

Minutes

Special Meeting of Council

Held at 10:00am, Wednesday 14 May 2025
Council Chamber, Tallangatta Council Office
32 Towong Street, Tallangatta, Victoria

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 14 May 2025 commenced at 10:00am**

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 10:16 am.

1 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, Wortmann, Tolsher and Pitman

Officer Attendance:	Title:
Ms Phelps	Chief Executive Officer
Mr Florence	Director Community and Planning
Ms Taylor	Director Corporate and Organisational Development

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 disclosures of any conflicts of interest.

5 Organisational Improvement

5.1 Draft Budget 2025/2026 (DCOD)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr Dylan Howard, Manager Finance.

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 2025/26* for Council's consideration to release for public exhibition.

Summary:

The *Draft Budget 2025/26* provides for the ongoing delivery of quality facilities and services to residents. To achieve this, we have prioritised the renewal and maintenance of existing assets, ensuring our roads, bridges, parks and community facilities remain safe, functional and fit for purpose. By investing in asset upkeep now, we are supporting the liveability of our towns and rural areas and avoiding higher costs to replace assets further down the track.

The Draft budget includes an increase in Long Day Care fees to \$20/day. In our recommendation to Council to set fees at this level, we considered cost of living pressures as well as the following factors:

1. Very small to nil increases across our services over the past five years. Only one centre has had one increase of \$5/day in five years. The decision not to increase fees previously had been made in light of financial pressures at a time of very high inflation.
2. Significant increase in legislation, quality standards and reporting in the Early Years industry.
3. Wait lists across almost all centres, and a desire from Councillors to be able to increase capacity and provide quality services for local families.
4. The Child Care Subsidies applicable that will significantly reduce the impact of this increase, with more than 50% of our families facing an out-of-pocket increase of \$4/day or less.
5. The previously-held position of Councillors that the direct costs of providing this service should not be a burden on ratepayer funds.

The fee increase is recommended to allow for greater resources in the centres that have wait lists and expand the places available for children, as well as greater

resources to ensure adequate supervision, leadership and development of staff, ensuring compliant, good quality services are being provided for our families. Fee increases will be communicated to families along with the reasons for this increase, and information about available options for families facing financial difficulty.

We have recommended the proposed rate increase of 3%, adhering to the cap set by the State Government under the Fair Go Rates system. This increase is responsible given the cost-of-living challenges being faced by residents.

Recommendation:

That:

1. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make the *Draft Budget 2025/26* available for public inspection and invite public submissions, with submissions closing Wednesday 11 June 2025; and
2. At the Council meeting on 25 June 2025:
 - a. Consider any submissions in relation to the *Draft Budget 2025/26*;
 - b. Consider the adoption of the *Draft Budget 2025/26*.

Attachment:

1. Towong Shire Council Draft Budget 2025-26 Draft [5.1.1 - 64 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 2025/26* 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*.

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 2025/26* 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)):

In releasing the *Draft Budget 2025/26* for exhibition and submissions, Council encourages residents to provide feedback. Commentary regarding specific engagement with our families using our Long Day Care services has been provided above.

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

The *Draft Budget 2025/26* includes a manageable capital works program which focuses on investment in our civil infrastructure, particularly roads and maintenance to support the Shire in its future growth and vibrancy.

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

The *Draft Budget 2025/26* includes support for several ongoing shared services and initiatives, including shared services with Indigo Shire Council for rates and Building services.

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

The *Draft Budget 2025/26* signals our ongoing reliance on external funding sources to meet community expectations for the infrastructure services we deliver. In the absence of, or reduction in these funding streams we acknowledge that we cannot deliver the full level of infrastructure and services that the community wishes for. We also acknowledge that continually expanding the infrastructure assets of Council also increases the annual expenditure for running costs, repairs and maintenance, and, at the end of the assets useful life, replacement costs.

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

Several major initiatives contained in the *Draft Budget 2025/26* are funded by State and Federal grant programs, in alignment to associated State and Federal plans and strategies. Council have prioritised those services and infrastructure expenditures that are subject to grant funding to ensure that we maximise the use of grant funding available.

Council Plans and Policies:

The activities funded by the *Draft Budget 2025/26* 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 2025/26 financial year demonstrates a surplus in the operating result. While this allows for investment in capital works, the underlying result is a small deficit and is a key measure for Council to aim for a break-even position.

Officer's View:

The *Draft Budget 2025/26* has been developed in alignment to legislative requirements, accounting standards and the *Council Plan*, and finds a good balance between being financially prudent while continuing to deliver for residents across the municipality.

