

# Minutes

## Special Meeting of Council

Held at 10:00 am, Wednesday 8 May 2024  
Towong Shire Council Office  
32 Towong Street, Tallangatta

### **Our Community Vision**

Towong Shire will be the ideal place to be: welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities with quality facilities and services.

This information is available in alternative formats on request

**Minutes for the Special Meeting of Council held at  
32 Towong Street, Tallangatta, Victoria  
on Wednesday 8 May 2024 commenced at 10:00 am**

### Commonly Used Acronyms

Abbreviation	Title
Council Officers	
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DIE	Director Infrastructure and Environment
DCP	Director Community and Planning
DCOD	Director Corporate and Organisational Development
MF	Manager Finance
SAE	Senior Asset Engineer
Government/Organisation	
CH	Corryong Health (formerly Upper Murray Health and Community Services)
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DJSIR	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
GMW	Goulburn Murray Water
HRGLN	Hume Region Local Government Network
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
NECMA	North East Catchment Management Authority
NERPEN	North East Regional Procurement Excellence Network
NEW	North East Water
NEWRRG	North East Waste and Resource Recovery Group
RCV	Rural Councils Victoria
RDA	Regional Development Australia
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
THS	Tallangatta Health Service
VGC	Victorian Grants Commission

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The Mayor declared the meeting open, the time being 10:51 am.

The delayed start was due to allow for Councillor only time.

## 1 Opening Prayer

The Mayor Read the opening Prayer:

“Almighty God, we ask that you be present at this meeting to assist us in our service to the Community through Local Government.

We pray that our decisions will be wise and taken with goodwill and clear conscience.

Amen.”

## 2 Councillor and Officer Presence at the Meeting

### Councillor Attendance

Crs Whitehead, Anderson, Scales, Wortmann and Dikschei

<b>Officer Attendance:</b>	<b>Title:</b>
Ms Gadd	Director Infrastructure and Environment
Ms Taylor	Acting Chief Executive Officer
Mr Florence	Acting Director Community and Planning

## 3 Apologies and Granting of Leave of Absence

Nil.

## 4 Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

Section 130 of the Act requires that a ‘Relevant person’ (which means a person who is a Councillor, a member of a delegated committee who is not a Councillor or a member of Council staff) disclose any conflict of interest in the manner required by Council’s Governance Rules and exclude themselves from the decision making process in relation to the matter including any discussion or vote on the matter at any Council meeting.

Council’s *Governance Rules* state as follows:

## **A2 Obligations with regards to conflict of interest**

*Councillors, members of delegated committee, and Council staff are required to:*

- a. Avoid all situations which may give rise to conflicts of interest;*
- b. Identify any conflicts of interest; and*
- c. Disclose or declare all conflicts of interest.*

## **A3 Disclosure of a conflict of interest at a Council meeting**

*A Councillor who has a conflict of interest in a matter being considered at a Council meeting at which he or she:*

*A3.1 is present must disclose that conflict of interest by explaining the nature of the conflict of interest to those present at the Council meeting immediately before the matter is considered; or*

*A3.2 intends to be present must disclose that conflict of interest by providing to the Chief Executive Officer before the Council meeting commences a written notice:*

*A3.2.1 advising of the conflict of interest;*

*A3.2.2 explaining the nature of the conflict of interest; and*

*A3.2.3 detailing, if the nature of the conflict of interest involves a Councillor's relationship with or a gift from another person, the:*

- a. name of the other person;*
- b. nature of the relationship with that other person or the date of receipt, value and type of gift received from the other person; and*
- c. nature of that other person's interest in the matter, and then immediately before the matter is considered at the meeting announcing to those present that he or she has a conflict of interest and that a written notice has been given to the Chief Executive Officer under this sub-Rule.*

*The Councillor must, in either event, leave the Council meeting immediately after giving the explanation or making the announcement (as the case may be) and not return to the meeting until after the matter has been disposed of.*

There were no declarations of any conflicts of interest.

## 5 Organisational Improvement

### 5.1 Draft Budget 2024-25 (DCOD-06/02/0085)

#### Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Ms Narelle Taylor, Director Corporate and Organisational Development.

At the time of preparation of this report, the officer did not have a general or material conflict of interest in any matter to which the report or advice relates.

#### Purpose of Report:

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the *Draft Budget 2024/25* for Council's consideration to release for public exhibition.

#### Summary:

The *Draft Budget 2024/25* provides for the ongoing delivery of quality facilities and services to residents, including a focus on upgrading, repairing and maintaining our roads and bridges network with \$4.7 million allocated to this key infrastructure.

We have also included a restructuring of our Early Years teams to ensure we are able to deliver quality Kinder, Childcare and Maternal and Child Health services to our communities.

We have recommended the proposed rate increase of 2.75%, adhering to the cap set by the State Government under the Fair Go Rates system. With the current strain of the increasing cost of living, this is deemed to be the appropriate increase affordable to residents, whilst noting that inflation is significantly higher, and presents real challenges to the future sustainability of Council.

