

Finance and Operations Committee

Agenda

Date: Wednesday 9 March 2022

Time: 6pm

**Venue: Civic Centre (Council Meeting Room)
13 Mair Street, Benalla**

The *COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Act 2020* enables councils to hold meetings electronically. This measure is intended to ensure the safety of members of the public, Councillors and Council staff.

The Council Meeting Room has limited capacity for public attendance. Accordingly, members of the public are encouraged to watch the live broadcast of the meeting at www.benalla.vic.gov.au

Any person wishing to participate in Question Time in accordance with Rule 7.2 of the *Governance Rules 2020* should contact the Council by emailing council@benalla.vic.gov.au or telephoning Governance Coordinator Jessica Beaton on (03) 5760 2600.

In accordance with the Governance Rule 6.4 an audio recording will be made of the proceedings of the meeting.

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Agenda

Chair	Councillor Justin King	
Councillors	Councillor Danny Claridge	
	Councillor Peter Davis	
	Councillor Don Firth	
	Councillor Bernie Hearn (Mayor)	
	Councillor Punarji Hewa Gunaratne	
	Councillor Gail O’Brien	
In attendance	Dom Testoni	Chief Executive Officer
	Robert Barber	General Manager Corporate
	Jane Archbold	Manager Community
	Cathy Fitzpatrick	Manager Finance
	Janine McMaster	Manager People and Performance
	Adam Saddler	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability
	Jessica Beaton	Governance Coordinator

Acknowledgment of Country

We, the Benalla Rural City Council, acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to Elders from other communities who may be here today.

Apologies

Recommendation:

That the apology/ies be accepted and a leave of absence granted.

Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes have been circulated to Councillors and posted on the Council website www.benalla.vic.gov.au pending confirmation at this meeting.

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the Finance and Operations Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 16 February be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Governance Matters

This Committee Meeting is conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Benalla Rural City Council *Governance Rules 2020*.

Recording of Council Meetings

In accordance with the *Governance Rules 2020* clause 6.4 meetings of Council will be audio recorded and made available for public access, with the exception of matters identified as confidential items in the agenda.

Behaviour at Meetings

Members of the public present at a meeting must remain silent during the proceedings other than when specifically invited to address the Committee.

The Chair may remove a person from a meeting for interjecting or gesticulating offensively after being asked to desist, and the chair may cause the removal of any object or material that is deemed by the Chair to be objectionable or disrespectful.

The Chair may call a break in a meeting for either a short time, or to resume another day if the behaviour at the Council table or in the gallery is significantly disrupting the meeting.

Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, a Councillor must declare any Conflict of Interest pursuant to Section 130 of the Act in any items on this Agenda.

At the time indicated in the agenda, a Councillor with a conflict of interest in an item on that agenda must indicate they have a conflict of interest by clearly stating:

- the item for which they have a conflict of interest;
- whether their conflict of interest is general or material; and
- the circumstances that give rise to the conflict of interest.

Immediately prior to the consideration of the item in which they have a conflict of interest, a Councillor must indicate to the meeting the existence of the conflict of interest and leave the meeting.

Business

1. Public Question Time

The Council's *Governance Rules 2020* provide the opportunity for members of the public to lodge written questions of broad interest to the Council and the community.

Questions of the Council will not be allowed during any period when the Council has resolved to close the meeting in respect of a matter under section 66 (1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act).

A question may be on any matter except if it:

- is considered malicious, defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial, or objectionable in language or substance;
- relates to confidential information as defined under the Act;
- relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer; or
- relates to any other matter which the Council considers would prejudice the Council or any person.

No more than two questions will be accepted from any person at any one meeting.

All questions and answers must be as brief as possible, and no discussion may be allowed other than by Councillors for the purposes of clarification.

Like questions may be grouped together and a single answer provided.

The Chair may nominate a Councillor, the Chief Executive Officer or another member of Council staff to respond to a question.

Recommendation:

That the question(s) and answer(s) be noted.

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2. 2021/2022 Community Sponsorship Program

SF/2857

Tom Arnold – Community Development Coordinator
Jane Archbold – Manager Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents funding applications under the 2021/22 Community Sponsorship Program.

BACKGROUND

The Community Sponsorship Program enables local community groups, clubs and organisations to seek funding to increase their capacity to work in partnership with the Council and others to address local needs and enhance the local community.

The Community Sponsorship Program distributes grants up to \$500 on a monthly basis, allowing local clubs, groups and organisations the opportunity to seek funds when the need arises.

DISCUSSION

Applications for consideration under the 2021/22 Community Sponsorship Program are detailed in the table below.

Applicant	Details	Amount Requested	Proposed Assistance
Lurg Hall and Reserve Committee of Management	<p>The development of the Don McKenzie Reserve into a location for low-cost camping ground and community events is a long term project that has seen the relocation, renovation and improvement to an amenities block.</p> <p>The next phase is the ongoing conversion of the old bike shed to a camp kitchen. Further works include the building of cabinets and sinks-connection of power, installation of electricity and electric hot plate/BBQ and tank water.</p> <p>Outcomes will be the increased functionality and attractiveness for community events and as a low-cost camping location for travellers and tourists. Increased patronage will generate increased expenditure in Benalla and surrounds and help the committee with a consistent funding stream</p>	\$500	\$500

Applicant	Details	Amount Requested	Proposed Assistance
Moorngag Cemetery Trust	The Trust is planning a celebration to mark the opening of the new lawn area at the Moorngag Cemetery including rotunda, mural and storyboards. It is requesting financial support to assist in the cost of outside catering from Rotary. This cost covers light refreshments for 70 attendees, some seating, tables and a marquee.	\$500	\$500
Benalla Squash Club	As part of the Tomorrow Today Foundation's Come and Try Day the Squash Club would like to bring an inflatable court to the event to add a visual attraction to their display, plus have children and adults play on the court to give them an idea of the sport. Along with the Come and Try day, the club hope to also have the court utilised by one of the primary schools in Benalla. The funding will enable the club to finance this effort to improve the promotion of Squash.	\$500	\$500
Total		\$1,500	\$1,500

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Community

- *A healthy, Safe and resilient community*
- *A connected, involved and inclusive community*

Leadership

- *Engaged and informed community*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with the Council’s *Community Engagement Policy*, it is proposed that, due to administrative nature of the Policy, that community engagement be undertaken at the ‘Inform’ level under the International Association for Public Participation’s IAP2 public participation spectrum.

Level of Public Participation	Promise to the community	Techniques to the used
Inform	We will provide information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotion of program via media, website and social media. ▪ Program presented in public reports to the Council. ▪ Outcomes advised directly to applicants. ▪ Outcomes detailed in Annual Report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The *2021/22 Budget* allocates \$15,000 to the Community Sponsorship. To date, \$4,360 in Community Sponsorship grant funding has been allocated.

To ensure transparency and accountability, where assistance is provided in meeting the cost of Council facility hire, the payment is reflected in relevant ledger accounts via an internal transaction.

For example, if the Council agrees to meet the hire cost of the Benalla Town Hall a credit would be made to the Town Hall income ledger account and a debit made to the Community Support Program expense ledger account.

In addition, recipients of support throughout the financial year are detailed in the Annual Report.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any general or material conflicts of interest in this matter.

Recommendation:

That \$500 grants be allocated to the Lurg Hall and Reserve Committee of Management, Moorngag Cemetery Trust and Benalla Squash Club from the 2021/22 Community Sponsorship Program.

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3. Community Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2021

SF/1534

Jane Archbold – Manager Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents activity for the Community department for the quarter ended 31 December 2021.

Community and Youth Development

- The Rural Outreach Worker supported 94 community members over the quarter, comprising of 104 visits and 33 phone calls, with 47 of these being new clients. There was a higher proportion of assistance being provided to people with a disability. The main reasons community members were seeking assistance was for carers mental health issues, relationship issues, financial issues and farming concerns. Nine vouchers were distributed to those in need over the quarter. The vouchers were arranged by using community donations received from the Rotary Club and the Baptist Church.
- Community Activity and Social Isolation (CASI) Program is continuing to work on producing a directory of activities available within Benalla. This will be distributed to all households in the Benalla Rural City community in early 2022. The aim of this directory is to assist community members to reconnect and better understand all the programs, services and activities on offer in Benalla Rural City community. This will also assist the updating of the Councils *Who What Where* online services directory.
- During the quarter assistance was provided to five households (seven adults, five children and two pets) who were isolating due to COVID-19. These people received groceries and medication as required. All referrals were made from within the community (none from the Coronavirus hotline). Assistance remains available to community members seven days a week.
- The *Community Engagement Policy* and *Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit* were finalised after community consultation and presented to the Council. Two submissions were received at the close of the submission period. Submissions will be considered by the Council in February 2022.
- The Community Development Officer role was advertised, and interviews were conducted in December 2021. The successful applicant, Katie Roscoe, will commence the role in January 2022. The role will support the rollout of rural township plans and other community development programs and initiatives.
- Draft Township Plans have been developed and shared with the majority of rural townships within the municipality. The plans have been shared through Council's rural networks and through the new Benalla Rural City Council online community engagement platform, the Hive. The plans will be further supported through targeted engagement in 2022.

- Funds from the Community Infrastructure Grants (Drought Funding) Council were made available to rural communities for community events through an EOI process. The grant is to support community reconnection and mental health initiatives. Communities were very grateful for the opportunity to use the funding to support Christmas and New Year's events with some events to be staged early in 2022.
- The *Council Plan 2021-2025* and *Community Vision 2036* documents were put on public exhibition and adopted during this period following a comprehensive community consultation process.
- During this quarter Community Sponsorship Grants were awarded to Benalla Water Tower Preservation Group Inc, Benalla Men's Shed, and the Goulburn North East Arts Alliance.
- Council have engaged the services of The Hive to support a new online engagement platform. Key council staff have received training on how to use the system and three Council projects were launched in December. The platform provides an exciting opportunity for the Council and the community members to work in partnership. The Hive allows for future projects and initiatives to reach a broader audience.
- The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) L2P program had 21 learner drivers in October, 20 in November and 23 in December (27 different people). Eight young people gained their P plates over the quarter and the program was supported by 20 mentors. In line with changed reporting guidelines from the TAC the number of young people driving is now assessed on monthly basis instead of quarterly.
- On Thursday 2 December 2021 the TAC L2P program's 10 year celebrations were held at the Benalla Moira Bowls Club. The night was attended by Cr Bernie Hear (Mayor), Cr Danny Claridge, Cr Peter Davis, Cr Punarji Hewa Gunarante and Cr Gail O'Brien, the CEO, Manager Community and Community Development Coordinator. Steve Bowmaker Department of Transport Hume Director, Ellie Stringer North East L2P Partnership Officer, steering committee members, volunteer mentors and young people involved in the program were also in attendance.
- The FReeZA North East Skate Park Series event was held on 12 December with 24 young people participants. The event was for all ages allowing young people the chance to scoot, skate or BMX their way to a prize. This event was in partnership with the YMCA and held in other council areas in the North East. Competitors can compete in as many competitions as they wish, and their scores are tallied for a grand final event.
- Teen Mental Health First Aid training was held for 55 Year 11 students at Benalla P-12 College as part of the Live4Life program. The group of Year 11 students were the first group from Benalla P-12 College to complete the full Live4Life program. Students had completed junior mental health training in Year 8 and provided a chance to be part of the Live4Life crew in Year 9 and 10. Students then complete senior mental health training again in Year 11. The Year 11 senior training differs from the Year 8 junior training as the discussion of a friend in crisis is talked about in much more depth in the senior training.

- The Live4Life BBQ and Colour Run event were held in December 2021 for Year 8 Students at Benalla P-12 College. Due to restrictions, the normal celebration event at the end of the year was not held. The Benalla P-12 College Live4Life crew came up with an alternative plan and organised a BBQ (catered by Rotary) and colour run for the Year 8 students on campus. Year 8 students reported they had a great time with the crew doing an amazing job organising and running the events on the day.



Loki Cole and Warren Tucker cut the cake at L2P 10-year anniversary event.



