

Director Community Development

Salomme Menezes

Manager Financial Strategy

1 COUNCIL WELCOME AND STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

WELCOME

The Mayor Cr Alan Getley will welcome all in attendance.

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Mayor Cr Alan Getley will acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting and pay our respects to their Elders and to the Elders from other communities who may be here today.

2 RECEIPT OF APOLOGIES

Cr Bernadette Hogan

Mallee Ward (Leave of Absence)

Daniel McLoughlan

Director Infrastructure and Delivery

3 DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

4 GENERAL BUSINESS

4.1 FINANCIAL REPORTS

4.1.1 DRAFT 2025/26 BUDGET

Author's Title: Manager Financial Strategy

Directorate: Corporate and Organisational Performance

File No:
FM/05/02

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: A Well Governed and Healthy Organisation

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to propose that Council endorse the Draft 2025/26 Annual Budget and commence the community engagement and public submission process in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy as defined by the *Local Government Act 2020*.

SUMMARY

The Buloke Shire Council Draft Budget 2023-2024 (the draft Budget) has been developed over several workshops held with councillors to allow for discussion. This has resulted in a draft budget being reflective of Council's priorities as outlined in Council's Long Term Community Vision and Council Plan 2021-2025.

To continue delivering essential services and capital projects to the Buloke community, the Council is proposing a 3.00% increase in general rates and the municipal charge, consistent with the State Government's rate cap.

The 2025/26 Draft Budget projects a surplus of \$27.2 million. This result is primarily driven by the recognition of a potential abnormal one-off disaster recovery grant estimated at \$26.9 million. When adjusted for this non-recurring item, the underlying operating result aligns more closely with the audited operating deficit of \$5.0 million reported for 2023/24 and the forecast deficit of \$1.4 million for 2024/25.

The total capital works program equates to \$44.6 million, including an estimated \$13.9 million carry forward projects. Further explanation around various items within the draft Budget have been outlined in the table below.

In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy, public exhibition will be undertaken on the draft Budget prior to Council's final consideration of the 2025/26 Budget at the June ordinary meeting. It is proposed that this public exhibition period commences on Friday 9 May and concludes on Thursday, 29 May 2025.

An invitation will also be extended to people making a submission to present those submissions at a meeting to be held Wednesday, 4 June 2025.

MOTION

That Council:

1. Endorse the draft 2025/26 Budget (incorporating the 4-year Budget) at Attachment 1 to this report for public exhibition.
2. Gives public notice of the draft 2025/26 Budget on Council's website and invites written submissions from Friday, 9 May 2025 until Thursday, 29 May 2025.
3. Notes that in accordance with Section 93 and 96(1)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, consultation will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy.
4. Notes that any person who makes a written submission in relation to the draft 2025/26 Budget may be heard by Council on Wednesday, 4 June 2025.
5. Notes that the 2025/26 Budget (incorporating the 4-year Budget) will be considered for adoption at the Council Meeting to be held Wednesday, 18 June 2025 at 7.00pm.

MOVED: Cr Charmaine Delaney

SECONDED: Cr Stephen Barratt

CARRIED.

(R/25/028)

DISCUSSION

Item	Commentary
Rates and charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The general rates and municipal charges are proposed to increase by 3.00% • There has been a revision in the draft Capital Improved Value (CIV) of properties, with the most significant change observed in the farming category, which shows a decrease of 1.7%, in contrast to a 31.0% increase in 2024/25. • There is a proposed change to the differentials with the aim to evenly distribute the rate increase in 2025/26. The differentials are proposed as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Residential - 100% of general rates o Commercial and industrial – 115% of general rates o Farming – 46% of general rates (from 42.5%) • The proposed rate increase is compliant with the Fair Go Rates System. • The waste charge per service is proposed to increase to \$450/- (approx. 6.00% increase from the previous year) to ensure full cost recovery.

