



# Council Meeting **Minutes**

Wednesday 18  
February 2026

Commencing at 7:00pm

Wycheproof Supper Room  
367 Broadway, Wycheproof

Daniel McLoughlan  
Chief Executive Officer



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## **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

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**Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 February 2026.****CHAIRPERSON:**

Cr Bernadette Hogan (Deputy Mayor) Mallee Ward

**COUNCILLORS:**

Cr Alan Getley	Mallee Ward
Cr Stephen Barratt	Lower Avoca Ward
Cr Bruce Stafford	Lower Avoca Ward
Cr Charmaine Delaney	Mount Jeffcott Ward

**OFFICERS:**

Paula Gardiner	Acting Director Infrastructure and Delivery
Jenna Allan	Director Corporate and Organisational Performance
Gaynor Atkin	Director Community Development
Anthony Smith	Acting Manager Governance
Georgia Brown	Senior Executive Assistant

## 1 COUNCIL WELCOME AND STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**WELCOME**

The Deputy Mayor Cr Bernadette Hogan welcomed all in attendance.

**STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Deputy Mayor Cr Bernadette Hogan acknowledged 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.

Cr Bernadette Hogan noted that for this meeting, officers have brought forward a proposed Joint Letter which has been submitted to Council and circulated. In order to consider this item, Council must first resolve to receive the item as a matter for **9.4 – Any Other Business**.

Prior to proceeding, in relation to the matter, the Director of Corporate and Organisational Performance, Ms Jenna Allan, provided a brief introduction to the matter for transparency.

*Council has received a joint letter from 5 signatories concerning a compliance matter relating to a residential property within the township of Charlton. Prior to any consideration being given to this matter I wish to inform Council of the following important points:*

*Matters of regulatory compliance, investigation and enforcement fall within the responsibilities of authorised officers, appointed under section 124 of the Local Government Act 2020, for the "administration and enforcement of any Act, regulations or local laws which relate to the functions and powers of the Council". These officers are empowered to undertake compliance actions independently and in accordance with the required legislative processes.*

*As Council is not an authorised decision-maker for operational compliance matters, the Joint Letter can be formally noted. The issues raised within the correspondence, however, will be managed through*

*the appropriate operational channels by authorised officers, in accordance with the applicable legislative requirements and internal procedures.*

Cr Bernadette Hogan advised that a motion to accept item 9.4 Any Other Business would be required.

## **2 RECEIPT OF APOLOGIES**

### **COUNCILLORS:**

Cr Graeme Milne

Mount Jeffcott Ward

### **OFFICERS:**

Daniel McLoughlan

Chief Executive Officer

Mayor, Councillor Graeme Milne and Chief Executive Officer, Daniel McLoughlan, attended an important Regional Councils Victoria event in Melbourne on behalf of Council.

## **3 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **MOTION**

That Council adopt the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17 December 2025.

**MOVED: Cr Alan Getley**

**SECONDED: Cr Bruce Stafford**

**CARRIED.**

**(R/26/1)**

## **4 REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Nil.

## **5 DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Alan Getley declared a material conflict of interest in relation to item 9.1.2. - Charlton CFA Fire Station Replacement due to providing consulting and appraisal services for the land.

Councillor Bruce Stafford declared a general conflict of interest in relation to the Joint Letter being brought forward in 9.4. Any Other Business due to the lead petitioner being his brother.

## **6 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Council received no questions from the public for this Council Meeting.

## 7 PROCEDURAL ITEMS

### 7.1 GOVERNANCE REPORT - FEBRUARY 2026

**Author's Title:** Acting Manager Governance

**Directorate:** Corporate and Organisational Performance

**File No:** GO/05/04

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance matters.

The Governance report is prepared as a monthly report to Council.

The Governance report includes:

- Record of Councillor Assemblies and Meetings held
- Record of Councillor Briefings, at Attachment 1 to this report.
- Chief Executive Officer Activity Report
- The Status of Actions Report for Council resolutions at Attachment 2 to this report.
- The summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held Wednesday, 10 December 2025 at Attachment 3 to this report.
- Contracts awarded in accordance with the increased Financial Delegation provided to the Chief Executive Officer.
- Building a Better Buloke 2040: Community Vision administrative amendments.

#### MOTION

That Council:

1. Notes the Record of Councillor Assemblies and Meetings held.
2. Notes the Record of Councillor Briefings, at Attachment 1 to this report.
3. Notes the Chief Executive Officer Activity Report.
4. Notes the Status of Actions Report for Council resolutions at Attachment 2 to this report.
5. Notes the summary of minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held Wednesday, 10 December 2025 at Attachment 3 to this report.
6. Notes the contracts entered into, in accordance with the increased Financial Delegation provided to the Chief Executive Officer of \$1,500,000 (excluding GST) as detailed within this report, excluding Contract C126 2024/25 FRRW - Nullawil Meridian Road DP5 which is included in the report in error.
7. Authorise the Director Community Development to finalise the Building a Better Buloke 2040: Community Vision by including the Acknowledgement of Country, and any minor administrative changes that don't change the intent of the document, professional design of the document and online version, for distribution and implementation.

**MOVED: Cr Stephen Barratt**

**SECONDED: Cr Charmaine Delaney**

**CARRIED.**

**(R/26/2)**

### KEY POINTS/ISSUES

The Governance Report is prepared as a monthly report to Council to provide a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance matters.

In accordance with best practice principles of good governance practice, and to ensure compliance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*, this report incorporates matters including records of meetings held, organised or hosted by Council, items relating to the delegation of Council powers and duties, and policy and strategy reporting.