Participant at FReeZA skating event.



Benalla P-12 Year 8 students enjoying Colour Run and BBQ activity.



Maternal and Child Health (MCH)

- Client consultations continue to be delivered face to face with relevant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Universal service recorded 37 births for the quarter, the rate increased over the Christmas period, however, is only five more than last quarter. There are currently 454 Children enrolled in the service.
- The Sleep and Settling outreach appointment hours have reduced with cancellations during the Christmas period. Sleep and Settling sessions for babies aged 6-8 months are being retried. Sleep and Settling sessions will follow on from First Time Parents Group in the future.
- First Time Parent Group continues face to face and attendance for fourth term was positive with several father's attending some sessions. The service is preparing to host a 'Father's group' with the aim to better support the fathers of enrolled families.
- Enhanced MCH hours have slightly increased with several antenatal referrals being received meaning the frequency of visits has increased.
- Staff continue to undertake online 'Infections prevention and Control' modules and, where possible, attend face to face training.

Family Services

- The Family Services team have noticed a decline in referrals over the past quarter which has impacted service/target hours. The Family Services Team Leader has liaised with The Orange Door Service System Navigator, OMFCS Alliance Coordinator, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and performance liaison in relation to these impacts. Despite this impact, The Family Services target hours are sitting at 93.33 per cent for Q2 and an overall 88.16 per cent for year to date.
- The Family Services Team have supported 29 families over the quarter.
- Vulnerable families are being seen face to face, however, COVID-19 screening is occurring before each face to face visit. Practitioners are delivering support via phone and video communications tools. Integrated Family Service team continue to work in a bubble system (one week from home, one week from the office) with no cross over in office. This is in effort to reduce exposure and impacts of transmission of COVID-19.
- A total of six families have received support from the Alliance flexible packages during the quarter.
- The Integrated Family Services team distributed gifts to Family Services and Family Liaison clients through the Benalla Community Care Giving Tree and Lurg Community Group Giving Tree donations. This saw 23 families (22 mothers, nine fathers and 68 children) receiving gifts for Christmas.
- The Family Liaison Team has supported seven families over the quarter. Family Liaison plays an integral role in supporting families in the Benalla Rural City community and works closely alongside Family Services to assess risk and complexities for support.

- Supported Playgroup finished out the year with virtual playgroup for term four as a result of funding body directives whereby only parents that had been double vaccinated were able to attend physical groups. Benalla Supported Playgroup continued with virtual groups only in order for all families involved to partake in activities. Activity packs were delivered to families with resources for planned activities and videos were live streamed and saved to the virtual platform which allowed for families to participate either in real time or at a time that better suited them. Planning for term one 2022 will commence shortly following directives from DFFH in relation to group settings. Supported Playgroup supported 12 families this quarter with a total of 14 playgroup aged children.

Aged and Disability Services

- Age and Disability Services has continued throughout the quarter meeting targets and adapting to changing guidelines issued by the department. Staff have continued to provide services with little disruption to our clients. All staff screen clients prior to their service.
- Due to COVID-19 restrictions Social Support Groups were cancelled for much of the quarter, resuming in early December 2021 as restrictions eased. During October and November staff supported clients with telephone monitoring and activity packs.
- The Staff have worked extremely hard to cover staff leave and holidays over the quarter. Domestic assistance and personal care services were over target and will cover areas that were under target for the previous quarter. Less referrals were received for home modification than anticipated.
- Aged and Disability Services staff completed First Aid training in November.
- 20 Volunteers and School Crossing supervisors continue to support the Social Support, Volunteer Transport and Meals on Wheels programs.
- Brokerage Services dropped by one third over the quarter after notifying providers of Council's intention to exit out of aged care services. This decline will no doubt continue to diminish over the remaining months of the program.
- All clients, volunteers and agencies were notified of Council's intention to exit out of services. Some concerns have been expressed, however staff have done their best to allay worries.
- Feedback was gathered from aged and disability staff to help prepare for staff transition sessions planned between January to June 2022. These sessions will assist staff to transition to the next stage in their careers such as, seeking another job, considering retirement, setting up a small business or undertaking further study.

Regional Assessment Service

- The Assessment team has continued to undertake assessments over the phone. If a client has more complex needs a face-to-face assessment is undertaken.

- The Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (HACC PYP) assessment forum was held in Wangaratta on 14 December, with five agencies from across the region attending. A report to be produced outlining present issues and efficacies in communication, promotion, intake and assessment and service delivery.
- Council was advised by DFFH that assessment funding will transfer to a new provider when other HACC PYP services transfer to a new provider at the end of June 2022. This equates to 0.2 EFT role within the assessment team. Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) assessment funding will continue until the end of June 2023. Assessment services will be remodelled into a single assessment service from July 2023. It is anticipated that additional training for existing staff will be made available to facilitate the transition into the new model.

Highlights

- Children’s Week 2021 saw Family Services partnering with Waminda Community House to distribute 120 fun filled activity packs. The number of packs created was based on historical participation numbers for Children’s Week in Benalla, with half delivered to Waminda and half kept at Benalla Community Care Family Services Office. Feedback from reception staff at Benalla Community Care noted that the packs were extremely successful and parents and children were grateful to receive them. Feedback included that due to Benalla not having had an Agricultural Show for the past two years, the packs have filled the void of show-bag type entertainment for the children. Waminda Community House has fed back that the packs have been ‘popular’ and have been taken up by children in the after school programs and picked up through their Road Side Relief program. A small number of packs were also held and distributed through safe drops to families that have been required to isolate due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025

Community

Action	December Quarter Update
With our community and key stakeholders to address some of the priorities of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023: healthy eating and active living; mental wellbeing, preventing violence and injury, and climate change and its impact on health.	Resourcing Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership and drafting of Health and Wellbeing plan workshop. Resourcing of Live4Life program, Age Friendly Benalla, FReeZA program, L2P, rural mental health events, Rural Outreach worker, Social Support Groups, Seniors Festival, Supported Playgroup, Family Liaison and Integrated Family Support program, MCH.
Act on the prevention of family violence through awareness raising, workplace policy and support for local and regional initiatives.	Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership, staff training, 16 Days of Activism, Maram training,

Action	December Quarter Update
	integral to work in community services. Family Violence reform/legislation.
Work together with key health, welfare and community organisations and networks to support better learning, development and wellbeing outcomes for community members.	Continued resourcing of the Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership Group, Benalla Youth Service Provider Network, Benalla Live4Life Partnership Group and participation in Early Years Network, North East Age Friendly Alliance, Ovens Murray Children and Family Services Alliance. Continue to provide Integrated Family Services, Maternal and Child Health Services, Family Liaison, Rural Outreach, Aged and Disability Services, Regional Assessment and Covid Emergency Relief.
Offer programs, services, activities and events that support, develop and connect community members of all abilities and lead the community in being age friendly and child and COVID safe.	Resource Accessibility Reference Group, Age Friendly Benalla Reference Group, in process of updating Community Access and Inclusion Plan and Mobility Map, implementing Age Friendly Benalla Strategy, finalising Youth Strategy, supporting Early Years Strategic Plan, offering Supported Playgroup, New Parents Group, Integrated Family Services, Family Liaison, Sleep and Settling, enhanced MCH, Regional Assessment Service, CHSP and HACC PYP, FReeZA, Live4Life programs.
Support and promote opportunities for the community to participate in a range of social, recreational, and arts and cultural programs, activities and events.	Seniors Festival activities, support Age well in Benalla Info Hub, Children’s week activities, rural community get togethers, FReeZA events and activities, Social Support Groups, Supported Playgroup, New Parents Group.

Action	December Quarter Update
Build community capacity through supporting community groups to deliver local initiatives that build social connections and enhance health and wellbeing.	Community Sponsorship program, community grants associated with drought and CASI funding, developing CASI directory of local activities, services and programs to be distributed to all households, updating Who What Where Benalla, L2P program, Rural Township Plans, Social Support Groups, Supported Playgroup, First time parents group, Sleep and Settling program, Family Services, Family Liaison, FReeZA, Engage, Live4Life programs.
Create and promote welcoming and inclusive practices and culture, so community members- whatever their age, gender, physical ability, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, sexuality or cultural background feel like they belong and are valued, respected and included.	Resource Umbrella Group, support Rainbow Ball, and wider regional networks focusing on LGBTIQ+, Supported Playgroup, New Parents Group, Integrated Family Services, Family Liaison, Sleep and Settling, MCH, Regional Assessment Service, CHSP and HACC PYP, CASI programs.
Continue to respectfully engage, include, celebrate and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people.	Resource Aboriginal Advisory Group begin planning for events and activities such as NAIDOC week and redevelopment of the Aboriginal Gardens, ongoing secondary consultations with VACCA and Mungabereena.
Promote, support and actively engage with smaller rural communities.	Rural Outreach Worker Program and Reference Group are drafting a number of Rural Township Plans, support funding for rural communities, rural mental health events, and support for local community get togethers, CASI, social support groups.

Leadership

Action	December Quarter Update
Ensure key community priorities captured in the long-term community vision are reflected in the Council Plan.	Resource Community Plan Implementation Steering committee, investigate ways of reporting back to the community.
Work in partnership with community members, groups and organisations to achieve the	Drafting updated <i>2036 Community Vision</i> document in partnership with CPISC, launch and consider best ways of keeping community informed on progress and assistance provided by CPISC in

Action	December Quarter Update
<p>aspirations captured within the Benalla Rural City long-term Community Vision.</p>	<p>preparing Community Vision incorporated in Community Plan.</p>
<p>Create opportunities for deliberative engagement prior to decision making and actively improve and enhance Council’s community engagement practices.</p>	<p><i>Community Engagement Policy and Toolkit</i> updated, provide some assistance to other departments, set up and help resource The Hive online platform seeking community engagement on key issues such as Rural Township Plans. Community Engagement underpins all of the work undertaken within the Community department.</p>

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

	Notes	2021/22 YTD Actuals (Credit)	2021/22 YTD Budget (Credit)	2021/22 YTD Variance	2021/22 Full Year Budget (Credit)	2021/22 Full Year Forecast
Community Operations	1	\$446,824	\$426,417	-\$20,407	\$890,813	\$976,096
Youth Programs	2	\$45,105	\$66,542	\$21,437	\$131,269	\$188,889
Rural Outreach		\$21,416	\$20,232	-\$1,184	\$40,045	\$40,045
Rural Access		\$1,237	\$0	-\$1,237	\$0	\$26,708
ADS Aged & Disability Services	2	\$60,152	\$116,990	\$56,838	\$608,864	\$884,665
ADS Assessment	2	(-\$5,829)	\$22,313	\$28,142	\$42,207	\$42,207
ADS Social Support	2	(-\$37,647)	\$5,218	\$42,865	\$9,079	\$9,079
FCS Maternal Child Health	2	\$40,158	\$26,292	-\$13,866	\$49,130	\$259,200
FCS Family & Children’s Services	1	\$48,594	(-\$57,495)	-\$106,089	(-\$118,229)	\$118,722
Total		\$620,012	\$626,509	\$6,497	\$1,653,177	\$2,545,611

Notes:

1. Unfavourable variance as funds have been spent from carry forward funds that have not yet been added to the forecast.
2. Favourable variance primarily due to timing variance in grant payments and inability to expend funds due to impacts of COVID-19.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