Fees and charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees and Charges have been increased by approximately 3.5% across most areas. Fees against building fees and charges, swimming pool services etc. have been reviewed and updated, where needed. There are other fees that are set by statute and charged by Council in addition to this listing. These are statutory fees and are made in accordance with legislative requirements. These fees are updated as of 1 July 2025 and will be reflected on the Department of Transport and Planning website.
Operating grants	<p>It includes -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approx. \$8.4 million of Financial Assistance Grants Approx. \$667,000/- of recurrent state grants towards service areas such as libraries and maternal child and health, among others Approx. \$386,000/- of non-recurrent state grants majorly contributed towards the February 2024 storm event.
Capital grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is \$33.5 million of capital grants budgeted for 2025/26 It includes a one-off grant of approx. \$26.9 million under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), though the timing of receipt remains uncertain.
Other Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflects interest on term deposits.
Employee costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total FTE including capitalized labour and grant funded positions is proposed to be 117.7 FTE including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 96.5 FTE established staff 0.5 FTE capitalized 20.8 FTE vacant positions The EBA agreement is in place for the 2025/26 financial year.
Materials and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expenditure in this area is expected to remain consistent over the three (3) year period.
Other expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depreciation, bad debts, finance costs and other expenses – all are subjected to increase by 3% over the 3 years
Cash balance projection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash position as at June 30 2026, is budgeted to be at \$16 million. Cash is projected to decline across the next four years, mainly due to capital grants budgeted conservatively in the projected three years. Council has not allocated non-recurrent grant income in the budgets for the three-year period following the proposed budget. However, should circumstances change, the forecasts will be updated in the relevant year once there is sufficient certainty regarding the funding
Property, infrastructure, plant & equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition assessment and revaluation of our property (land and building) is currently in progress and is anticipated to be completed prior to June 2025.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition assessments and revaluation of Councils infrastructure and plant & equipment will occur in accordance with the frequency of revaluations by asset class. Capital works including carry forwards are budgeted at \$44.6 million.
Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This includes provisions for the following – all of which are considered to remain consistent but will be reviewed prior to June 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee entitlements such as annual leave and long service leave Landfill restoration Gravel pit restoration Redundancies (if identified)
Lease liability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council has no borrowings; however, light fleet operating leases exist. These expected to remain consistent.
Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserves are currently held for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined Benefits Superannuation Sustainability Fund Unspent Grants Grant Opportunity Capital Project Initiations Waste
Capital works program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The capital works program total equates to \$44.6 million, (including \$13.9 million of carry forward projects) consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$3.6 million New \$40.5 million Renewal \$250K Upgrade \$152K Expansion Funding for the capital works program consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$33.5 million Grants \$575K Contributions \$10.5 million Council Cash
Flood recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council has included in the capital program flood rehabilitation works worth \$34.3 million consisting of grant funding approx. \$28.6 million from Disaster Recovery Funding, LRCI phase 4 and Betterment as well as potential cost to council approx. \$5.7 million
Targeted performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance indicators included in the draft 2025/26 Budget.

RELEVANT LAW

The draft Budget has been prepared in accordance with relevant statutory requirements, including the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2014*.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Not applicable.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct sustainability implications associated with this report. However, the Draft Budget does include planned resource allocations toward sustainability, social and environmental services and projects.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Draft Budget engagement process will comprise media information across print, social and radio. A copy of the Draft Budget will be made available to community forums and be placed on the Council's website.

Council invites written submissions from the 9 May 2025 until 29 May 2025.

The process of community engagement is consistent with the Council's community engagement policy.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

There are no direct innovation and continuous improvement activities associated with this report.

COLLABORATION

Not applicable.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The Draft Budget is for the financial year 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026, and contains financial statements including a Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Changes in Equity, Statement of Cash flows, Statement of Capital Works and Statement of Human Resources.

These statements have been prepared for the year ending 30 June 2026 in accordance with the Act and Regulations. They are consistent with the annual financial statements prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards.

The Draft Budget also includes detail about the rates and charges to be levied and other information, Council requires to make an informed decision about the adoption of the Budget.