### Record of Councillor Assemblies and Meetings held from 4 December 2025 to 4 February 2026

Records of matters discussed at meetings organised or hosted by Buloke Shire Council that involve Councillors and Council officers are kept in accordance with the Governance Rules.

Meeting records must include attendees, including organisations represented by external presenters; the title of matters discussed; and any conflicts of interests disclosed and whether the declarant of a conflict of interest excused themselves from the meeting.

#### Record of Councillor Assemblies:

Date/Time/Venue	Councillor Attendees	Meeting Type
9/12/2025 5:30pm <i>Charlton Senior Citizens</i>	Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Delaney, Cr Stafford, Cr Barratt	Charlton Shire Hall – Community Meeting
10/12/2025 10:00am <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>	Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Barratt, Cr Delaney	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting
15/12/2025 8:00am <i>Via Teams</i>	Cr Getley, Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Barratt, Cr Stafford, Cr Delaney	CEO and Councillors Update
17/12/2025 7:00pm <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>	Cr Getley, Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Stafford, Cr Delaney	Council Meeting
22/01/2026 6:30pm <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>	Cr Getley, Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Barratt, Cr Stafford, Cr Delaney	Australian Citizenship Ceremony
22/01/2026 7:00pm <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>	Cr Getley, Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Barratt, Cr Stafford, Cr Delaney	Buloke Australia Day Awards

4/02/2026 5:00pm <i>Sea Lake Senior Citizens</i>	Cr Getley, Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Stafford, Cr Delaney	Councillor Briefing
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**Record of Meetings:**

Date/Time/Venue	Meeting Type	Attendees from Council	External Attendees	Conflicts of Interest declared
10/12/2025 10:00am <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting	Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Delaney  Daniel McLoughlan, Jenna Allan, Paula Gardiner, Gaynor Atkin, Salomme Menezes, Anthony Smith, Jason Hunter.	Brad Ead, Bernard Young, Stephen Gardner	Nil
17/12/2025 7:00pm <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>	Council Meeting	Cr Getley, Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Stafford, Cr Delaney  Daniel McLoughlan, Paula Gardiner, Jenna Allan, Gaynor Atkin, Anthony Smith, Georgia Brown	Nil	Nil
4/02/2026 5:00pm <i>Sea Lake Senior Citizens</i>	Councillor Briefing	Cr Milne, Cr Hogan, Cr Delaney, Cr Getley, Cr Stafford  Daniel McLoughlan, Jenna Allan, Gaynor Atkin, David Richardson, Ryan Hemley, Trevor Rumbold, Salomme Menezes	<i>Advance Sea Lake Inc. members:</i> Jenny Newell, Patricia Amos, Rohan Mott,	Nil

**Chief Executive Officer Activity Report from 4 December 2025 to 4 February 2026**

Record of meetings attended by the Chief Executive Officer on behalf of the Buloke Shire Council. Activity record includes the date, activity and location.

<b>Daniel McLoughlan – Chief Executive Officer</b> <i>(4 December 2025 to 4 February 2026)</i>		
Date	Activity	Location
04/12/2025	Loddon Campaspe Councils - CEOs	Online
08/12/2025	MAV CEO Briefing - Maternal & Child Health	Online
08/12/2025	Mallee Regional Partnership Meeting	Kerang
08/12/2025	Meeting with Jade Benham MP	Online
09/12/2025	Meeting with Travellers Rest Committee	Charlton
09/12/2025	Charlton Shire Hall - Community Meeting	Charlton

09/12/2025	Tourism Update Due for GWM Tourism Board Meeting	Online
10/12/2025	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting	Wycheproof
10/12/2025	NGSC Transmission Forum	Online
10/12/2025	Wimmera Southern Mallee Council Alliance - CEO Meeting	Online
11/12/2025	Local Government Executive Roundtable	Dimboola
12/12/2025	BSC CEO and Councillors Update	Online
15/12/2025	CEO and Councillors Catch-up	Online
15/12/2025	MAV - Monday Connect	Online
15/12/2025	BSC, DTP and ERV	Online
16/12/2025	VNI West CRG Meeting - Observers and VNI West Team	Charlton
17/12/2025	Meeting with North Central LLEN	Wycheproof
17/12/2025	Council Meeting	Wycheproof
18/12/2025	Loddon Campaspe Councils - CEOs	Online
18/12/2025	Loddon Mallee Drought Coordination Meeting	Online
19/12/2025	Charlton Fire – Multiple meetings	Charlton
22/12/2025	Charlton Fire - Situation update, coordination	Online
23/12/2025	Charlton Fire Community Information Session	Charlton
24/12/2025	Charlton Fire - Situation update, coordination	Online
27/12/2025	Charlton Fire - Situation update, coordination	Online
30/12/2025	Charlton Fire - Situation update, coordination	Online
02/01/2026	Charlton Fire - Situation update, coordination	Online
03/01/2026	Sea lake Fire - Situation update, coordination	Online
04/01/2026	Sea lake Fire - Situation update, coordination	Online
14/01/2026	NGSC Transmission Forum (Acting CEO Jenna Allan)	Online
19/01/2026	MAV - Monday Connect	Online
21/01/2026	Western REZ Councils - Preparation for Meeting with VicGrid	Online
22/01/2026	Australian Citizenship Ceremony	Charlton
22/01/2026	Buloke Australia Day Awards Celebration	Charlton
26/01/2026	Guest Speaker - Nullawil Australia Day Event	Nullawil
28/01/2026	Meeting with VP Minerals	Wycheproof
02/02/2026	VNI West Social Value Fund – BSC Consultant Brief	Online
04/02/2026	MAV Regional Meeting – Loddon Campaspe Mallee	Online
04/02/2026	Councillor Briefing	Sea Lake

### Status of Action of past Council Meeting Resolutions

To provide Council with a list of the Status of Action of Council resolutions outstanding for completion of action since the last Council Meeting.