4. People And Performance Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2021

SF/1538

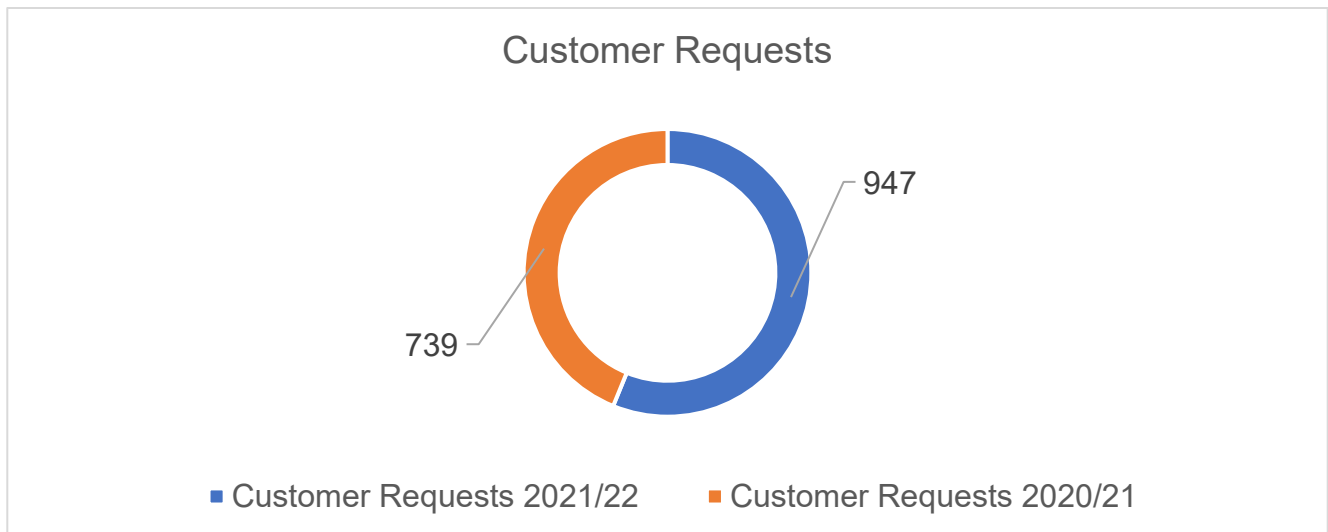
Janine McMaster – Manager People and Performance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

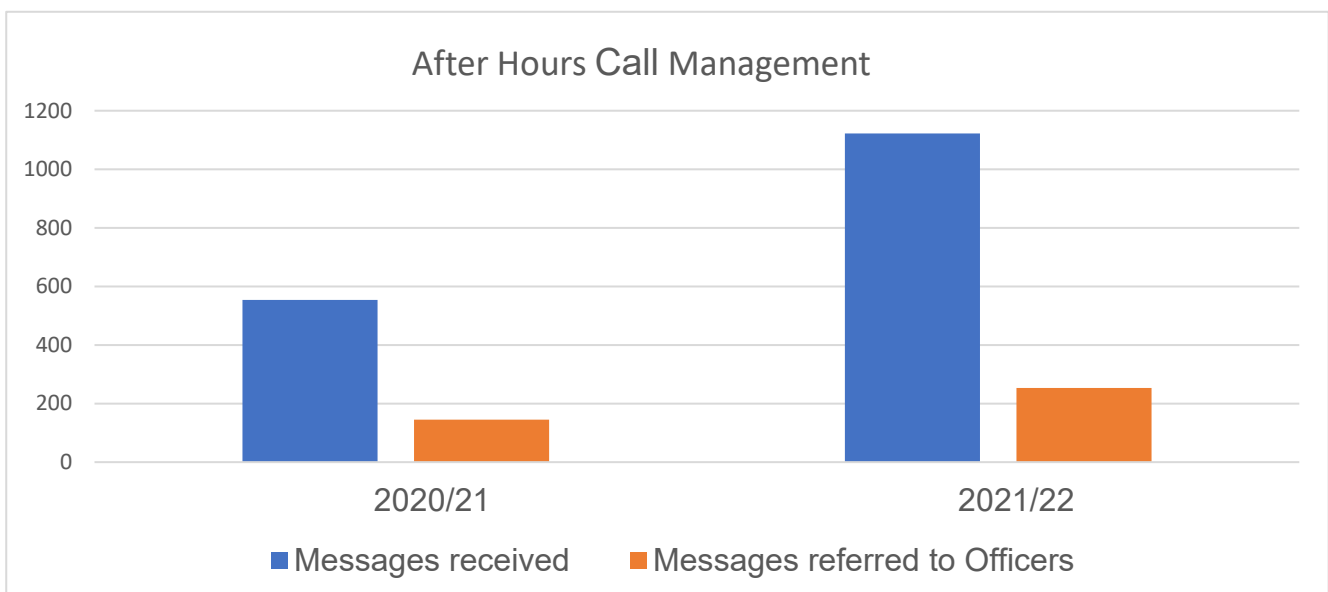
The report presents the activities of the People and Performance department for the quarter ended 31 December 2021.

Customer Relations

Customer requests (CRMS) increased by 28 per cent for the quarter compared to 2020/21.



There was a 51 per cent increase to after-hours phone calls received during the quarter compared to 2020/21.



HUMAN RESOURCES

- Training applications are slightly higher due to First Aid and CPR training for 53 staff along with Visitor Vex to Vax training provided to customer-based staff.
- The workplace incidents ranged from equipment use, verbal abuse, harassment, driving vehicles, minor cuts, laceration, and fall. Of the 16 incidents only four were injury related, which did not result in a claim.
- Ongoing maintenance and administration of the Human Resources functions, including the following areas: organisational wide training and monitoring the training budget.
- Finalisation of the Working for Victoria Program. All staff that were on the program completed their roles in November 2021.
- Continuing the negotiations for the *Benalla Rural City Council Enterprise Agreement 2021*.

Service	September 2021	December 2021
Recruitment	12	0
Turnover	5	3
Training Applications	30	85
Workplace incidents	16	16
WorkCover claims	1	0

Payroll

- Ongoing maintenance and administration of the Payforce database functions, including changes to employee details and terms of employment, reviewing the organisation structure module of Payforce to incorporate resignations, employment of new staff and changes to staff terms of employment.
- Respond to internal payroll enquiries.
- Prepared fortnightly managers payroll reports and other ad hoc reports and costing requests.
- Completed the termination process of the Working for Victoria employees.
- Investigating the adjustments to employee data stored in Payforce in preparation for the transition to Single Touch Payroll (STP) Phase 2.
- Phase 2 includes the requirement for additional information to be reported to the Australian Taxation Office with every fortnightly pay run. One of the benefits of Phase 2 is a reduction in the additional reporting obligation by employers to multiple government agencies.

Risk Management

COVID-19

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee meets monthly and frequently monitors any potential risks that may arise across the organisation.

COVID-Safe Plans are in place for each work location and are being updated continually keeping in line with the changing requirements of the State Government.

Processes that have been implemented and will continue to be monitored, throughout the organisation relating to COVID-19 include, but are not limited to:

- COVID-19 updates from the Chief Executive Officer to all staff when required
- continued distribution of PPE across all work locations i.e. hand sanitisers, masks, hygiene wipes, etc.
- distribution of COVID-19 information posters across all work locations
- customer service venues continue to follow all social distancing requirements, for example, distance marking, hand sanitiser, etc.

Occupational Health and Safety

OH&S continues to be monitored through the following regular:

- workplace inspections
- designated Workplace Group meetings
- incident and hazard reporting and monitoring
- incident and hazard action lists
- reporting to the Leadership Team and OH&S Committee
- reporting at department team meetings.

Information Management

- The Information Management team has been preparing 30 cartons of day boxes for destruction, in accordance with the *Public Records of Victoria* (PROV) requirements
- Transfer of the previous version of the records system from HPE to the new Content Manager.
- 19,907 electronic documents were saved to *HPE Records Manager (RM8)*. this was a decrease of 1,845 documents from the previous quarter.

Volunteer Development

Activity	September 2021		December 2021	
	Current but not active	Active	Current but not active	Active
Aged & Disability Services (includes Rotary MOWs)	67	17	64	15
Arts and Tourism	13	40	13	40
Events and Festivals	22	7	22	7
Youth Programs	6	19	6	19
L2P (Mentors only)	3	20	3	21
Gardens maintenance and Litter Reduction (includes airport)	3	34	2	37
Specialist Committees & Steering Groups (includes Age Friendly and CASI)	10	42	6	46
RedB4 Bookshop	21	39	21	40
Benalla Library	8	1	8	1
Friends of Groups	21	39	11	43
Total	174	258	156	269

The total number of volunteers has decreased by seven (432 to 425) and the number of active volunteers has increased by 11, which indicates that an increasing number of volunteers are feeling more comfortable returning to volunteer activities.



During November and December, a number of small celebratory activities were held for volunteers to attend, including morning and afternoon teas, lunches and the L2P 10-year celebration dinner.

Sir Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop Learning Centre

Activity	October 2021	November 2021	December 2021	Increase
Total Visits	3,060	3,516	3,217	4,106
Total Loans	5,530	4,902	4,690	1,121
Total Members	5,516	5,547	5,563	79

The Benalla Library participated in the Libraries Victoria Vaccine Ambassador Hub, assisting patrons find vaccination appointments and reliable information from trusted sources. The program is a Public Libraries Victoria and Department of Health joint initiative.

Benalla Library, from December 2021 to January 2022, is participating in the Big Summer Reads program. In preparation for this, Library staff have created and distributed over 350 childrens take-home packs as a part of our Early Years engagement goals.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025

Community

Action	December Quarter Update
Encourage, support, value and celebrate volunteering in the community.	<p>Continue to support our volunteers to resume in their function area, however, being considerate of their caution due to COVID-19 and personal risk factors.</p> <p>Various end of year celebrations have been held across numerous programs to thank and celebrate the selfless contributions provided by our volunteers.</p>

Leadership

Action	December Quarter Update
<p>Improve customer experience through responsive, timely, efficient, well planned, and accessible services.</p>	<p>The Customer Relations Team continue to provide a high standard of service which results from their competency and excellent knowledge of all council functions.</p> <p>The team are proactive in their response to customer queries.</p>
<p>Develop a skilled, efficient and high performing customer focussed workforce.</p>	<p>Staff training is always encouraged and available through the formal training application process. In addition, staff and supervisors can identify required training during the Staff Performance and Development Review process.</p> <p>The E-Learning program is available for all staff to access any online training courses for their benefit.</p> <p>Organisation wide compliance and legislative training is allocated when required to ensure the skills and knowledge of all staff remain current.</p>
<p>In collaboration with key community partners support an inclusive and safe workplace, aiming to increase awareness of and access to appropriate training for staff in the prevention of all forms of violence.</p>	<p>As part of Council’s commitment to our <i>Gender Equality Action Plan</i>, Gender Equity and Bystander training will be allocated to staff within the first year of the plan.</p> <p>Continue to promote and participate in the annual 16 Days of Activism campaign.</p>

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

	Notes	2021/22 YTD Actuals	2021/22 YTD Budget	2021/22 YTD Variance	2021/22 Full Year Budget	2021/22 Full Year Forecast
Library		\$173,726	\$174,908	\$1,182	\$444,580	\$458,362
People & Performance	1	\$291,006	\$311,997	\$20,991	\$618,505	\$618,505
Customer Relations		\$201,646	\$198,778	-\$2,868	\$394,095	\$394,095
Records Management	2	\$136,197	\$146,971	\$10,774	\$291,824	\$303,074
Volunteer Development		\$36,805	\$32,876	-\$3,929	\$65,238	\$65,238
Risk Management	3	\$558,149	\$580,000	\$21,851	\$705,000	\$651,244
Total		\$1,397,530	\$1,445,530	\$48,000	\$2,519,242	\$2,490,518

Notes:

1. Favourable variance due to receipt of prepaid Government Parental Leave Pay.
2. Favorable variance due to the delay in replacing staff member on maternity leave. Staff acting in the roles are on lower banding levels.
3. Favourable variance due to Insurance expenses being less than budgeted.

There has been no material financial impact to the People and Performance department due to COVID-19.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

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5. Economic Development and Sustainability Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2021

SF/1893

Adam Saddler – Manager Economic Development and Sustainability

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activity of the Economic Development and Sustainability department for the quarter ending 31 December 2021.

Economic Development

COVID-19 Impacts

Four Greater Shepparton City Council COVID-Safe officers assisted the Economic Development team for two weeks in October 2021 by visiting every business in the CBD and rural townships. They played a crucial education and supporting role by ensuring businesses understood the latest COVID-19 rules and distributed business kits with COVID Safe posters.