Council Resolution:

**CR ANDERSON
CR TOLSHER**

THAT:

- 1. THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER BE AUTHORISED TO MAKE THE *DRAFT BUDGET 2025/26* AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION AND INVITE PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS, WITH SUBMISSIONS CLOSING WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE 2025; AND**
- 2. AT THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 25 JUNE 2025:**
 - a. CONSIDER ANY SUBMISSIONS IN RELATION TO THE *DRAFT BUDGET 2025/26*; AND**
 - b. CONSIDER THE ADOPTION OF THE *DRAFT BUDGET 2025/26*.**

CARRIED

5.2 Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/2029 (DCOD)

Disclosure of Interests (S.130):

This report was prepared by Mr Dylan Howard, Manager Finance.

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:

This report provides an overview of the *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* for Council's consideration to release for public exhibition.

Summary:

Development of a Revenue and Rating Plan is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2020, and establishes the revenue raising framework within which Council funds its operations. Revenue sources include rates and charges, statutory fees, user fees, grants and other income such as interest on funds held in bank accounts. A *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* has been prepared and we are seeking approval for the Plan to be placed on public exhibition.

Recommendation:

That:

1. The Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make the *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/29* available for public inspection and invite public submissions, with submissions closing Wednesday 11 June 2025; and
2. At the Council meeting on 25 June 2025:
 - a. Consider any submissions in relation to the *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/29*; and
 - b. Consider the adoption of the *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025/29*.

Attachment:

1. Draft Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-29 [5.2.1 - 19 pages]

Background/History:

The Local Government Act 2020 requires that a Council must prepare and adopt a Revenue and Rating Plan to cover a minimum period of four years following each Council election. The Revenue and Rating Plan establishes the revenue raising framework within which Council funds its operations, including the principles and considerations underlying the distribution of rates, charges and fees to property owners and users of Council services.

A *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* has been drafted in alignment with Council's current revenue and rating strategies. The actual quantum of revenue to be raised is then determined in the Council Budget.

The two most significant sources of funding for Council are grants and rates, which comprise 48% and 33% of annual income within Council's proposed *Proposed Budget 2025/2026* respectively. Rates provide a reliable foundation of funding from which Council can support the delivery of services and infrastructure, while grants can fluctuate considerably from year to year.

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

The *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 and also complies with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1989, which still retains provisions in relation to how Councils may raise and apply rates and charges.

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

Council could choose to vary its funding mechanisms. Funding mechanisms have been proposed in order to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of rates, charges and fees across ratepayer, residents and other users of Council services and facilities.

While the *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* covers the period 2025-2029, it is noted that the Council may choose to vary the Plan by resolution at any time if considered necessary.

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

The *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* strategies are designed to balance community needs with Council's ongoing financial sustainability.

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

The development of the *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* is being released for the community to provide feedback.

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

The *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* expands on the information currently available to the community to explain how Council funds its operations, providing further transparency and understanding as well as opportunity for input.

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

The *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* is based on the Model Revenue and Rating Plan provided by Local Government Victoria, which was developed through collaboration with Councils across the state.

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

The *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* is a key instrument outlining how Council funds its operations, and provides the framework underpinning the income sources outlined in Council's Budget and Long Term Financial Plan. It is noted that grants are a major component of Council's funding and may fluctuate considerably from year to year.

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

The *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* outlines the importance of grants, from the State and Federal governments, in funding the operations of Council, which in turn may be determined by relevant State and Federal plans and policies.

Council Plans and Policies:

The *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* is a key element of Council's integrated planning framework and provides the basis for funding Council's Budget and the Council Plan.

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 *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* highlights the importance of grant funding in supporting Council's operations, and notes that grants may fluctuate considerably from year to year. There is some risk to Council being able to maintain essential operations, renew aging infrastructure and support ongoing community needs given the uncertainty of the continuation and quantum of all grant funding. Ongoing advocacy is essential to providing Council with further financial certainty.

Officer's View:

The *Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029* has been developed in accordance with legislative requirements and Council's current revenue and rating strategies. It is the Officer's view that the Plan be released for public exhibition.

Council Resolution:

**CR PITMAN
CR ANDERSON**

THAT:

- 1. THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER BE AUTHORISED TO MAKE THE *PROPOSED REVENUE AND RATING PLAN 2025/29* AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION AND INVITE PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS, WITH SUBMISSIONS CLOSING WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE 2025; AND**
- 2. AT THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 25 JUNE 2025:**
 - a. CONSIDER ANY SUBMISSIONS IN RELATION TO THE *PROPOSED REVENUE AND RATING PLAN 2025/29*; AND**
 - b. CONSIDER THE ADOPTION OF THE *PROPOSED REVENUE AND RATING PLAN 2025/29*.**

CARRIED

6 Closure of Meeting

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting closed, the time being 10:28 am.

Confirmed