### Audit and Risk Committee Minutes

A summary of the minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held Wednesday, 10 December 2025 is provided at Attachment 3.

### Exercise of Delegated Authority

Council delegates powers, duties and functions to the Chief Executive Officer to support the efficient operation and delivery of Council services.

The Chief Executive Officer has been delegated authority by Council to award contracts up to \$300,000 (exclusive of GST) through an Instrument of Delegation made on 29 October 2025 (\$5 Instrument of Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer).

Council at its meeting held Wednesday, 17 December 2025 resolved as follows:

*That Council:*

- 1) *Increase the Financial delegation provided to the Chief Executive Officer from \$300,000 (excluding GST) to \$1,500,000 (excluding GST).*
- 2) *Authorised the Chief Executive Officer to exercise the increased financial delegation of \$1,500,000 (excluding GST) for the procurement of goods, services and works only when the following conditions are satisfied:*
  - a. *Contracts and works are directly related to projects associated with the 2022 and 2023 flood events, namely:*
    - i. *AGRN 1037 (October 2022 Flooding Event).*
    - ii. *AGRN 1096 (December 2023 Flooding Event).*
  - b. *Council Flood Support Fund Approved Works Schedule (AGRN 1037, AGRN 1096, AGRN 1108).*
  - c. *Funded flood studies and Laser imaging Detection and Ranging projects (funded due to the 2022 and 2023 flood events).*
- 3) *Receive a report at the next available Council Meeting clearly identifying each Contract awarded via exercising of the temporary increased financial delegation.*
- 4) *Authorises the temporary increase of the CEO financial delegation up to 30 June 2027, or earlier by resolution of Council.*

<b>Contract Name</b>	<b>Awarded to</b>	<b>Contract Sum (\$) (excl. GST)</b>	<b>Brief Description of Works Under Contract (Scope)</b>
<i>Contract C126 2024/25 – FRRW – Nullawil Meridian Road – DPS</i>	<i>HIWAY Pty Ltd</i>	<i>\$1,450,000.00</i>	<i>Rehabilitation and widening of the full length of Nullawil Meridan Road. Finished sealed road width will be 6m.</i>
<i>Contract C132 2025/26 – Supply &amp; Construction of Flood Protection Levee, Camp Street Donald</i>	<i>Eco Infrastructure &amp; Engineering Pty Ltd</i>	<i>\$609,905.46</i>	<i>Supply, and civil construction works for installation of a demountable flood barrier including reinforced concrete footing works, concrete sleeper retaining wall works, underground stormwater drainage works flexible road pavement works, bituminous works and other associated works along Camp St, Donald.</i>
<i>Contract C135 2025/26 – FRRW – Watchupga West Road</i>	<i>Berne Fleming Civil Pty Ltd</i>	<i>\$274,180.00</i>	<i>Reinstatement works for Watchupga West Road, Watchupga had flood</i>

			damage identified between chainage Ch 12.260 km and Ch 12.760 km.
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### Corporate Documents

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, all Victorian Councils must maintain a Community Vision with an outlook of at least 10 financial years. The Community Vision describes the long-term community's aspirations for the future of the municipality.

Council revised the Community Vision in accordance with Section 88 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. Council adopted the Building a Better Buloke 2040: Community Vision at its meeting held Wednesday, 5 November 2025.

At the time of adoption, the Acknowledgement of Country was inadvertently left off the final version. It is recommended that Council now include Councils Acknowledgement of Country as included in the Council Pan 2025-2029 as outlined below:

*Buloke Shire Council acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk, the Dja Dja Wurrung and Wamba Wemba people as the Traditional Owners of parts of the land now known as Buloke. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and value their ongoing contribution to our heritage and our community.*

Council have also become aware of other minor administrative errors within the document, none of which change the intention of its content. These errors will be amended and published with endorsement from the Chief Executive Officer.

- Attachments:**
1. Attachment 7.1.1 - Councillor Briefing Record - 4 February 2026
  2. Attachment 7.1.2 - Council Resolution Action - 18022026
  3. Attachment 7.1.3 - Summary of minutes ARC Dec 25

## 8 GENERAL BUSINESS

### 8.1 POLICY REPORTS

#### 8.1.1 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

**Author's Title:** Director Corporate and Organisational Performance

**Directorate:** Corporate and Organisational Performance **File No:** CM/14/05

#### **Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029**

**Strategic** Council leadership and engagement

**Objective:** Responsible leadership and decision making

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is for Council to adopt an updated Social Media Policy that reflects its and the sectors contemporary environment.

#### **SUMMARY**

Council first adopted its Social Media Policy in 2016 and has since updated the Policy in 2022 to better reflect its presence across its Corporate Facebook and X (Twitter) profiles. In accordance with the new Model Councillor Code of Conduct introduced in 2024, Council have undertaken a further review of the Social Media Policy and have updated the document to ensure that improved standards of Governance and Integrity may be reflected through Social Media platforms used by Council.

#### **PROCEDURAL MOTION**

That Council defer consideration of item 8.1.1. Social Media Policy to a future Council Meeting pending further information.

**MOVED: Cr Bruce Stafford**

**CARRIED.**

**(R/26/3)**

#### **DISCUSSION**

Council's Social Media Policy is an important document to uphold Council's integrity whilst having a significant online presence. Council operates its own Facebook, X and LinkedIn pages and has around 5,000 residents engaging with Council on these platforms. The policy gives clear direction and guidelines for social media use both professionally for Council and for personal use by Councillors and staff alike.