Economic Impacts

Economists predicted a bumper spending for the Christmas shopping period due to the anticipated 'revenge shopping' once lockdowns lifted. Figures show Victorian shoppers spent more than \$2 billion in this quarter, dining out and travelling once the Melbourne lockdown finished at the end of October. Tracking shows in-store spending recovered rapidly once restrictions on mobility were lifted, especially at clothing outlets where purchases were 12 per cent above the Pre COVID-19 norm in Victoria. Spending was fuelled by a build up in household savings, government stimulus and record low interest rates.

Figures from NAB, show the rebound effect for the period 29 October to 6 November 2021 with more than \$200 million spent in Victorian restaurants (about 23 per cent higher than a comparable pre-pandemic period); \$800 million was spent on retail shopping (up 25 per cent on pre-pandemic levels) and more than \$38 million on accommodation (up 72 per cent on pre COVID-19 figures).

Overall spending in regional Victoria was up 28 per cent on pre-pandemic levels and in Melbourne it was up 21 per cent.

Financial data analysis by Spendmapp monitors local economic activity by cleansing and analysing bank transaction data by time, geography, expenditure category and type, for a deep dive of local economic activity within Benalla Rural City.

Spendmapp Summary:

Type	October 2021	November 2021	December 2021	Comments
Resident Local Spend	\$6.0M	\$5.8M	n/a	Since 2019 the local spending trend has been shifting upwards, which may be attributed to the Buy from Benalla campaign.
Visitor Local Spend	\$3.9M	\$4.7M	n/a	A healthy growth of 8.9% in the visitor economy from October to November coincides with lockdown restrictions easing with Melbourne able to travel to the regions again.
Total Local Spend	\$9.9M	\$10.4M	n/a	3.63% increase from same time last year
Resident Escape Spend (ie money spent outside the municipality)	\$4.1M	\$5.2M	n/a	November's increase of \$1.1M from October reflects easing of restrictions and borders re-opening.
Resident online spend	\$3.8M	\$4.5M	n/a	High vaccination rates may have encouraged more in-store retail shopping. However real time spending trackers show purchasing at major online retailers remains well above pre-COVID levels, which suggests online shopping is more entrenched with customers because of the pandemic and e-commerce is here to stay.

* n/a – December figures are not available

Benalla Rural City Spending Analysis

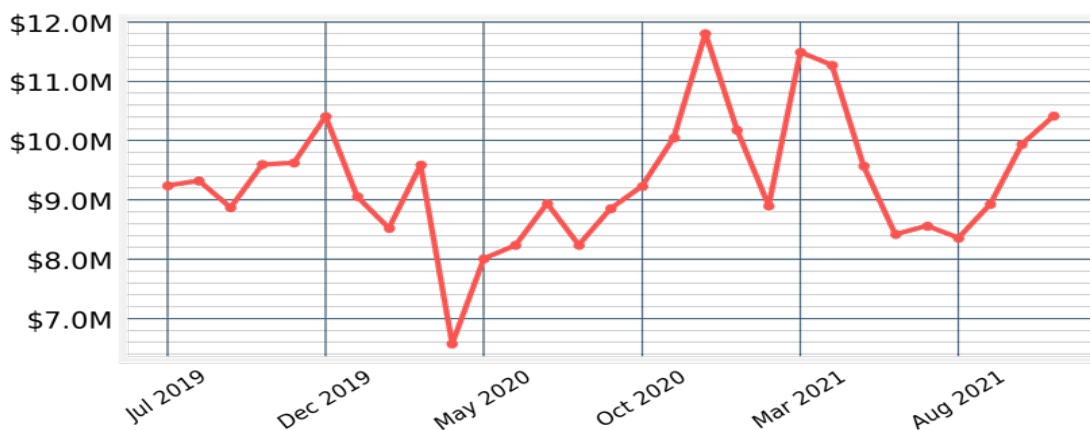
Residential Local Spend Categories

The top five spending categories in Benalla LGA this quarter were:

No.	October 2021	\$ Amount	November 2021	\$ Amount
1	Grocery stores, food and alcohol retailing	\$4.18M	Groceries, food and alcohol	\$4.23M
2	Light industry, trades and transport	\$2.02M	Light industry, trades and transport	\$2.04M
3	Dining, entertainment and travel	\$1.40M	Dining, entertainment and trave	\$1.78M
4	Services and Other	\$0.82M	Department store and retail items	\$0.89M
5	Department Stores and retail	\$0.77M	Services and Other	\$0.81M

Total Local Spend

The total amount spent with merchants within the Benalla Rural City LGA.



Since July 2019, the spending trend (as shown by the trendline in the Spendmapp app) for total local spend has been upwards.

Visitor Local Spend

Visitor local spend is the amount spent by non-residents and non-local businesses with merchants inside Benalla Rural City. Since July 2019, the spending trend for Visitor Local Spend in Benalla Rural City has been upwards with troughs coinciding with COVID-19 restrictions, in particular the sharp decline in March-April 2020 and again from April-August 2021.



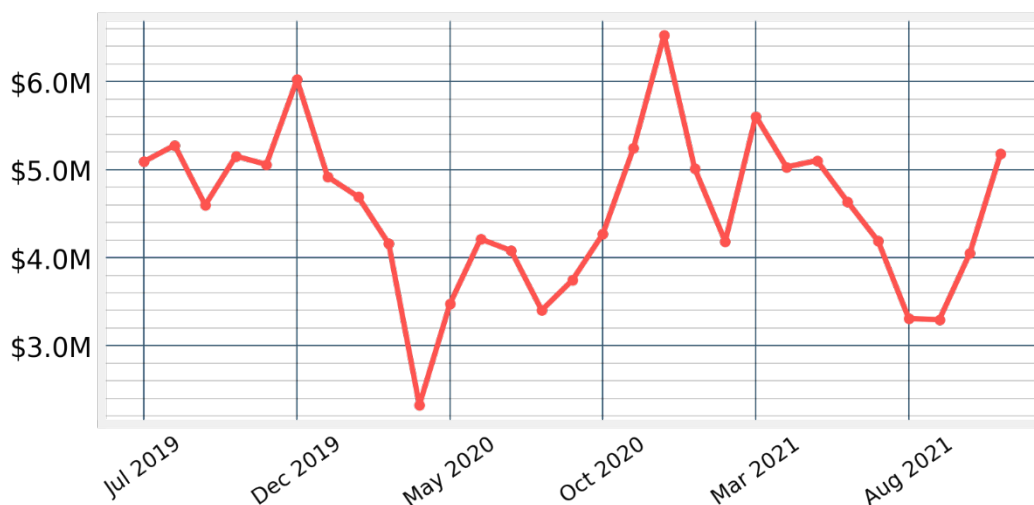
Where Do Visitors Come From?

The top three Visiting suburbs/towns by spend in October were:

1. Mansfield \$0.25M
2. Violet Town \$0.16M
3. Euroa \$0.13M

Resident Escape Spend

Resident escape spend is the amount spent by residents and local businesses outside the Benalla Rural City LGA. Since July 2019, the spending trend for Resident Escape Spend has been trending downwards. The troughs coincide with lockdown restrictions.

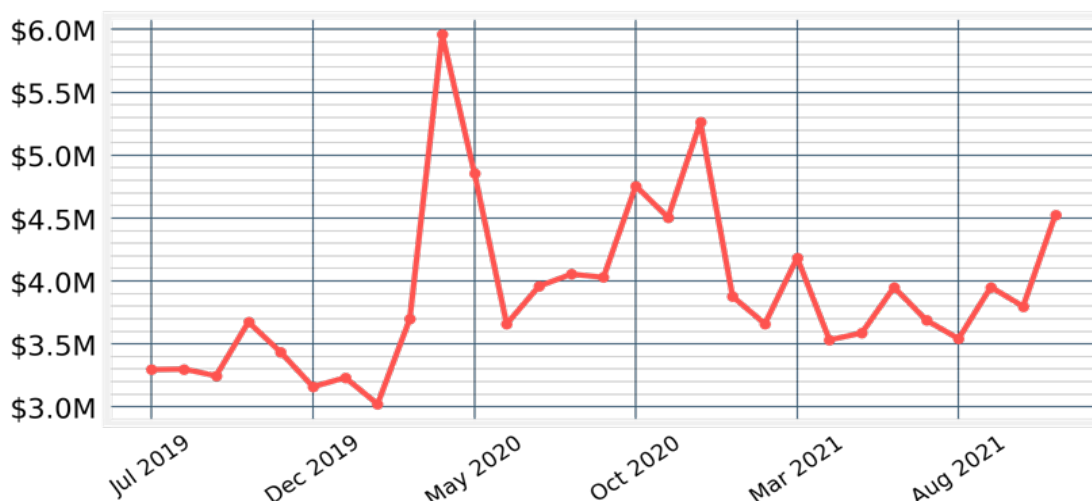


The Top Destinations for Escape Spend were:

No.	October 2021		November 2021		Category
	Where	Spend	Where	Spend	
1.	Wangaratta	\$0.78M	Wangaratta	\$0.91M	Consumer staples
2.	Shepparton	\$0.33M	Shepparton	\$0.57M	Discretionary spending
3.	Wodonga	\$0.09M	Albury	\$0.12M	Services

Resident Online Spend

July 2019 – November 2021 Source: Spendmapp



The top items purchased online by residents in this quarter, (in order of expenditure amount and category), were:

1. Specialised and luxury goods
2. Dining and entertainment
3. Professional services
4. Travel
5. Department store items and clothing
6. Transport
7. Bulky goods
8. Light industry
9. Furniture and other household goods
10. Personal services
11. Grocery stores and Supermarkets
12. Specialised food retailing
13. Trades and contractors

Access to and Quality of Housing

Mortgage Stress Rate

The mortgage stress rate measures the proportion of low income households (those in the bottom 40 per cent of household incomes) who are paying more than 30 per cent of their household income on their mortgage repayment.

The mortgage stress rate in Benalla is higher than Victoria at 11.3 per cent, compared to 10.1 per cent.

Mortgage Stress Rate Benalla	Mortgage Stress Rate Victoria	Mortgage Stress Rate Australia
11.3 %	10.1 %	9.3 %

Rental Stress Rate

The rental stress rate measures the proportion of low-income households (i.e. those in the bottom 40 per cent of household incomes) who are paying more than 30 per cent of their household income on their rental payment.

The rental stress rate in Benalla is currently 31.2 per cent which is significantly higher than the Victorian rate of 26.9 per cent.

Rental Stress Rate Benalla	Rental Stress Rate Victoria	Rental Stress Rate Australia
31.2 %	26.9 %	27.3 %

Housing Suitability

The housing suitability measure indicates the average number of spare bedrooms in local dwellings over and above those required to appropriately accommodate the number of residents in each dwelling within the catchment.

The average number of spare bedrooms in Benalla is 1.5 bedrooms, compared to Victorian average of 1.2 spare bedrooms. This is an opportunity to be explored further to assist in the short term in tackling the short housing crisis.

Housing Suitability Indicator Benalla	Housing Suitability Indicator Victoria	Housing Suitability Indicator Australia
1.5	1.2	1.3

- A score above 0 indicates a higher number of bedrooms per dwelling than would be anticipated based on the socio-demographic composition of the household (i.e. potential over supply of accommodation)
- A score below 0 indicates a lower number of bedrooms per dwelling than would be anticipated based on the socio-demographic composition of the household (i.e. potential under supply of accommodation)
- A score of 0 indicates the number of rooms for the socio-demographic mix is anticipated to be about right.

Source: PHIDU (2017). *Social Health Atlas of Australia. Data by Local Government Area. Published 2017: December 2017. Public Health Development Unit, Adelaide*

Investment

Goorambat Solar Farm

Benalla Rural City Council approved a planning permit in December 2019 for a 250MW solar farm at Goorambat East with 589,000 MWh of clean energy to be generated annually, providing power for 118,000 homes.

Construction is scheduled to commence in September 2022 taking 18 months.