#### Recommendation:

That:

1. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make the *Draft Budget 2024/25* available for public inspection and invite public submissions, with submissions closing Tuesday 25 June 2024; and
2. At the Council meeting on 26 June 2024:
  - a. Consider any submissions in relation to the *Draft Budget 2024/25*;
  - b. Hear any person or their Representative in support of their submission; and
  - c. Consider the adoption of the *Draft Budget 2024/25*

**Attachment:**

1. Draft Budget 2024-25 [5.1.1 - 65 pages]

**Background/History:**

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires that a Council must prepare and adopt a Budget for each financial year and the subsequent three financial years by 30 June each year. The budget must give effect to the Council Plan and contain the financial statements, services and initiatives to be funded, the prescribed indicators and measures of service performance, the total amount to be raised by rates and charges, descriptions of the rates to be applied, and any other information prescribed by the regulations. The Budget must be developed in accordance with the financial management principles outlined by the *Local Government Act 2020* as well as its *Community Engagement Policy*.

A *Draft Budget 2024/25* has been prepared for consideration by Council, based on ongoing community consultation aligned to its *Community Engagement Policy* and in alignment to the vision outlined by the *Council Plan 2021-2025*.

The following key high-level considerations have been incorporated in the preparation of the *Draft Budget 2024/25*:

- Resources required to complete the strategic initiatives contained in the *Council Plan 2021-2025*;
- Adequate cash reserves to meet Council commitments over the next ten years;
- Reduced service delivery in Swimming Pools and Tourism, due to financial constraints ; and
- A rate cap of 2.75% for the 2024/25 financial year as set by the Minister for Local Government.

**Relevant Law (s.9(2)(a)):**

The *Local Government Act 2020*

**Options – Best Outcomes for the Community (s.9(2)(b)):**

Council could choose to vary revenue and expenditure levels from proposed levels. Revenue levels have been proposed to balance the community's capacity to pay for rates and services with Council's ability to cover its costs as inflation increases the cost of doing business. Expenditure is comprised of spending on projects which are grant funded and spending on business-as-usual facilities and services, which are to

be maintained at current levels.

### **Sustainability Implications (s.9(2)(c)):**

The parameters of the *Draft Budget 2024/25* have been set to balance community needs with ongoing financial sustainability. Council's financial sustainability has improved following ongoing efforts to contain costs and obtain sustainable revenue levels, however longer-term sustainability remains a challenge in the light of the costs of renewing the Shire's aging civil infrastructure.

### **Community Engagement (s.9(2)(d)):**

The *Draft Budget 2024/25* has considered feedback received through ongoing community engagement and particularly the consultation regarding the *Council Plan 2021-2025*.

In releasing the *Draft Budget 2024/25* for exhibition and submissions, Council provides a further mechanism for community members to provide input into future spending and revenue raising activities.

### **Innovation and Continuous Improvement (s.9(2)(e)):**

The *Draft Budget 2024/25* includes a major capital works program which invests in our civil infrastructure to support the Shire in its future growth and vibrancy.

### **Collaboration (s.9(2)(f)):**

The *Draft Budget 2024/25* includes support for several ongoing shared services and initiatives, including shared services with Indigo Shire Council for rates services and the development of a joint technology platform across Towong, Indigo and Alpine Shire Councils.

### **Financial Viability/Budget Impact (s.9(2)(g)):**

The *Draft Budget 2024/25* signals our ongoing reliance on external funding sources to meet community expectations for the services we deliver. Further it highlights our inability to continue to operate with such a significant operating deficit.

### **Regional, State and National Plans and Policies (s.9(2)(h)):**

Several major initiatives contained in the *Draft Budget 2024/25* are funded by State and Federal grant programs, in alignment to associated State and Federal plans and strategies.



**Council Plans and Policies:**

The activities funded by the *Draft Budget 2024/25* are in alignment with the strategies outlined in the *Council Plan 2021-2025*.

**Transparency of Decision (s.9(2)(i)) :**

It is the officer's view that it is appropriate to consider this matter in a Council meeting that is open to the public.

**Risk Assessment:**

The Budget for the 2024/25 financial year demonstrates a significant deficit in the operating result. Whilst this is able to be funded in the next year by cash reserves, this is not sustainable. Into the future, the ability of Council to continue offering the same level of services and simultaneously maintain and upgrade aging infrastructure is at risk.

**Officer's View:**

The *Draft Budget 2024/25* has been developed in alignment to legislative requirements and the *Council Plan 2021-2025*, and finds a good balance between being financially prudent while continuing to deliver for residents across the municipality.

**Council Resolution:**

**CR SCALES**

**CR WORTMANN**

**THAT:**

- 1. THE DRAFT BUDGET BE AMENDED FOR REMOVAL OF \$3.6 MILLION FOR COLAC COLAC CARAVAN PARK WORKS, WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IF LEASE AGREEMENTS ARE FAVOURABLE, A REVISED BUDGET MAY NEED TO OCCUR;**
- 2. COUNCIL REQUESTS THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO INITIATE A ROLLING REVIEW OF COST SAVINGS IN THE OPERATIONAL BUDGET;**
- 3. THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER BE AUTHORISED TO MAKE THE AMENDED *DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25* AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION AND INVITE PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS, WITH SUBMISSIONS CLOSING TUESDAY 25 JUNE 2024;**
- 4. AT THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 26 JUNE 2024:**
  - a. CONSIDER ANY SUBMISSIONS IN RELATION TO THE *DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25*;**
  - b. HEAR ANY PERSON OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVE IN SUPPORT OF THEIR SUBMISSION; AND**
  - c. CONSIDER THE ADOPTION OF THE *DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25*; AND**
- 5. THE STAFF BE THANKED FOR DEVELOPING THE *DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25*.**

**CARRIED**

## **6 Closure of Meeting**

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting closed, the time being 11:05 am.