A strong Social Media Policy helps Councillors, Council staff and the community ensure a safe platform for communication and engagement for the betterment of Council services. With the fast-paced nature of social media and increase in uptake for more urgent forms of communication, the ability to innovate with new platforms and updated offerings of currently used platforms is imperative.

**RELEVANT LAW**

*Local Government Act 2020*

*Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Act 2024*

Model Councillor Code of Conduct

**RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS**

Council's Social Media Policy was last updated and adopted in 2022.

**OPTIONS**

Council may choose to not adopt the proposed changes to the Social Media Policy.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

This Policy is relevant to staff, Councillors, volunteers and contractors and does not warrant community engagement.

**INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Council are committed to ensuring compliance with the relevant law and regulations which maintain a high standard of service delivery for our community. Updating this policy to ensure a timely review has been undertaken will enable staff, Councillors, volunteers and contractors to confidently utilise social media to the best of their ability.

**COLLABORATION**

Internal collaboration between service areas has been undertaken for this Policy review, along with research into other similar Policy documents and supporting information relevant to the Local Government sector.

**FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

Social media use incurs costs through Council's operational budget, however when managed efficiently, this form of communication and community engagement has proven to be an extremely important and effective method of communication to our community which in fact, costs Council less than more traditional means of communications (eg. Print media).

**REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES**

Not applicable.

**COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES**

The use of social media is required and expected through the delivery of strategic outcomes of the Council Plan 2025-29.

**TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS**

This Policy will continue to be reviewed when appropriate or due and brought through Council to ensure transparency to the Community.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

No officer involved in the preparation of this report or the review of this Policy has declared a conflict of interest.

***Attachments:***

1. Attachment 8.1.1.1 - Social Media Policy 2026

## 8.2 MANAGEMENT REPORTS

### 8.2.1 QUARTERLY ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 2 FY2025/26

**Author's Title:** Director Corporate and Organisational Performance

**Directorate:** Corporate and Organisational Performance **File No:** FM/02/08

#### **Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029**

**Strategic Objective:** Council leadership and engagement

**Objective:** Consulting with and informing our community

#### **PURPOSE**

To present to Council the draft Quarterly Organisational Performance report for Quarter 2 FY2025/26 (at Attachment 1) for noting.

#### **SUMMARY**

The quarterly organisational performance report is an integrated progress report that updates Council and community on the delivery of the strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2025-29, including performance reporting, financial performance and delivery of the capital works program for the period of July 2025 up to and including the end of December 2025 (Quarter 2).

The report focusses on the activities undertaken in Quarter 2, noting that many activities and projects are ongoing and a progressive update from the Quarter 1 performance report, presented to Council in December 2025.

As at the end of December 2025, the Council Plan overall performance demonstrates a positive position of progress. At this point in the first year of the new Council Plan, which was adopted by Council in June 2025, there remains an overlap of key initiatives, however with the adoption of Council's key long term strategic plans in October 2025, the organisation is tracking well for service delivery to our community.

Council continues to work towards a more strategic approach in communication of key priorities and overall Council Direction that ensures that our community are well informed and able to track our progress.

#### **MOTION**

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Quarterly Organisational Performance Report for Quarter 2 FY2025/26 at Attachment 1.

**MOVED: Cr Charmaine Delaney**

**SECONDED: Cr Alan Getley**

<b>CARRIED.</b> <b>(R/26/4)</b>
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## **DISCUSSION**

The Council Plan 2025/26 was adopted by Council on 18 June 2025 in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* (The Act).

Within the Council Plan, a detailed 'Key things we will do' list of actions is provided against each of the strategies associated to the five (5) over-arching strategic objectives.

The key initiatives and projects undertaken by Council are recorded through internal processes, and documented within each service area Business Unit Plan, developed in alignment with the Annual Budget process, which sets out the financial year, + the three years thereafter. Importantly, the Council Plan is also a 4-year document which must be complimented by Council's other key strategic documents and plans in accordance with the integrated strategic planning and reporting framework.

In accordance to the recommendations of the Municipal Monitor's Report published in January 2025 for the Buloke Shire Council, a commitment has been made to maintaining financial sustainability and establishing an Annual Budget on a cash basis going forward.

Like all Local Government Authorities, the Buloke Shire experiences financial constraints that are not new or surprising. Rate capping, cost shifting for various services across sectors and generally rising costs for materials and services (particularly for rural and remote areas) continues to be a challenge in managing the 4-year Annual Budget, which must also inform the long-term financial position outlined within the Financial Plan (10 years).

Resourcing continues to be a major issue in the current environment, increased turnover rates and associated changes in attitudes and culture for employment in the public sector has remained difficult to manage since the COVID pandemic. This is more problematic for Council's typically more traditional, steady tenured roles.

Council's ability to establish a long-term financially sustainable position without having to rely on non-recurrent grant funding remains unlikely. Due to this fact, the challenge remains for Council to deliver the long-term aspirations of the community in a strategically aligned way that enables the delivery of core Council services in the short term.

## **RELEVANT LAW**

*Local Government Act 2020.*

## **RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS**

The Council Plan 2025-29 was adopted by Council in June 2025.

## **OPTIONS**

Council may seek further clarification on matters raised within the report where appropriate.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement is undertaken in a meaningful and deliberative way to prepare the 4-year Council Plan. The introduction of this report as a measure of progress on a quarterly basis across the entire 4-year term aims to provide the community with a transparent method of ensuring accountability for delivery of the objectives of the Plan to be met in line with the community engagement which informed them.

**INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Council will continue to consider improvements and innovative ways to improve this new report in the interest of informing progress against the Council Plan.

**COLLABORATION**

The preparation of this report requires internal collaboration to present an organisational-wide update of overall performance.

**FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

Nil to report at this point in relation to the preparation of this report – noting that this report's purpose is to provide a progress update. Individual service areas and key initiatives noted within the report should be considered in relation to their individual resourcing and financial implications as separate to this report and its purpose in presentation.

**REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES**

Not applicable.

**COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES**

This report aligns with Council's obligations to track its progress against the strategic objectives of the Council Plan 2025-29.

This report forms an important part of Council's integrated strategic planning and reporting framework, including the associated Policy.

**TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS**

This report provides a quarterly performance update of Council's progress against the Council Plan and associated Council decisions. The report encourages a transparent means of reporting progress against all strategic objectives and deliverables within the Council Plan.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

No conflicts of interest were declared in the preparation of this report.

***Attachments:***

1. Attachment 8.2.1.1 - Organisational Performance Report - Quarter 2 FY 2025-26

## 8.3 FINANCIAL REPORTS

### 8.3.1 QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT – QUARTER 2 FY2025/26

**Author's Title:** Manager Financial Strategy

**Directorate:** Corporate and Organisational Performance **File No:** FM/09/08

#### **Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029**

**Strategic** Council leadership and engagement

**Objective:** Responsible leadership and decision making

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to present to Council the financial reports for the period ended 31 December 2025 (Quarter 2) in accordance with the requirements of Section 97 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

#### **SUMMARY**

Council adopted its 2025/2026 Annual Budget at the Council meeting on the 18 June 2025. The attached report includes a comparison of the operating and capital works budgets with actuals for the period ended 31 December 2025 as well as the Cash Flow Statement and Balance Sheet. It also includes Council's forecasted comprehensive income statement for year end June 2026.

#### **MOTION**

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Quarterly Financial Report for period ended 31 December 2025.
2. Receives and notes the Statement of Capital Works for period ended 31 December 2025.
3. Notes that the Chief Executive Officer acknowledges in accordance with the Act that there is no need for a revised annual budget.

**MOVED: Cr Charmaine Delaney**

**SECONDED: Cr Stephen Barratt**

**CARRIED.**

**(R/26/5)**

#### **DISCUSSION**

For the quarter ending 31 December 2025, Council's financials reflect a negative variance of \$3.788 million. Council's operating income is \$2.7 million below the year-to-date budget, while capital income is

\$655K below budget. Operating expenditure shows an unfavorable variance of \$424K compared with the year-to-date budget.

Council forecasts a full-year operating surplus of \$8.364 million, reflecting an unfavorable variance of \$20.468 million against the budgeted surplus of \$28.832 million. This variance is not driven by overspending but mainly relates to approximately \$14 million in capital grant funding under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) that has not yet been received, with Council currently negotiating with Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV).

Capital works expenditure is forecast at \$23.314 million compared with the approved budget of \$46.735 million.

Council continues to forecast a cash neutral position as of June 2026 by expecting the total cash and cash equivalents at year-end to exceed \$30 million, similar to year-end balance of June 2025.

A detailed analysis of variances has been tabled below.

## COMPREHENSIVE INCOME STATEMENT

While Council's comprehensive year-to-date (YTD) income statement reflects an unfavorable variance of \$3.788 million, its forecasted result reflects an unfavorable variance of \$20.468 million. Reasons for which are detailed within the table below:

Detail	YTD Variance Comments	Forecasted Variance Comments
<b>Income</b>		
Rates and charges	Against YTD budget has a favorable variance of \$45K.	Favorable variance forecasted due to supplementary valuations.
Statutory fees and fines	Favorable variance primarily due to a one-off fee earned from subdivision of land.	Favorable variance forecasted due to a one-off fee earned from subdivision of land, remaining items travelling close to budget.
User fees	Unfavorable variance of approx. \$36K primarily due to lower-than-expected services such as public health, building and compliance.	Unfavorable variance forecasted due to lower-than-anticipated level of operations in the building and compliance service areas.
Grants – operating	<p>Unfavorable variance of \$2.27 million YTD due to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timing difference of the Financial Assistance Grants receipt (approx.\$2 million, first 50% received in FY24/25).</li> <li>Non-recognition of Council Flood Support Fund of \$300K received in advance. Income will be recognised when acquittals are approved on a quarterly basis.</li> </ul>	<p>Unfavourable variance forecasted of \$3.9 million is primarily due to Financial Assistance Grants for financial year 2025/26 received in advance during financial year 2024/25.</p> <p>Council is not forecasting to receive an advance for FY2026-27 in FY2025-26.</p>
Grants - capital	Unfavorable variance due to delays in project delivery, including Birchip RSL, Tiny Towns, and the Watchem and Wooroonook septic replacement projects which has resulted in income not yet being recognised. Income against Roads to Recovery will be recognised once Q2 acquittal reports are acquitted.	<p>Unfavorable variance is forecasted primarily due to unearned income from flood recovery works funded by –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DRFA for flood recovery approx. \$14.4 million.</li> <li>Local Roads and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) phase 4 approx. \$439,000.</li> </ul>