The projected employment during the build is 209 direct jobs onsite and 1249 indirect jobs (total of 1458 jobs). The economic impact of the Goorambat Solar Farm during construction is estimated to be \$538 million comprising \$145 million direct spend and \$393 million flow-on impact, 70 per cent of this will be spent in the Hume (North East Victoria) region.

Once fully operational there will be seven ongoing jobs and 59 indirect jobs created with a predicted impact of \$31.1 million annually with 90 per cent of spending occurring in the Hume region. This comprises \$9.3 million direct spend and \$21.8 million flow on impact.

NBN Business Fibre

From September 2021, NBN enterprise ethernet business grade fibre is now available in Benalla. Up to 1Gb (symmetrical upload and download speed) is available on a three year contract with zero build at metro pricing levels. There are 10-20 retailers in Benalla offering this business grade NBN service and pricing is dictated by the retail service provider.

Other Information

- Smyth Seeds has been bought by Ballarat Seed company.
- Green n Grow Garden and Gifts closed in December 2021, with the owners retiring.
- Barry Plant Real Estate closed in December 2021 and the licensees have returned to Ireland.

Startup Shakeup

The newly incorporated Board has appointed Ilena Young as Managing Director and CEO, commencing in January 2022.

The 2022-2024 Strategic Planning is in progress and Operational Plans are in place for 2022 which include:

- continuing core activities, such as, e-newsletter, COVID friendly meetups and business masterclasses
- two more incubators to commercialise new business ideas will be held in 2022 (10 weeks each)
- continuing to support businesses through the Regional Skills Network (with locally-based mentors)
- building out the SME Digital Literacy program focusing on online business and improving digital confidence and capacity.

Startup Shakeup is waiting on the results of two big funding applications, which if successful will increase their ability to work with more small businesses and startups across the North East Vic region.

Communications

The December 2021 edition of the Council News newsletter was distributed to households and non-resident homeowners in this reporting period. A review of the value and reach of the monthly Council News format with recommendations for 2022 will be presented to the February 2022 Communications Advisory Committee meeting.

Engagement through **benalla.vic.gov.au** continues to be a key communication tool but compared to the same reporting period in 2020 the page views have dropped by 14.3 per cent. This could be due the reduction of COVID-19 restrictions over this reporting period but further monitoring of the website will be undertaken to understand this change.

Social media continues to be a popular tool to inform and engage with the community on Council activities. Communications is continually reviewing the content for social media and is ensuring that it is clear and concise while identifying any calls to action.

The digital community engagement platform “Have You Say” was launched in early December 2022. This digital platform allows Council to engage with the community on many activities and projects. The digital platform is a new tool in the Council’s community engagement suite that allows an easy pathway for the community to provide feedback on specific activities.

The Communications team continued to provide assistance across the organisation on the delivery of key Benalla Rural City Council branded projects and associated activities to keep the community informed.

A review of all corporate communications is still underway and is expected to be completed in the first half of 2022.

Events

Australia Day 2022 award nominations opened in October 2021 with the following categories: Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year, District Achiever of the Year, Community Event or Project of the Year and Community Group of the Year.

Council received 30 Australia Day Award nominations with the selection panel scheduled to meet in December 2021. All nominees will be recognised at the major award presentation on Wednesday 26 January 2023 at Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre. Achievement Awards will be presented by Councillors at district township ceremonies.

Council was successful in receiving a grant from the National Australia Day Council to assist with the delivery of COVIDSafe Australia Day activities.

The Events team supported the Christmas Street Decorations Working Group in the planning and installation of Christmas Street decorations within the Benalla CBD.

The Events Coordinator assisted the Benalla Lions Club in preparation for the Carols by Candlelight event to be held at the Benalla Botanical Gardens on Sunday 19 December. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled due to inclement weather.

Benalla Art Gallery

Exhibitions

Ledger Gallery:

- Re-generation: Benalla Art Gallery Collection - Attendance of 5,229 from 1 October – 31 December 2021

Bennett Gallery:

- FEM-aFFINITY - Attendance of 764 from 1 October – 17 October 2021
- Showcase 2021 - Attendance of 2,657 from 22 October – 28 November 2021
- Nick Selenitsch: Form and the Universe of Colour - Attendance of 1,856 from 3 December – 31 December 2021
- Pauline Fraser: Contemplating Nature - Attendance of 859 from 16 December – 31 December 2021

Simpson Gallery:

- Kim Westcott: the other web - Attendance of 87 from 1 October – 3 October 2021
- Temporal Artefacts - Attendance of 2,082 from 8 October – 12 December 2021

Total attendance over the reporting period was 14,345. It is noted that the Gallery was closed from 25 to 28 December 2021 and weekly Tuesday closures during this reporting period.

Showcase 2021 Exhibition and School Engagement

Having presented the 2020 iteration online due to the impacts of COVID-19, Benalla Art Gallery was able to present the full scale physical Showcase exhibition in 2021. Featuring 63 works by 30 student artists from six schools across Benalla, Wangaratta, Mansfield, and Yarrawonga. The exhibition was rich in media and concept issues such as diversity, inclusion and equality; the environment; social cohesion and mental health explored through drawings, paintings, prints, photography, sculpture, new media, graphic design, and fashion.

The exhibition was the result of an ongoing engagement by Benalla Art Gallery staff with 21 schools in the broader north east Victorian region. The Gallery provided flexibility in application dates and processes to enable maximum participation. The Gallery recognised the difficulties disrupted contact hours in 2021 posed a challenge for teachers and students in resolving a work for presentation. Many of the schools who were unable to participate in 2021 due to the impacts of COVID-19 have indicated an eagerness to present work by students in 2022.

‘The Power of Cultural Infrastructure’ Talk series

Benalla Art Gallery hosted the first of four talks exploring ‘The Power of Cultural Infrastructure’ in December. Presented by Katrina Sedgwick OAM, Director and CEO of Australian Centre for the Moving Image, the talk was presented in partnership with RACV and MPavilion. Attended by over 30 participants, and was professionally filmed by MPavilion, with the edited talk to be released on Benalla Art Gallery’s website in January.

The talk series has been developed following the recent completion of the Feasibility Study and Business Case by Urban Enterprise into redevelopment of Benalla Art Gallery. The study assessed the cost benefit, and social and cultural outcomes of redevelopment. The study showed an opportunity to deliver favourably against a number of key objectives. Each presenter in this talk series explores real world achievements which resonate with these desired outcomes, and will therefore provide community and decision makers with practical insight and inspiration.

Pauline Fraser: Contemplating Nature Exhibition, Launch, Gallery Shop

Rounding out Benalla Art Gallery’s diverse and high quality 2021 exhibition program was Pauline Fraser’s Contemplating Nature. The exhibition is due recognition for a significant artist in our region, with Pauline having been based for several decades in Lurg. The exhibition itself features etching and aquatint prints and ceramic forms celebrating the landscape and wildlife of Lurg. The exhibition has proven incredibly popular with visitors, including attracting 70 attendees to the Exhibition Preview and End of Year Celebration. A number of works within the exhibition proper have sold, while the Gallery has also programmed a Gallery Shop exhibition within two glass display cabinets of Pauline Fraser’s Land and Sky Collection of thrown ceramic forms. This Gallery Shop exhibition will continue through January, and commences a new program of sales-based, monthly Gallery Shop exhibitions by artists and craftspeople of the north east Victorian region. An Application Form is in final stages of development for public release.

Media Performance

Benalla Art Gallery was a source of consistent and positive media coverage over the period October to December 2021, with outcomes including

- Nine News national weather cross to the Gallery - 18 November
- Social media promotion by reputable peer galleries with extensive followings
- local and regional radio interviews including ABC Mornings and Edge FM Wangaratta
- local and regional print press including Mansfield and Wangaratta newspapers, and the following Benalla Ensign articles:
 - Temporal Artefacts – 3 November
 - Student Showcase exhibition – 10 November
 - Friends of Benalla Art Gallery Max Allen lunch – 17 November
 - Art on Saturdays workshops – 1 December
 - The Power of Cultural Infrastructure Talk 1 – 8 December
 - Nick Selenitsch Form and the Universe of Colour – 15 December

Tourism

Visitation

It is surmised that low visitation through the Visitor information Centre (VIC) is being impacted by the current location and the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. During this quarter a total of 1086 visitors came through the VIC. This is a decrease of 17 per cent on the previous year and the VIC is closed on Sundays due to lack of resources. December 2021 was the worst month where the Vic saw a decrease of 60 per cent visitation when compared to other months.

Industry Immersion Day

Tourism North East and Benalla Rural City Council hosted an industry immersion day with six operators from the region. Operators got to experience firsthand experiences on offer for visitors including:

- Baileys of Glenrowan
- Winton Wetlands
- Little Cedar Goats cheese
- Glenrowan Providore.

An immersion day is for operators to learn about influencing visitors to our region by:

- being up to date with local tourism products to enhance the visitor experience
- assisting in increasing visitor length of stay and spend whilst in region
- fostering a collaborative industry.



Tourism Operators enjoying Baileys of Glenrowan

Visitor Information Servicing Summit – VIS Warrnambool November 2021

The VIS Summit is the yearly meeting place for all VIS personnel, economic development staff and regional tourism bodies.

This year's summit theme was 'Reimagining Visitor Servicing'. It was a chance for VIS staff to support market recovery through collaborative promotion, connection with community and business, and new ways to connect with visitors and their changing needs.

Speakers included:

- Simon Kuestenmacher, The Demographics Group
- Ashleigh Bartley, Visit Victoria
- Paul Matthews, Visitor Economy Tourism Consultancy.

Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre (BPACC)

During the October-December 2021 quarter BPACC has had 119 screenings, 937 patrons averaging 7.9 patrons per screening.

BPACC has been impacted by resourcing, density limits and COVID-19 Marshalling.

Sustainable Environment

Collaborated with a private entity to successfully secure funding for an electric vehicle charging station to be installed in Benalla. The location is being determined with the provider.

Worked with RMIT University to apply for grant funding to develop a renewable energy microgrid system plan for Council buildings which is currently under assessment.

Developed an approach for a review of the *Benalla Climate Change Adaption Action Plan*, along with the Council's Environment Strategy, to be implemented early 2022.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025

Economy

Action	December Quarter Update
Work together with key stakeholders to engage, support, strengthen, enhance and diversify local business.	Continued to represent Benalla on various working groups including: Ovens Murray Digital Futures Group, Indi Telecommunications Action Group (ITAG), Benalla Future Work Steering group, Regional Smart Cities Connectivity group and Startup Shakeup Board.
Attract new investment, business and industry to the Benalla Rural City to facilitate business growth and job creation.	Continued to develop the Benalla Deep Dive Workforce Development plan to be finished early 2022.
Strengthen the visitor economy through growth of events and promotion of unique assets and experiences and visitor attractions.	Tourism North East (TNE) is marketing Benalla’s Street Art trail as one of the ‘top 10 walks’ in North East Victoria for the Melbourne market.
Grow, enhance and promote sports, arts and culture tourism opportunities.	Worked with TNE on region tourism marketing opportunities.
Improve accommodation offerings in the Benalla Rural City.	Facilitated sessions to determine priority actions for Stage 3 of the Benalla Deep Dive workforce development plan that is scheduled for March 2022.
Work with key stakeholders to improve local learning and employment pathway opportunities that address skills gaps, align with future needs and support lifelong learning.	Continued to develop the Benalla Deep Dive workforce development plan to be finished early 2022.
Broadly market Benalla Rural City’s liveability.	Continue to promote Benalla Rural City as a place to live, work and invest through social media and other key publications.

Environment

Action	December Quarter Update
Partner with agencies and the community to manage and enhance our natural environmental assets, water quality and river health across Benalla Rural City and support the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Regional Catchment Strategy and other regional environmental strategies.	Weed and pest management program completed. Undertook a biodiversity meeting with Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA).