Valuations for council rates and fire services property levy are made annually in accordance with the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*. They are undertaken, or overseen, by the Valuer-General. Rating valuations are used to apportion (fairly distribute) council rates to ratepayers.

Council for the 2025/26 financial year has increased the differential for farm land to 46.00% (previously 42.5%). This increase is in accordance with the parameters established in the Revenue and Rating Plan that a review is required when the rate burden for any differential rate category changes by +/- 5.00% or greater following a general revaluation of properties.

This applies following the general revaluation of properties on 1 January 2025 (effective from 1 July 2025) that saw an average decrease in the valuation of farm land by 1.7% compared to an increase of 5.7% for residential and 6.1% for commercial and industrial properties.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

Consideration has been given to other regional, state and national plans and policies as required throughout the preparation of this budget.

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

The Draft Budget provides resourcing to enable continued implementation of Council's current plans and strategies.

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council's engagement approach provides for receipt and consideration of submissions to the Draft Budget at a hearing to be held Wednesday, 4 June 2025.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officer involved in the preparation of this report had a conflict of interest.

Attachments:

1. Attachment 4.1.1.1 - Draft Annual Budget F Y 2025 2026 BSC

4.2 ORGANISATIONAL REPORTS

4.2.1 DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN

Author's Title: Director Community Development

Directorate: Community Development

File No:
CM/14/20

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: A Well Governed and Healthy Organisation

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 for consideration and endorsement to go on public exhibition.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Act 2020 states that a 'Council must adopt and prepare a Council Plan for a period of at least the next four financial years after a general election in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices'.

The Draft Council Plan 2025-2026 has been developed under 5 Strategic Objective areas - Services supporting our communities to thrive, Vibrant and connected communities, Built and Natural environment, Prosperous and growing economy, and Council leadership and engagement.

MOTION

That Council:

1. Endorses the Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 to go on public exhibition for feedback from Friday 9 May 2025 to Thursday 29 May 2025.

MOVED: Cr Charmaine Delaney

SECONDED: Cr Bruce Stafford

CARRIED.
(R/25/029)

DISCUSSION

The Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 comes to Council for endorsement to go on public exhibition for feedback from Friday 9 May to Thursday 29 May 2025.

It has been prepared following an extensive community consultation and engagement process and an analysis of other interacting strategies and plans such as the community plans.

The draft document presents the following 5 Strategic Objectives supported by 13 strategies to guide Council for the next four years:

Strategic Objective 1: Services supporting our communities to thrive

Our vision is to create an environment where all members of our community enjoy good physical and mental wellbeing, and have fairer access to services, programs, events and activities.

Strategies

- 1.1 Active advocacy and participation in service networks
- 1.2 Accessible and responsive health and community services

Strategic Objective 2: Vibrant and connected communities

Our vision is for communities to celebrate their unique identities, and for community members to have opportunities locally to participate in, and connect with, others in their community.

Strategies:

- 2.1 Strengthen community activity and connections
- 2.2 Empower and support organisations to make a difference in their communities

Strategic Objective 3: Built and natural environment

Our vision is to achieve a balance between the infrastructure needs of our communities and protecting and nurturing the natural environment.

Strategies:

- 3.1 Advocate and plan for, and manage community buildings, roads and transport networks
- 3.2 Welcoming and accessible parks and open space
- 3.3 Caring for our environment

Strategic Objective 4: Prosperous and growing economy

Our vision is for a prosperous and growing economy providing diverse employment opportunities to sustain towns and communities, attract new residents, and support the future aspirations of our young people.

Strategies:

- 4.1 Attract innovative, creative and sustainable businesses
- 4.2 Invest in our young people

4.3 Promote Buloke as a great place to visit, live and invest

Strategic Objective 5: Council leadership and engagement

Our vision is to be responsive, innovative, engaged and accountable. We will make informed decisions based on sound evidence, be financially sustainable, and actively advocate on community priorities and aspirations.

Strategies:

- 4.1 Responsible leadership and decision making
- 4.2 Advocacy and partnering to deliver on priorities
- 3.3 Consulting with and informing our community

The Plan, its Strategic Objectives and Strategies will have an annual review, and an annual plan developed which will be reported quarterly.