Contributions	An unfavorable variance of \$463K is reported mainly due to the Birchip Netball Courts' unsuccessful insurance claim. Additional income received for administration support received under the Essential Services and Volunteers Fund has reduced the overall unfavorable result.	Unfavorable variance forecasted primarily due to the Birchip Netball Courts' unsuccessful insurance claim of approx. \$500,000.
Other income	Unfavorable variance of \$19K is mainly attributed to interest income on investments not received as investments being redeemed for working capital. This has been partially offset by fuel tax credits; funding received from the Department of Transport and Planning for the LED Transformation project and reimbursements from community groups leasing Council properties for utility expenses.	Unfavorable variance forecasted due to lower-than-anticipated interest income on investments not received, as investments being redeemed primarily to fund flood works until Council receives the grant funding.
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Employee costs	Favorable variance to date of \$121K due to internal staff associated with flood recovery works being capitalised along with minor vacancies within the organisation and vacant positions not filled.	Favorable variance forecasted due to vacancies.
Materials and services	An unfavorable variance of approximately \$141K is mainly due to unbudgeted external consultants hired, outweighing savings in other areas.	Unfavorable variance forecasted mainly due to unbudgeted external consultants costing approx. \$693,000 and membership fee savings towards Wimmera Southern Mallee Development costing approx. \$65,000.
Depreciation and Amortization	Depreciation for the period is over budget due to the capitalisation of assets at year end.	Unfavorable variance forecasted due to depreciation charge on assets capitalised at year end.
Right of use assets	Staff vacancies have led to fewer vehicles being required resulting in a favorable variance.	Favorable variance forecasted as staff vacancies have led to fewer vehicles being hired.

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Finance costs	Interest on light vehicles leased is close to YTD budget	Favorable variance in lines with right of use assets.
Other expenses	Unfavorable variance of approximately \$55K due to Council contributions towards Wimmera Southern Mallee Council Alliance Group, Safer Together grant obligations, Birchip Community specifically for Ray Neville Silo Art as part of the Tourism Business Innovation grant obligations.	Unfavourable variance of \$98K due to Council contributions towards Wimmera Southern Mallee Council Alliance Group, Safer Together grant obligations, Birchip Community specifically for Ray Neville Silo Art as part of the Tourism Business Innovation grant obligations as well as increased audit fees, mayor and councillor allowances.

**BALANCE SHEET AS AT DECEMBER 2025**

<b>Detail</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Assets</b>	
Trade and other receivables	These have increased due to rates being raised in August 2025. Forecasted to reduce as rate revenue receipts are anticipated.
Cash and cash equivalents	Cash and cash equivalents stand at \$2.701million, which when compared to year ended 30 June 2025 decreased by \$427K.
Other financial assets	Reduced due to investments being redeemed for working capital requirements.
Other assets	Forecasted to change due to prepayments at year end.
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	Adjusted for depreciation, and capital expenditure to date is included as work in progress. Forecasted to increase to include year-end capitalisation.
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Trade and other payables	These have decreased by approximately \$1.796 million as credit and payroll accruals recorded at year end as well as creditors due post year end have been paid.
Trust funds and deposits	Includes the fire services levy raised that will be payable to the State Government.
Contract and other liabilities	Increased due to external grants received including – Roads to Recovery \$309K and Regional Workers Accommodation (Cabins) \$1.5million.
Provisions	A decrease due to payout of Long Service Leave (approximately \$71.6K) netted off by YTD accruals.
Lease liabilities	No change.
<b>Equity</b>	
Accumulated surplus	Adjusted for last year's surplus and year-to-date earnings.
Reserves	No change.

**STATEMENT OF CAPITAL WORKS AS AT DECEMBER 2025**

<b>Detail</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
Land and land improvements	Minor unfavorable variance due to no budget allocated for FY2026.
Building improvements	Favorable variance as items under building improvements and replacement of public toilet facility at Watchem Park are being progressed as per timeline.
Plant and equipment	Favorable variance as the heavy plant and fleet strategy as agreed in budget development process is in progress.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Roads	Favorable variance majorly due to works including flood works now being under procurement phase and to commence construction soon.
Footpaths and cycleways	Favorable variance due to program being developed.
Drainage	Favorable variance due to program still under development.
Recreational, leisure and community facilities	Favorable variance due to the delay in the delivery of major projects such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aquatic Renewals, where priority projects are being finalised.</li> <li>• Tiny Towns, being in progress in Berriwillock, Nandaly, Nullawil and Watchem.</li> <li>• Birchip Netball Court Remediation, not going ahead due to unsuccessful insurance outcome.</li> </ul>
Parks, open space and streetscapes	Favorable variance caused due to - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay in delivery of major projects such as Septic Replacements at Watchem and Wooroonook which commence construction in February 2026.</li> <li>• Regional Workers Accommodation (Cabins) is progressing as per the timelines while other projects are in the procurement or final completion stages.</li> </ul>
Aerodromes	Favorable variance due to projects still in the development phase.

**RELEVANT LAW**

The reports are consistent with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

**RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS**

Council adopted the budget for FY2025-26 on 18 June 2025.

**OPTIONS**

Not applicable.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Not applicable.

**INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Not applicable.

**COLLABORATION**

The attached reports and comments have been prepared in collaboration with various Council officers.

**FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

The reports provide a snapshot of Council's financial performance for the second quarter of the year, noting that there is no impact on the adopted budget.

**REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL PLANS AND POLICIES**

Not applicable.

**COUNCIL PLANS AND POLICIES**

The report is an opportunity for Council to compare its financial performance against its annual budget and is in accordance with its Council Plan 2025-2029 commitment to manage its budgets responsibly to achieve long-term financial sustainability.

**TRANSPARENCY OF COUNCIL DECISIONS**

Quarterly financial reporting ensures Council and the Buloke community are aware of the financial implications of decisions and actions. Reporting Council's financial position allows Council to monitor and respond to financial risk.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

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

***Attachments:***

1. Attachment 8.3.1.1 - Quarterly Financial Statement Dec 2025
2. Attachment 8.3.1.2 - Capital Works Statement Dec 2025

## 8.4 ORGANISATIONAL REPORTS

Nil.