Action	December Quarter Update
Enable a safe and thriving natural environment.	Undertook a review of the Environment Strategy.
Partner with business, industry and community to plan and implement local approaches and initiatives that respond to climate change.	Undertook planning for review of climate change adaption plan and environment strategy.
Advocate, promote, support and encourage the use of renewable and clean energy and technology.	Partnered with a private entity to successfully secure funding for an electric vehicle charging station.
Improve Council's sustainability performance through greater use of renewable energy and demonstrating sustainability leadership to the community.	Partnered with RMIT University to apply for grant funding to develop a renewable energy microgrid system plan for Council buildings.

Leadership

Action	December Quarter Update
Provide timely and effective communications in plain language to the community about Council services, activities and decision making.	Produced multiple media releases on a variety of Council activities, Regularly Social media posts and production off the Council newsletter.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

	Notes	2021/22 YTD Actuals	2021/22 YTD Budget	2021/22 YTD Variance	2021/22 Full Year Budget	2021/22 Full Year Forecast
Economic Development and Sustainability		\$113,664	\$121,421	\$7,757	\$254,011	\$256,291
Art Gallery		\$141,687	\$151,339	\$9,652	\$444,298	\$487,178
BPACC	1	\$80,979	\$117,510	\$36,531	\$233,550	\$233,550
Communications	2	\$91,219	\$109,008	\$17,789	\$216,646	\$208,649
Events	3	\$55,277	\$86,554	\$31,277	\$242,496	\$227,735
Tourism	4	\$159,022	\$138,287	-\$20,735	\$239,031	\$254,827
Environmental Sustainability		\$36,444	\$31,860	-\$4,584	\$94,601	\$169,572
Business Development	5	\$455,407	\$425,140	-\$30,266	\$505,166	\$589,948
Total		\$1,133,697	\$1,181,119	\$47,422	\$2,229,800	\$2,427,749

Notes:

1. Favourable variance due to the impact of closures due to COVID-19.
2. Favourable variance due to the impact of vacant positions not being filled.
3. Favourable variance due to not incurring expenditure on the Benalla Festival due to COVID-19.
4. Unfavourable variance due to costs of moving to a temporary Visitor Information Centre.
5. Unfavourable variance due to an unbudgeted Working For Victoria employees' expenses. Income received in 2021/22.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

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6. Finance Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2021

SF/1519

Cathy Fitzpatrick – Manager Finance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents an overview of the functions of the Finance department for the quarter ended 31 December 2021.

Finance

- Victorian Local Government Grants Commission return 2021/22 lodged.
- Quarter two review of forecast result for 30 June 2022 considering COVID-19 impacts against budget phasing 2021/22.
- Commence development of 2022/23 Budget Program and Business Planning Guidance Instructions.
- Finalised preparation of BRCC Financial Plan 2021-31.

Sundry Debtors

An analysis of the unpaid sundry accounts as at that date with comparative data for the previous year is as follows:

Debtors balances:

Date	90 days	60 days	30 days	Current	Total
31/12/21	\$38,995	\$83,149	\$154,539	\$192,538	\$469,222
30/09/21	\$27,217	\$11,894	\$47,244	\$518,689	\$605,044
30/06/21	\$64,772	\$18,023	\$119,125	\$714,972	\$916,892
31/03/21	\$169,643	\$65,623	\$166,057	\$493,220	\$894,543
31/12/20	\$108,915	\$44,279	\$69,307	\$807,052	\$1,029,553

Investment Portfolio

In accordance with the Investment Policy, details of investments held at 31 December 2021 are provided in the following table.

Table 1. Investments held at 31 December 2021

Bank	Short-term credit rating	Investment type	Amount invested '000	Interest rate	Term (days)	Maturity date
NAB	A-1+	TD	\$3,042	0.31%	276	08-Feb-22
Westpac	A-1+	TD	\$2,000	0.31%	275	25-Feb-22
NAB	A-1+	TD	\$921	0.28%	273	21-Mar-22
ANZ	A-1+	TD	\$3,900	0.15%	273	24-Mar-22
Westpac	A-1+	TD	\$933	0.24%	273	26-May-22
Westpac	A-1+	TD	\$1,051	0.25%	273	23-Jun-22
Subtotal:			\$11,847			
CBA	A-1+	At call	\$4,261	0.01%		
CBA	A-1+	Operating	\$9,126	0.00%		
Subtotal:			\$13,387			
Total:			\$25,234			

*TD refers to general term deposits where the use of interest earned is not restricted.

These funds are required to meet the Council's short-term commitments, including capital and operating supplier payments, employee payroll costs and loan repayments.

Loan Portfolio

Details of existing loans held at 31 December 2021 are attached in **Appendix 1**.

Loan terms are:

Loan Number	Type	Term
15 to 17	Variable	10 years
18	Fixed – principal and interest	10 years
19	Variable	10 years
20	Fixed	10 years
21	Fixed	10 years
22	Variable	10 Years

Procurement

- Continued to progress procurement for CAPEX 2021/22 program, additional new grant projects and forward planning for future procurement activities and contract requirements
- Nine procurements initiated.
- Council on 10 November 2021 adopted the *Procurement Policy* as required by the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Revenue, Property and Valuations

- First instalment reminder notices issued for overdue balances.
- Second instalment notices issued to all ratepayers.
- Second instalment reminder notices issued for overdue balances.
- Supplementary Valuation batches now undertaken bimonthly, as well as special batches for newly certified subdivisions.
- Second instalment remittance return submitted to the State Revenue Office for the Fire Services Property Levy.
- Amendments to Australia Post (BillPay) contract have been scheduled for March 2022. It is expected these amendments will see an ongoing reduction in collection costs.

E-notice stats:

- EzyBill – 129
- BPAY View - 401

EzyBill is a convenient way of receiving quarterly rate notices via email. EzyBill portal allows access to rate notices from any electronic device making payment both easy and convenient.

BPAY is an easy and secure way to pay and manage bills from your online banking.

Rates and Charges Revenue

Reminder notices were issued for the first instalment on 8 October. There were 1,088 notices issued for debts totaling just under \$0.928 million.

Second instalment notices were issued on 28 October with payment due by 30 November. Reminder notices were issued on 8 December. There were 1,066 notices issued for debts totaling \$0.955 million.

Fourteen formal valuation objections were lodged, with two having already been disallowed. Adjustments will be made over the remainder of the year once we have received confirmation by Valuer-General Victoria.

There is still one unresolved valuation objection from a previous year – a large supermarket chain remains with the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Appendix 2 details the overall rates and charges generated and collected and apportions the unpaid balance between arrears from previous years of \$0.620 million and unpaid charges levied in the current year amounting to \$8.12 million.

Rate arrears collected in the current year amount to \$407,000. The use of formal debt collection activities and the ability to raise interest has seen this figure increase slightly on last quarter, and substantially (over \$70,000) on Q2 last year.

Larger rate balances will be referred to Council’s debt collection agency in early 2022.

Collections, as a proportion of overall debt, are very similar to Q2 last year (-0.01%). However, the number of properties with outstanding balances has increased by around 211 properties.

Appendix 3 provides a graph summary comparing the 2021/22 rate instalments due with the total instalments paid as at 4 January 2022.

Spatial Data Management

The following table includes spatial data management statistics:

Task	December 2021	September 2021	June 2021	March 2021
Rural Road numbers issued	8	8	15	17
Requests forwarded to the Spatial Information Division of DELWP to update the State mapping datasets with new addresses and Council Property Numbers and rectify anomalies	212	224	184	90
Maintenance and auditing parcels on Mapbase	245	240	204	120

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) – Request for Property Addresses

Provided DELWP with an extract of names and addresses within four defined areas of the municipality to assist them with advising property owners of proposed planned burns and fuel management works for 2021/2022.

Roadside Weed and Pest Program Mapping

Through the annual Roadside Weed and Pest program, contractors G & K Weed and Vermin Control recorded or treatment sites with supporting information and the digital data has been mapped into the Corporate GIS. This data assists with identification and location of various weeds, future planning, and the yearly reporting under the State funding agreement.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025

Leadership

Action	December Quarter Update
Manage the procurement of goods and services to provide transparency and best value for money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalised the development of the <i>Procurement Policy</i>. Adopted 10 November 2021. ▪
Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy that maintain financial sustainability and deliver value for money and rating fairness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalised Victorian Local Government Grants Commission return 2021/22 lodged by 30 September 2021. ▪ <i>Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2030/31</i> was adopted by Council in October 2021. ▪ Undertook full Quarter two review of forecast result for 30 June 2022 considering COVID-19 impacts against budget phasing 2021/22. ▪ Commenced development of <i>2022/23 Budget Program</i> and <i>Business Planning Guidance Instructions</i>.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Sub-Programs	Notes	2021/22 YTD Actuals (Credit)	2021/22 YTD Budget (Credit)	2021/22 YTD Variance	2021/22 Full Year Budget (Credit)	2021/22 Full Year Forecast (Credit)
Accounting Services	1	(\$317,888)	(\$307,397)	\$10,491	(\$569,047)	(\$591,876)
Property and Valuations	2	(\$15,889,574)	(\$15,662,883)	\$226,691	(\$15,580,617)	(\$15,884,070)
Acquisition and Disposal of Council Properties		\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$25,000)	(\$25,000)
Total		(\$16,207,462)	(\$15,970,280)	\$237,182	(\$16,174,664)	(\$16,500,946)

Notes:

1. Favourable variance of \$14,000 as actual interest expenses are lower than budgeted. Partly offset by unfavourable additional online transaction charges.
2. Favourable variance due to supplementary rate and charges, additional revenue in lieu of rates (\$211,468) and reduced debt collection costs due to application of *COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy*.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Interest To Be Paid	2021/2022 YEAR	2022/2023 YEAR	2023/2024 YEAR	2024/2025 YEAR	2025/2026 YEAR	2026/27 YEAR	2027/28 YEAR	2028/29 YEAR	2029/30 YEAR	2030/31 YEAR	TOTALS
Loan Number:											
15A	\$ 4,270.05	\$ 1,080.06									\$ 5,350.12
15B	\$ 9,446.08	\$ 2,389.28									\$ 11,835.37
16	\$ 7,283.26	\$ 4,422.52	\$ 1,386.63								\$ 13,092.41
17	\$ 9,911.76	\$ 6,870.19	\$ 3,753.17	\$ 705.89							\$ 21,241.01
18	\$ 9,543.06	\$ 7,615.00	\$ 5,630.00	\$ 3,561.15	\$ 1,371.71						\$ 27,720.93
19	\$ 3,659.63	\$ 3,133.10	\$ 2,525.21	\$ 1,887.35	\$ 1,248.17	\$ 604.69					\$ 13,058.15
20	\$ 13,227.67	\$ 11,385.31	\$ 9,499.21	\$ 7,528.09	\$ 5,394.85	\$ 3,286.35	\$ 1,062.37				\$ 51,383.84
21	\$ 12,810.85	\$ 11,304.30	\$ 9,774.72	\$ 8,142.20	\$ 6,482.53	\$ 4,768.43	\$ 3,005.77	\$ 1,169.98			\$ 57,458.78
22	\$ 20,871.53	\$ 19,144.28	\$ 16,970.87	\$ 14,782.25	\$ 12,449.25	\$ 10,239.36	\$ 8,070.51	\$ 5,830.22	\$ 3,611.21	\$ 1,395.24	\$ 113,364.73
Total Interest Payable	\$ 91,023.91	\$ 67,344.05	\$ 49,539.81	\$ 36,606.94	\$ 26,946.51	\$ 18,898.82	\$ 12,138.65	\$ 7,000.20	\$ 3,611.21	\$ 1,395.24	\$ 314,505.34