RELEVANT LAW

The Local Government Act 2020 states that a 'Council must adopt and prepare a Council Plan for a period of at least the next four financial years after a general election in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices'.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council decisions around other key strategic documents will interact with Council Plan 2025-2029 once adopted.

OPTIONS

Council has the option to not endorse the Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 to go on public exhibition from Friday 9 May 2025 to Thursday 29 May 2025.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 presents several strategies that will support sustainability initiatives and respond to the requirement that Local government is identified in the Climate Change Act 2017.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 has acknowledged the extensive engagement undertaken with the community, and relevant stakeholders, on a range of issues and projects over the last two years. During

this time over 1,500 people shared their ideas and experiences, raised issues and provided feedback through surveys, workshops and focus groups, drop-in sessions, emails and written submissions.

This information has influenced the development of the Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 and been further developed through specific consultation on the Council Plan which was undertaken between March and April 2025 with over 140 people engaged through conversations, surveys and community summits.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 outlines several innovative strategies building on the community feedback as well as indicators to identify areas for continuous improvement.

COLLABORATION

The development of the Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 incorporates collaboration efforts undertaken with a range of local and Regional and State stakeholders.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The delivery of the Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 will be supported through Annual Budgets adopted each year as well as the Long-Term Financial Plan. External funding will also be sought to provide additional funding, as required.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

The Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 acknowledges the directions and objectives of other Regional, State and National plans and policies.

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

The Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 acknowledges the actions and objectives of other key Council plans and strategies.

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

This report recommends Draft Council Plan 2025-2029 goes on public exhibition from Friday 9 May 2025 to Thursday 29 May 2025 to enable the public to make submissions and provide feedback on the proposed strategies and direction.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officer involved in this report has a conflict of interest.

Attachments: 1. Attachment 4.2.1.1 - Draft Buloke Shire Council Plan 2025-2029

4.2.2 DRAFT REVENUE AND RATING STRATEGY

Author's Title:	Manager Financial Strategy
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Directorate: Corporate and Organisational Performance

File No: CM/14/20

Relevance to Council Plan 2021 - 2025

Strategic Objective: A Well Governed and Healthy Organisation

PURPOSE

This report is for Council to consider the proposed Revenue and Rating Strategy 2015-2029, for approval to exhibit and call for public submissions.

MOTION

That Council:

1. Having prepared the draft Revenue and Rating Strategy, endorses the document for public exhibition, commencing Friday 9 May 2025 and concluding on Thursday 29 May 2025;
2. Invites submissions from the community on the proposal contained in the draft Revenue and Rating Strategy, and draft Rating policy; and
3. Allows presentations in support of written submissions to be heard at the Councillor briefing scheduled to be held on 4 June 2025.

MOVED: Cr Charmaine Delaney

SECONDED: Cr Stephen Barratt

CARRIED.
(R/25/030)

DISCUSSION

Council is committed to develop and adopt a four-year Rating and Revenue Strategy setting out the mechanism of rates and charges to be adopted by Council for the purpose of distributing the rates burden across the Buloke municipality on a fair and equitable basis.

RELEVANT LAW

The Local Government Act 2020 requires each council to prepare a Revenue and Rating Strategy to cover a minimum period of four years following each Council election.

The Valuation of Land Act 1960 is the principal legislation in determining property valuations. Under the Valuation of Land Act 1960, the Victorian Valuer-General conducts property valuations on an annual basis.