## 8.5 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

### 8.5.1 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

**Name:** Cr Bruce Stafford

**Date:** 4 December 2025 - 4 February 2026

**Meetings Attended:**

Date	Meeting / Event
09/12/2025	Meeting with Traveller's Rest Committee
09/12/2025	Charlton Hall Discussion
15/12/2025	CEO/Councillor Update – <i>Via Teams</i>
16/12/2025	Charlton Forum
17/12/2025	Council Meeting – <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>
23/12/2025	Charlton Fire Community Information Session
22/01/2026	Australian Citizenship Ceremony – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
22/01/2026	Buloke Australia Day Awards – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
26/01/2026	Charlton Australia Day Ceremony
02/02/2026	Charlton Park Committee
04/02/2026	Councillor Briefing – <i>Sea Lake Senior Citizens</i>

**Name:** Cr Charmaine Delaney

**Date:** 4 December 2025 - 4 February 2026

**Meetings Attended:**

Date	Meeting / Event
07/12/2025	Watchem Town Christmas Party
09/12/2025	Charlton Hall Discussion
10/12/2025	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting – <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>
14/12/2025	Donald 2000 Christmas Party
15/12/2025	Wycheproof P-12 College Presentation Night
16/12/2025	Donald High School Awards Presentation Night
17/12/2025	Council Meeting – <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>
20/12/2025	VRI Hall Christmas Carols
22/01/2026	Australian Citizenship Ceremony – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
22/01/2026	Buloke Australia Day Awards – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
26/01/2026	Donald 2000 Australia Day

04/02/2026	Councillor Briefing – <i>Sea Lake Senior Citizens</i>
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**Name:** Cr Bernadette Hogan

**Date:** 4 December 2025 - 4 February 2026

**Meetings Attended:**

Date	Meeting / Event
10/12/2025	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting – <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>
17/12/2025	Council Meeting – <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>
22/01/2026	Australian Citizenship Ceremony – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
22/01/2026	Buloke Australia Day Awards – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
26/01/2026	Australia Day Breakfast – <i>Birchip</i>
02/02/2026	Advance Sea Lake Meeting – <i>Sea Lake</i>
04/02/2026	Councillor Briefing – <i>Sea Lake Senior Citizens</i>

Congratulations to the winners of the Birchip Australia Day awards, Maurice Hogan (Citizen of the Year), Tylah Haslam (Young Citizen of the Year), and Birchip Harness Racing Club (Event of the Year).

**Name:** Cr Alan Getley

**Date:** 4 December 2025 - 4 February 2026

**Meetings Attended:**

Date	Meeting / Event
12/12/2025	Advance Sea Lake Inc. Christmas Street Party – <i>Sea Lake</i>
17/12/2025	Council Meeting – <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>
22/01/2026	Australian Citizenship Ceremony – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
22/01/2026	Buloke Australia Day Awards – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
26/01/2026	Australia Day Awards – <i>Culgoa</i>
26/01/2026	Australia Day Awards – <i>Sea Lake</i>
02/02/2026	Advance Sea Lake Meeting – <i>Sea Lake</i>
04/02/2026	Councillor Briefing – <i>Sea Lake Senior Citizens</i>

**Name:** Cr Stephen Barratt

**Date:** 4 December 2025 - 4 February 2026

**Meetings Attended:**

Date	Meeting / Event
09/12/2025	Charlton Hall Discussion
10/12/2025	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting – <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>
15/12/2025	CEO/Councillor Update – <i>Via Teams</i>

17/12/2025	Council Meeting – <i>Wycheproof Supper Room</i>
18/12/2025	Men’s Shed Wycheproof Christmas Function
22/01/2026	Australian Citizenship Ceremony – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
22/01/2026	Buloke Australia Day Awards – <i>Charlton Park Community Complex</i>
26/01/2026	Australia Day Awards – <i>Wycheproof</i>

## 9 OTHER BUSINESS

### 9.1 NOTICES OF MOTION

#### 9.1.1 SUNSHINE REGIONAL LINK CROSSOVERS

**Author's Title:** Cr Alan Getley

**File No:** GO/09/01

**Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029**

**Strategic Objective:** Council leadership and engagement

Advocacy and partnering to deliver priorities

#### PURPOSE

The following Notice of Motion is for the purpose of the action of Council to acknowledge and write to the Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Jacinta Allan and Local Victorian members of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly to raise concerns regarding the removal of the Sunshine Regional Rail Links.

#### SUMMARY

By 2050 the freight task is predicted to triple, and by 2030 Melbourne is forecast to be the biggest city in Australia. Congestion within Melbourne is now a major factor and the cost of using Victoria's toll road system continues to climb well above CPI.

More than one in five vehicles on Melbourne's toll roads is now a heavy vehicle, this trend is not predicted to decrease. The challenge of moving this freight throughout Victoria whilst keeping people safe, keeping within designated emissions, and providing a liveable state will be a challenge over the next decades.

The increase in High Productivity Freight Vehicles in Victoria is predicted to increase. Victoria needs a fit for purpose rail freight system. An efficient rail system with complementary infrastructure is vital for Victoria and Australia's economic prosperity.

The Sunshine Super Hub is part of Victoria's Big Build of projects and is jointly funded by the Federal and Victorian Governments. Works are expected to begin in 2026 and be completed in 2030.

As part of the Sunshine Super Hub development, it is proposed that two Sunshine Regional Rail Link Crossovers would be removed. Rail Freight would primarily be diverted an additional 47 kilometres via Geelong. This would increase train transit and cycle times and incur additional expenses in crewing and fuel costs. The removal of these crossovers would have a detrimental impact on rail freight in Victoria, increasing rail costs and driving more freight to road.

#### MOTION

That Council:

1. Writes to the Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Jacinta Allan and Local Victorian members of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly to raise concerns regarding the removal of the Sunshine regional rail links.
2. Notes the Mayor has signed a joint letter of Mayors to the Premier regarding the removal of the Sunshine Regional Rail Link Crossovers.