Principle To be Paid	2021/2022 YEAR	2022/2023 YEAR	2023/2024 YEAR	2024/2025 YEAR	2025/2026 YEAR	2026/27 YEAR	2027/28 YEAR	2028/29 YEAR	2029/30 YEAR	2030/31 YEAR	TOTALS
Loan Number:											
15A	\$ 149,601.45	\$ 104,600.93									\$ 254,202.37
15B	\$ 330,944.01	\$ 231,395.06									\$ 562,339.06
16	\$ 143,575.99	\$ 148,175.17	\$ 124,285.55								\$ 416,036.71
17	\$ 109,062.88	\$ 112,104.45	\$ 115,221.47	\$ 63,350.83							\$ 399,739.62
18	\$ 50,656.66	\$ 52,584.72	\$ 54,569.72	\$ 56,638.57	\$ 58,818.68						\$ 273,268.34
19	\$ 48,897.53	\$ 49,446.46	\$ 50,054.35	\$ 50,692.21	\$ 51,331.39	\$ 67,305.04					\$ 317,726.98
20	\$ 47,925.61	\$ 49,767.97	\$ 51,654.07	\$ 53,625.19	\$ 55,758.43	\$ 57,866.93	\$ 50,060.97				\$ 366,659.18
21	\$ 45,937.63	\$ 47,444.18	\$ 48,973.76	\$ 50,606.28	\$ 52,265.95	\$ 53,980.05	\$ 55,742.71	\$ 57,536.82			\$ 412,487.39
22	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 1,900,000.00
Total Principle Payable	\$ 1,116,601.74	\$ 985,518.93	\$ 634,758.92	\$ 464,913.07	\$ 408,174.45	\$ 369,152.03	\$ 295,803.68	\$ 247,536.82	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 4,902,459.64

Rates and Charges Collections Report
As at 31 December 2021

Item 6 - Appendix 2

	Rates	Interest	Legal	Total	Comments
Arrears as at 1/7/2021	\$959,927	\$58,976	\$7,685	\$1,026,588	Unpaid amounts up to and including the 2021/22 rating year
Payments 30/09/2021	-\$185,294	-\$10,255	-\$2,956	-\$198,505	
31/12/2021	-\$199,370	-\$7,902	-\$1,254	-\$208,526	
31/03/2022					
30/06/2022					
TOTAL	-\$384,664	-\$18,157	-\$4,210	-\$407,031	
Arrears Rates Balance	\$575,263	\$40,819	\$3,475	\$619,557	Arrears Unpaid as at 04/01/2022

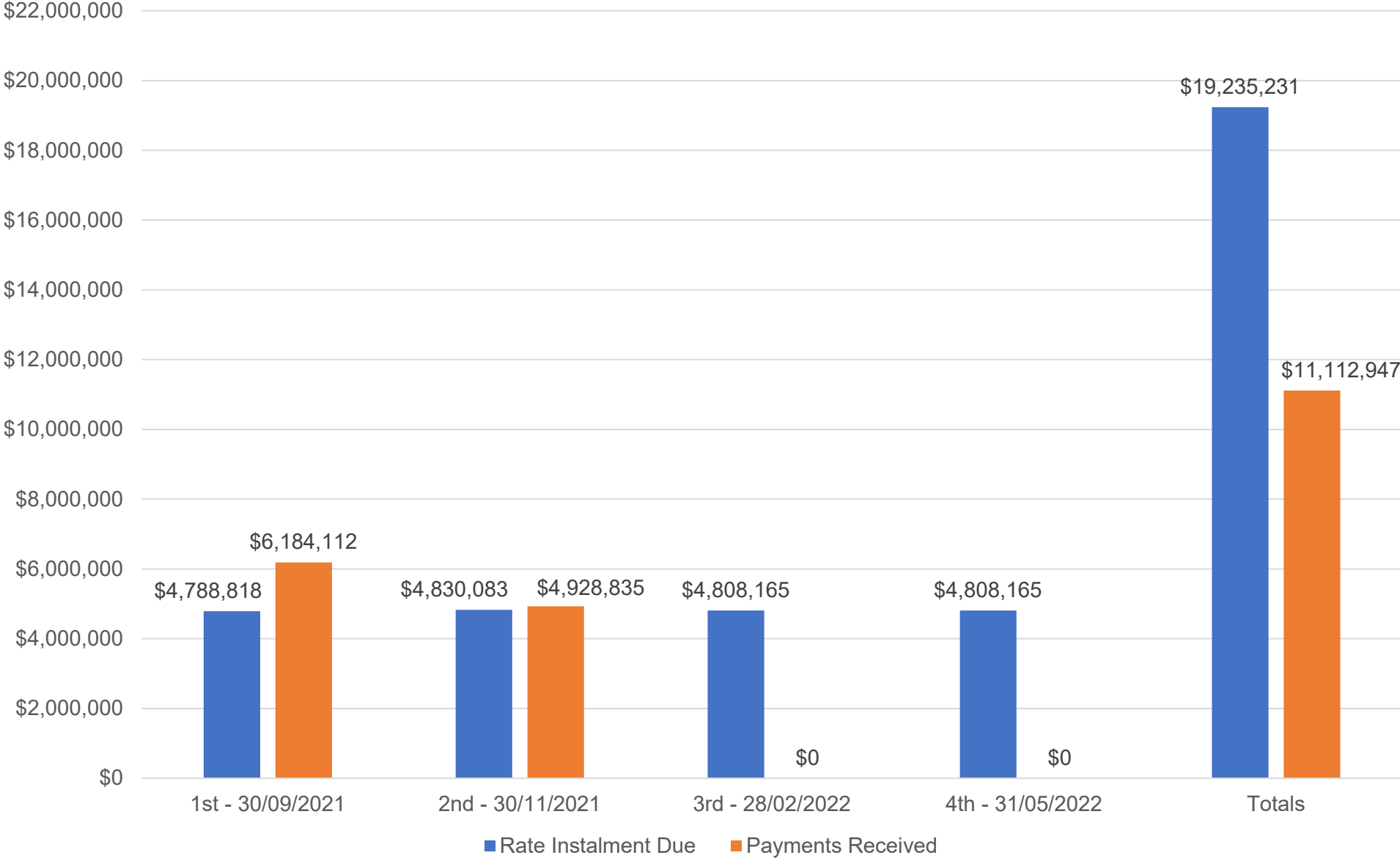
Current Rates/Charges	Rates	Interest	Legal	Total	Comments
					2021/22 Rates including Municipal and Waste Management Charges (includes additional rates levied on new houses and subdivided lands)
Raised 30/09/2021	\$19,536,184	\$8,205	-\$1,454	\$19,542,935	
31/12/2021	\$82,000	\$21,893	\$25	\$103,919	
31/03/2022					
30/06/2022					
TOTAL	\$19,618,185	\$30,098	-\$1,429	\$19,646,854	

Pension Concessions	Rates	Interest	Legal	Total	Comments
30/09/2021	-\$407,918	\$0	\$0	-\$407,918	State Govt - reimbursed by DHHS
31/12/2021	-\$3,705	\$0	\$0	-\$3,705	
31/03/2022					
30/06/2022					
TOTAL	-\$411,623	\$0	\$0	-\$411,623	

	Rates	Interest	Legal	Total	Comments
Net Rates for Collection	\$19,206,562	\$30,098	-\$1,429	\$19,235,231	
Payments 30/09/2021	-\$6,181,356	-\$2,756	\$0	-\$6,184,112	Payments received to date for current year rates
31/12/2021	-\$4,917,349	-\$11,486	\$0	-\$4,928,835	
31/03/2022					
30/06/2022					
TOTAL	-\$11,098,705	-\$14,242	\$0	-\$11,112,947	

	Rates	Interest	Legal	Total	Comments
Current Rates Balance	\$8,107,857	\$15,856	-\$1,429	\$8,122,285	Current Unpaid as at 04/01/2022
Balance Remaining	\$8,683,120	\$56,676	\$2,046	\$8,741,842	Balance as at 04/01/2022

2020/21 Rates and Charges - Due and Collected to 3 January 2021



7. COVID-19 Hardship Policy Review

SF/3956

Cathy Fitzpatrick – Manager Finance
Robert Barber – General Manager Corporate

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report discusses the review of the *COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy*.

BACKGROUND

Adopted in April 2021, the *COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy* has been extended several times, most recently at the Council meeting on 9 October 2022, where the Council resolved:

1. *That the COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy (September 2021 Review) be adopted.*
2. *That the COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy be reviewed by 28 February 2022.*

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the *COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy* (refer **Appendix 1**) is to provide the Council with a policy framework to provide financial relief to individuals and business needing assistance from the impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The *COVID-19 Hardship Policy* (the Policy) aims to provide ratepayers with a clear and transparent understanding of options and assistance available if currently experiencing financial hardship due to the pandemic.

The review of the Policy in June 2021 included amendments to the criteria for assistance under the Policy. Seventeen ratepayers were sent letters to re-confirm their eligibility for assistance under the Policy. Eleven ratepayers are currently receiving assistance under this policy.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Leadership

- *Good governance.*
- *High performance culture.*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To 28 February 2022, \$39,562 in penalty interest, at a State Government prescribed 10 per cent interest rate, had been charged. Penalty interest on rates and charges was budgeted for \$52,215 in 2021/22 at half year review it was reduced to \$48,215.

The extension of the policy to 30 June 2022 will decrease 2021/22 revenue by approximately \$4,000.

The impact of the Policy on the Council's cashflow will be closely monitored and reported to the Council as required.

LEGISLATIVE AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the report is consistent with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any general or material conflicts of interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the Policy be extended until 30 June 2022.

As part of the annual review of the *Benalla Rural City Council Rating and Revenue Plan 2021* a general Financial Hardship Policy should be considered by the Council to replace the *COVID-19 Hardship Policy* in line with industry best practice.

Recommendation:

- 1. That Council Policy *COVID-19 Financial Hardship* be adopted.**
- 2. That Council Policy *COVID-19 Financial Hardship* be reviewed in June 2022.**

CP 34 COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy

Responsible Officer:	Manager Finance
Document type:	Council Policy
Reference:	CP34
Approved by:	Council
Date Adopted:	23 March 2022
Date of Next Review:	June 2022

Policy Objective

The purpose of this *COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy* is to provide the Council with a policy framework to provide financial relief to individuals and business needing assistance from the impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The policy aims to provide ratepayers with a clear and transparent understanding of options and assistance available if currently experiencing financial hardship due to the pandemic.

Definitions

Term	Definition
The Council:	Benalla Rural City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .
Debt:	Debt is the amount (of money) owed by a debtor as a result of a transaction with Council.
Debtor:	Debtor refers to the individual, organisation or other party that owes a debt as a result of a transaction with Council.
Ratepayer:	Is the occupier of any rateable property who is liable to pay rates. This maybe the property owner or a tenant who under the lease agreement is liable to pay rates.

Procedure

1. COVID-19 Financial Hardship

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new virus that can cause an infection in people, including a severe respiratory illness. COVID-19 spreads through close contact with an infected person, mostly via face to face contact.

COVID-19 was characterised by the World Health Organisation a Global Pandemic on 12 March 2020 and a State of Emergency declared in Victoria on 16 March 2020.

Subsequent actions to slow the spread of COVID-19 has had a significant economic impact on several local businesses and ratepayers.

Rates and Charges income is a secure and reliable source of revenue that the Council uses to deliver services to the community. In times of crises it is important to remember that Council still requires cash flow to deliver critical services to the community, however, it is also recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic will cause significant financial hardship for many members of the community and that the Council has a responsibility to provide assistance.

1.1 Alignment

The policy aligns with Council Policy *CP28 Debt Management*.

1.2 Organisational Context

- *Local Government Act 1989 and Local Government Act 2020*
- *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2021-2025*
- *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

2. Objectives

To provide direction to Council's officers when collecting and providing for debts owed to Council and to ensure Council takes into consideration the financial hardship of debtors caused by COVID-19.

The Council will provide assistance to those in financial hardship in accordance applicable legislation, while ensuring it does not jeopardise the funding of its operations.

The policy will be guided by the principles of transparency, efficiency, capacity to pay and equity by treating all debtors consistently and in a fair manner.

3. Policy Details

3.1 Financial Hardship

Financial hardship is a circumstance of experiencing a lack of financial means, which may be either ongoing or temporary. This policy is to address temporary financial hardship due to impacts of COVID-19. The Council's existing *Debtor Management Policy* only allows for financial hardship experienced by a residential ratepayer's primary residence. This policy will apply to all rateable properties in Benalla Rural City.