COLLABORATION

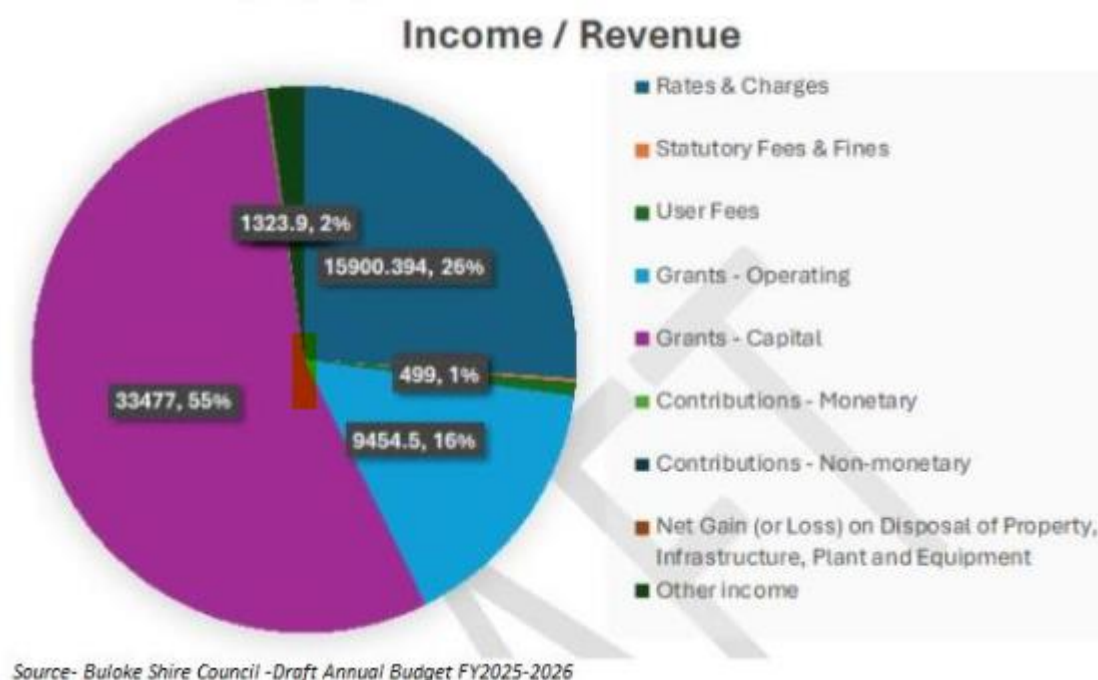
This report has been prepared and developed internally. Council has conducted 1 detailed workshop regarding rating and revenue where the draft strategy was discussed as well. It was attended by representatives from the Valuer-General Victoria in addition to the internal management and councillors.

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE POLICY

The purpose of the Revenue and Rating Strategy is to establish the revenue raising framework within which Council proposes to work.

- Council uses the Capital Improvement Value (CIV) as rating valuation method
- Council uses the differential rating strategy to ensure fair and equitable distribution of rate burden.
- Council plans to increase the intervention level to +/- 10% of change of property valuations provided by the Valuer-General Victoria where Council is required to review any adjustment to the differential ratings.
- Differentials applied for FY 2025/2026 are as follows -
 1. Residential Land = 100% of General rates
 2. Commercial and Industrial Land = 115.6% of General rates
 3. Farm Land = 46% of General Rates
- Council will levy a municipal charge on the grounds that all properties should contribute to its administrative costs
- Council will levy a charge for kerbside garbage and recycling services based on full cost recovery

FINANCIAL VIABILITY



As seen in the above image, various streams of council's revenue sources are mapped out. Rate revenue makes up the largest portion of approx. 50% -55%. Thus, a mechanism to calculate that income source becomes important.

- Statutory fees and fines are legislative charges - updated yearly by
- User Fees -discretionary charges (updated by council annually in the budget)
- External Grants - Council highly reliant on grant funding and will proactively advocate for support to other levels of government
- Contributions, net gain on disposal form parts of Council's other income.

REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES

None Identified

COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES

None identified

TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council has ensured transparency in developing this policy and decisions made around it.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officer involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest.

<i>Attachments:</i>	1. Attachment 4.2.2.1 - DRAFT Revenue and Rating Strategy 2025-29
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5 MEETING CLOSE

Meeting closed at 5:12 pm.

NEXT MEETING

The next Council Meeting will be held in Wycheproof Hall Supper Room on Wednesday 21 May, 2025 at 7:00pm.