**MOVED: Cr Alan Getley**

**SECONDED: Cr Stephen Barratt**

**CARRIED.**

**(R/26/6)**

**Attachments:** Nil

## 9.1.2 CHARLTON CFA FIRE STATION REPLACEMENT

**Author's Title:** Cr Bruce Stafford

**File No:** GO/09/01

### **Relevance to Council Plan 2025 - 2029**

**Strategic Objective:** Council leadership and engagement  
Advocacy and partnering to deliver priorities

### **PURPOSE**

The following Notice of Motion seeks to formally advocate to the Minister for Emergency Services for immediate funding to enable construction of a fit-for-purpose facility that meets current operational, safety, and inclusion standards and supports the long-term sustainability of the Charlton CFA brigade.

### **SUMMARY**

The Charlton CFA fire station was constructed approximately 95 years ago and was designed for significantly smaller appliances and very different operational requirements. While the building has served the community for many decades, it is now no longer capable of accommodating modern CFA vehicles or meeting contemporary emergency service standards.

A new CFA appliance delivered to the Charlton brigade around five fire seasons ago does not fit within the existing station. As an interim arrangement, the appliance is currently housed at the captain's business premises rather than at the fire station, resulting in additional travel time for volunteers and delays in emergency response.

In addition, the station lacks suitable facilities for female volunteers and provides substandard amenities for male members. These deficiencies create barriers to volunteer participation and are inconsistent with contemporary expectations around safety, inclusion, and volunteer wellbeing.

Land has already been acquired for the purpose of constructing a new Charlton CFA fire station.

*Councillor Alan Getley declared a material conflict of interest in relation to item 9.1.2. - Charlton CFA Fire Station Replacement due to providing consulting and appraisal services for the land and left the meeting.*

*Cr Alan Getley left the meeting at 7:27 pm.*

### **MOTION**

That Council:

1. Notes that the Charlton Country Fire Authority (CFA) operates from a fire station that is approximately 95 years old and is no longer fit for purpose.
2. Notes that a modern CFA appliance delivered to the Charlton brigade approximately five fire seasons ago cannot be properly accommodated within the existing fire station due to building constraints.
3. Notes that, as a result, the fire truck is currently housed at the captain's business premises rather than at the fire station, adding minutes to emergency response times.
4. Notes that the existing station lacks appropriate amenities for volunteers, including the absence of suitable facilities for female members and substandard facilities for male members.

5. Recognises the critical role of CFA volunteers in protecting the Charlton community and surrounding district, and the importance of providing safe, functional, and inclusive infrastructure to support effective emergency response, training, and volunteer recruitment and retention.
6. Requests that Council formally write to the Minister for Emergency Services, The Hon. Vicki Ward as a matter of urgency seeking immediate funding for the construction of a new Charlton CFA fire station on land already acquired for that purpose.
7. Requests that a copy of Council's correspondence to the Minister for Emergency Services, The Hon. Vicki Ward, also be provided for information to the Local Victorian members of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly and the Federal Minister for Emergency Management, Hon Kristy McBain MP.

**MOVED: Cr Bruce Stafford**

**SECONDED: Cr Stephen Barratt**

**CARRIED.**

**(R/26/7)**

*Cr Alan Getley returned to the meeting at 7:32 pm.*

**Attachments:** Nil

## 9.2 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

### Cr Charmaine Delaney:

Flagpoles at Donald Office – Community members are questioning who is responsible for deciding the installation and placement of the Australian flag and flagpoles at the Donald office.

Unanswered Road Grading Request – A resident has requested a road be graded but has received no response from Council and is seeking follow-up.

Rates Notice Barcode Issue – The Donald Post Office has reported that some barcodes on new rates notices are not scanning correctly, creating additional manual processing and delays. A request has been made for Council to investigate.

Speed Limit Concern – Wood Street, Donald – Residents are requesting a reduction in the 50 km/h speed limit due to safety concerns, particularly for elderly pedestrians crossing the road.

Responsibility for the Richardson River – Community members are seeking clarification on who is responsible for managing the Richardson River, as advice from the Water Catchment Authority and the Shire appears inconsistent.

Industrial Site Drainage – Donald – Ongoing flooding at the Donald industrial site has been raised multiple times without acknowledgement or response. A resident is seeking communication and a future action plan from the Shire.

## 9.3 URGENT BUSINESS

Nil.

## 9.4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Council received a Joint Letter, and in order to consider this item, Council must first resolve to accept the correspondence as Any Other Business.

*Councillor Bruce Stafford declared a general conflict of interest in relation to the Joint Letter being brought forward in 9.4. Any Other Business due to the lead petitioner being my brother and left the meeting. Cr Bruce Stafford left the meeting at 7:36pm.*

*Councillor Alan Getley declared a general conflict of interest in relation to the Joint Letter being brought forward in 9.4. Any Other Business due to being an adjoining property owner and left the meeting. Cr Alan Getley left the meeting at 7:36pm.*

Cr Bernadette Hogan advised that given that two Conflicts of Interest were declared for this matter, Council was unable to maintain a quorum of a majority of Councillors and therefore the meeting must proceed to Item 10. Meeting Close.

*Cr Bruce Stafford returned to the meeting at 7:37pm.*

*Cr Alan Getley returned to the meeting at 7:37pm.*

**9.5 MATTERS WHICH MAY EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC**

Nil.

**10 MEETING CLOSE**

Meeting closed at 7:37pm.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next Council Meeting will be held in Wycheproof Hall Supper Room on 18 March 2026 at 7:00pm.