3.2 Payment Plan and Interest Hold

The total deferral of all financial responsibilities due to an event can cause a secondary bout of financial stress when the event has concluded and bills are owed. The Council's aim is to provide assistance to ratepayers through the COVID-19 event without creating additional financial stress when the pandemic has been resolved.

The Council will encourage ratepayers to set up a payment plan with Council tailored specifically to the ratepayers needs to reduce the amount of debt owing after the pandemic. Council will hold interest on debt accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interest hold will begin from the declaration of the State of Emergency, 16 March 2020 until at least 30 June 2022 to allow time for the debt to be paid without interest.

If any debt is still outstanding at 1 July 2022, the Council's *Debtor Management Policy* may apply.

3.3 Rates Deferral and Interest Hold

If the ratepayer approved for assistance under this Policy is unable to enter into a payment plan, the Council will defer the debt accumulated during the COVID-19 pandemic and will hold interest on this debt from the declaration of the State of Emergency 16 March 2020 until 30 June 2022 to allow ample time for the debt to be paid without interest.

If any debt is still outstanding at 1 July 2022, the Council's *Debtor Management Policy* may apply.

3.4 Debt Recovery

The Council will make a reasonable attempt to contact a customer about their overdue account. This may include a reminder letter, account statement, email or phone call.

Until at least 1 July 2022, the Council will hold off on legal action for the collection of rates and charges for property owners approved for assistance under this Policy.

This does not include legal action to recover the payment of fines.

The debtor will be liable for all legal costs incurred by Council in the debt collection process.

4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Council officers will monitor the Council's cash flow position and will include this report in the quarterly finance paper to Council.

This Policy will be reviewed in June 2022.

5. Application Process

From 1 July 2021, applicants will be required to supply, in writing, sufficient information to support their application under this Policy. Additional information or time to verify information may be sought before the application proceeds.

If an applicant intentionally provides inaccurate or misleading information, Council can immediately revoke any assistance given and terminate the arrangement.

If an applicant wishes to appeal a decision made in relation to their situation, the Manager Finance or General Manager Corporate will consider the appeal and make a determination.

Related Policies

Council Policy *CP28 Debt Management*

Related Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

8. CEO Employment And Remuneration Committee

SF/1849

Robert Barber – General Manager Corporate

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents for consideration the establishment of a Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Committee.

BACKGROUND

Section 45 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), required the Council to develop, adopt, and keep in force a *Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Policy* by 31 December 2021.

The Policy was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 15 December 2021.

DISCUSSION

The Policy includes the establishment of a CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee to support the Council to carry out the following functions:

- recruitment
- remuneration and contract provisions
- performance monitoring, including annual reviews
- general employment advice as required.

The Committee, which will be chaired by the Mayor, will include all councillors and a suitably qualified and experienced independent, non-voting member.

The independent member will possess the following key competencies:

- Strong leadership and communication skills.
- Expertise and experience in one or more of: human resources; senior business or government; employment law, and performance management and development of executive level staff.
- Understanding of good governance practices.
- Facilitation experience.
- Knowledge and understanding of issues impacting local government.

The proposed *CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference* is attached as **Appendix 1**.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with the Council's *Community Engagement Policy*, it is proposed that, due to administrative nature of the Policy, that community engagement be undertaken at the 'Inform' level under the International Association for Public Participation's IAP2 public participation spectrum.

Level of Public Participation	Promise to the community	Techniques to the used
Inform	We will provide information	▪ Report presented to the Council.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Leadership

- *Good governance.*
- *High performance culture.*

LEGAL OR STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the report is consistent with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed *CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference* has been developed using existing budget allocation. It is proposed that \$8,000 be included in the 2022/23 Budget to fund the engagement of the independent member. the Community Support Program expense ledger account.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any general or material conflicts of interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

If the proposed terms of reference are adopted by the Council a procurement process will be undertaken to engage the Committee's independent member.

Recommendation:

- 1. The *CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference* be adopted.**
- 2. That a CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee be established in accordance with the *CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference*.**
- 3. That the *CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference* be reviewed in March 2025.**

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Terms of Reference

Item 8 - Appendix 1

CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of the Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Committee (the Committee) is to advise and assist the Council in fulfilling its responsibilities concerning Chief Executive Officer (CEO) employment matters, being:

- the recruitment and appointment of the CEO
- determining the CEO's Performance Plan (the Plan)
- assessing the CEO's performance against set performance criteria in the Plan
- determining the remuneration of the CEO and other contractual conditions of employment
- the extension, reappointment, or advertising of an Incumbent CEO position
- dealing with other CEO employment matter that may arise from time to time.

2. Duties and Functions

The Committee has the following duties and functions:

- 2.1. The Committee is an Advisory Committee of Council. It has no delegated power from the Council.
- 2.2. To make recommendations to Council on employment matters relating to the CEO or the person appointed to act as the CEO, including the following:
 - the appointment of the CEO
 - the appointment of an acting CEO when the position is vacant for a period greater than 28 days.

- any extension or reappointment of the appointment of the CEO, if provided for under the CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy and in line with Council's legal obligations.
- remuneration and contractual conditions of appointment of the CEO
- the outcome of annual performance reviews of the CEO
- performance criteria and performance review methodology developed by the Committee for the CEO
- deal with any relevant CEO employment matter that may arise from time to time
- assessment of the CEO's performance against set criteria at regular performance reviews
- to consider suitable candidates for the position of the independent adviser to the Committee and to make recommendation to Council for the appointment of the Independent Adviser, where the incumbent resigns from their position on the Committee or is not reappointed by the Council.

3. Composition

- 3.1. The Committee will comprise all councillors
- 3.2. The Committee will be advised by an Independent Adviser appropriately experienced and qualified. The Adviser is a non-voting member of the Committee.
- 3.3. Meetings of the Committee will be chaired by the Mayor, or if not present, the Deputy Mayor.

4. Frequency of meetings

- 4.1. The frequency of meetings will be determined by the Committee.
- 4.2. A special meeting of the Committee may be called by:
 - resolution of the Committee
 - the Chair
 - the Council, where the Chair is incapable of calling the special meeting.

5. Quorum

- 5.1. The quorum for a meeting will be at least three members of the Committee, one of whom must be the Mayor or Deputy Mayor.
- 5.2. If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes after the scheduled meeting commencement time, the meeting will be rescheduled.

6. Voting

- 6.1. Recommendations of the Committee should as often as possible and in the first instance be by consensus.
- 6.2. If consensus cannot be obtained, on any matter, in the opinion of the Chair, the matter shall be put to a vote as follows:
 - Each member of the Committee will have one vote.
 - Vote will be by a show of hands.
 - For a vote to be successful, it must be carried by the majority of members present at the meeting.
 - Where there are an equal number of votes for and against, the Chair will have the casting vote.
 - Where a vote is required to decide a recommendation/s to the Council details of the key options considered will be provided to the Council together with the recommendation.

7. Reporting

- 7.1. The business of the Committee shall be recorded in proper minutes.
- 7.2. All meetings and records of the Committee will be confidential.
- 7.3. Consideration will be given to whether information referred by the Committee to Council, can be released to the public following resolution by the Council.
- 7.4. Where the Committee is to make recommendations to the Council, the Committee will engage secretariat officer support to assist in the development of Council report/s.

8. Support

8.1. The Mayor and CEO, or delegate, will agree how best to provide appropriate secretariat support, including:

- giving appropriate notice of meetings
- circulation of meeting documentation
- taking the minutes for each meeting
- tracking the decisions of the Committee
- keeping appropriate records of the meeting documentation, including the signed minutes.

9. Independent Adviser

9.1. Role of the independent Adviser

The role of the independent adviser is to:

- attend and participate in all Committee meetings as requested and appropriate
- provide expert advice to the Committee on all matters relevant to the Committee

9.2. Qualities and qualifications

The independent adviser will have the following key competencies:

- Strong leadership and communication skills.
- Expertise and experience in one or more of: human resources; senior business or government; employment law, and performance management and development of executive level staff.
- Understanding of good governance practices.
- Facilitation experience.
- Knowledge and understanding of issues impacting local government.

9.3. Appointment timeframe

The independent adviser will be appointed for up to a two-year term and can be reappointed by resolution of Council.

9.4. Appointment process

Where there is an impending vacancy in the Independent Adviser role, or it becomes vacant, the Committee will source nominations. The Committee will consider suitable candidates and make a recommendation to Council on the appointment of the preferred candidate. The Independent Adviser will be impartial with appropriate experience.

The independent adviser cannot be a Councillor or member of Council staff.

9.5. Fees

The Independent Advisor will be paid a consultancy fee and engaged in line with the Council's Procurement Policy and Guidelines.

Payment will be made to the independent adviser upon receipt of an invoice.

10. Advice to the Committee

10.1. The Committee may obtain legal or other specific expert advice as required.

10.2. Any formal advice requested by the Committee will be made available to all Committee members and, where relevant and appropriate, will be provided to the Council through meeting minutes.

11. Review of Terms of Reference

The CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference will be reviewed in March 2025.

9. Councillors' Expenses For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2021

SF/1557

Tracey Beaton – Executive Assistance to CEO, Mayor and Councillors

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report details expenditure associated with Councillors' mobile phone usage, attendance at professional development courses and conferences and seminars, and reimbursement of expenses incurred during the quarter ended 31 December 2021.

Councillors' Information and Communication Expenses

Councillors' information and communication expenses for mobile phones and iPads are detailed in the table below:

Councillor	2021/2022 Q1	2021/2022 Q2
Cr Claridge	\$47.65	\$39.54
Cr Davis	\$39.54	\$39.54
Cr Firth	\$39.54	\$39.54
Cr Gunaratne	-\$2.76	\$39.54
Cr Hearn	\$17.73	\$39.54
Cr King	\$39.54	\$39.54
Cr O'Brien	\$31.36	\$31.36
Total	\$212.60	268.60

Councillors' Reimbursement of Expenses

The Council at its meeting on 15 December 2021 adopted the *Councillor Resources and Reimbursement Policy*.

There were no reimbursements made for the quarter ended 31 December 2021.

Councillors' Attendance at Training Courses, Conferences and Seminars

The Council at its meeting on 15 December 2021 adopted the *Professional Development for Councillors Policy*. The policy states that a quarterly report be submitted to the Council detailing year to date expenditure on Councillors' attendance at professional development courses or conferences and seminars.

Attendance by Councillors from 1 October 2021 – 31 December 2021:

Date	Councillor	Description	Registration and Accommodation Ex GST
08-Oct-2021	Cr Hearn	MAV - Meeting Procedures Workshop	\$500.00
13-Oct-2021	Cr Davis, Cr Gunaratne	MAV -Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Training	\$0
4-Nov-2021	Cr Gunaratne	MAV - Social Media Webinar	\$0
18-Nov-2021	Cr Gunaratne	MAV - Sexual Harassment Workshop	\$0
9-Dec-2021	Cr Hearn, Cr Firth	MAV - Mayoral Welcome and Introduction	\$0
13-Dec-2021	Cr Hearn, Cr Firth Cr Claridge, Cr Gunaratne, Cr King, Cr O'Brien	Fishbowl - Councillor Media Training	\$2,800.00
Total		Exclusive of GST	\$3,300.00

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The *2021/2022 Budget* allocated for Councillors professional development is \$6,225.00.

As at the 31 December 2021, the actual spend against the allocation is \$3,945.46.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

10. CEO Credit Card For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2021

SF/3905

Tracey Beaton – Executive Assistance to CEO, Mayor and Councillors

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report details expenditure associated with the corporate credit card issued to the Chief Executive Officer for the quarter ended 31 December 2021.

BACKGROUND

As part of an audit of the Council's 2017/18 financial statements, the Victorian Auditor General's Office recommended that the Chief Executive Officer's credit card transactions be reviewed and authorised by a Council member.

In response to the recommendation, transactions on the CEO's credit card are reported quarterly to the Council. There was no expenditure for the quarter ended 31 December 2021.

Recommendation:**That the report be noted.**

Closure of Meeting