

Benalla Rural City Council

Council Meeting

Minutes

Date: Wednesday 6 August 2025

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

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Minutes

Chair	Councillor Bernie Hearn (Mayor)	
Councillors	Councillor Justin King (Deputy Mayor)	
	Councillor David Blore	
	Councillor Peter Davis	
	Councillor Puna Hewa Gunaratne	
	Councillor Jillian Merkel	
	Councillor Nathan Tolliday	
In attendance	Peter Keane	Chief Executive Officer
	Robert Barber	General Manager Corporate
	Jane Archbold	Manager Community
	Cathy Fitzpatrick	Manager Finance
	Adrian Gasperoni	Manager Assets and Infrastructure
	Courtney Naughton	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability
	Greg Robertson	Manager Facilities and Information Technology
	Tom Arnold	Community Development and Recreation Coordinator
	Grant Banks	Community Engagement Coordinator
	Jess Pendergast	Governance Coordinator

Opening and Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair opened the meeting at 6pm and recited the following Acknowledgement 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

No apologies were submitted to the meeting.



Statement of Commitment

The Councillors recited the following Statement of Commitment:

I declare,

that as a Councillor of Benalla Rural City

I will undertake on every occasion

to carry out my duties in the best interests of the community

and that my conduct shall maintain the standards of our Model Councillor Code of Conduct

so that I may faithfully represent

and uphold the trust placed in the Council

by the people of Benalla and District.

Governance Matters

The Council Meeting was 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 Rule 6.4 of the *Governance Rules 2020* the Council Meeting was livestreamed via the Council's website and an audio recording was made of the proceedings.

Members of the public can watch the recorded broadcast of the meeting at **www.benalla.vic.gov.au**

Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

See item 4.11, 9.3 and 9.4.

Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

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

Cr Davis / Cr Tolliday:

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 25 June 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Carried

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Cr Davis' or 'Cr Tolliday', is written in the bottom right corner of the page.

1. Public Question Time

No public questions were submitted to the meeting.

2. Petitions

No petitions were submitted to the meeting.

Record of Committees

3.1 Recommendations from Finance and Planning Committee

The recommendations of the Finance and Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 23 July 2025 were presented.

Cr Blore / Cr Gunaratne:

That the recommendations of the Finance and Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 23 July 2025 be adopted.

Carried

3.2 Assemblies of Councillors, Advisory and External Committees

Under Council's *Governance Rules 2020* the Chief Executive Officer is required to provide a written record of the Assemblies of Councillors at a scheduled Council Meeting.

The record of Assemblies of Councillors, Advisory and External Committees for June 2025 were presented.

June 2025

Tuesday 3 June	Benalla Art Gallery Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday 11 June	Live4Life Benalla Partnership Meeting
Thursday 12 June	Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment Project Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday 18 June	Assembly of Councillors – Business Review Briefing
Monday 23 June	Benalla Street Art Advisory Committee Meeting
Tuesday 24 June	Australia Day Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday 25 June	Communications Advisory Committee

Cr Tolliday / Cr Merkel:

That the report be noted.



Carried

Officer Reports

4.1 Draft *Benalla Airport Masterplan*

The report presented for consideration the draft *Benalla Airport Masterplan*.

Cr Davis / Cr King:

That the draft *Benalla Airport Masterplan* be endorsed and placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days.

Carried

4.2 Draft *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029*

The report presented for consideration the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029*.

Cr Gunaratne / Cr Blore:

That the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029* be endorsed and placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days.

Carried

4.3 Draft *Benalla Rural City Council Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2034/35*

The report presented for consideration the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2034/35*.

Cr Blore / Cr King:

That the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2034/35* be endorsed and placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days.

Carried

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4.4 Draft Benalla Rural City Council Landfill and Resource Recovery Centre Masterplan

The report presented for consideration the *Benalla Landfill and Resource Recovery Centre Masterplan*.

Cr Blore / Cr King:

- 1. That the *Benalla Landfill and Resource Recovery Centre Masterplan* be adopted.**
- 2. That the Council acknowledge that the *Benalla Landfill and Resource Recovery Centre* becomes the recognised regional landfill in Northeastern Victoria in accordance with *Recycling Victoria Strategic Plan 2023-2026*.**

Carried

4.5 Draft Benalla Rural City Council Asset Plan and Draft Asset Management Policy

The report presented the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Asset Plan 2025–2029*.

Cr Merkel / Cr King:

That the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Asset Plan 2025–2029* and draft *Asset Management Policy* be endorsed and placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days.

Carried

4.6 Draft Benalla Rural City Road Management Plan 2025-2029

The report discussed the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Road Management Plan 2025-2029*.

Cr Gunaratne / Cr Davis:

That the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Road Management Plan 2025–2029* be endorsed and placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days.

Carried



4.7 2025/26 Major Event Funding Program

The report presented a funding applications from the 2025/26 Major Event Funding Program.

Cr Davis / Cr Tolliday:

That a \$2,000 allocation from the 2025/26 Major Event Funding program be allocated to the Benalla Racing Club.

Carried

4.8 2025 Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Surveys – Benalla Rural City Council

The report presented results from the 2025 Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Benalla Rural City Council surveys.

Cr King / Cr Blore:

- 1. That the *2025 Victorian Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey – Benalla Rural City Council* report be received.**
- 2. That the *Local Community Satisfaction Survey Benalla Rural City Council 2025 Tailored Questions* report be received.**

Carried

4.9 Councillor's Expenses For The Quarter Ended 30 June 2025

The report details expenditure associated with Councillors' mobile phone usage, attendance at professional development courses, conferences and seminars, and reimbursement of expenses incurred.

Cr Davis / Cr Merkel:

That the report be noted.

Carried



4.10 Mayor and Councillors' Attendance At Conferences and Events

The Mayor and Councillors attendance at meetings and events during the period from 16 June 2025 to 27 July 2025 were presented.

It is noted that:

- Cr Bernie Hearn was in attendance at the 150 Year Reconsecration of Maranga Lodge held on Saturday 26 July 2025.
- Cr Justin King was in attendance at Benalla Homlessness Response Group Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 24 June 2025.
- Cr Peter Davis was not in attendance the 150 Year Reconsecration of Maranga Lodge held on Saturday 26 July 2025.
- Cr Peter Davis was in attendance at the Benalla Neighbourhood Policing Forum held on Thursday 24 July 2025.
- Cr Puna Hewa Gunaratne was not in attendance at the 150 Year Reconsecration of Maranga Lodge held on Saturday 26 July 2025.
- Cr David Blore was not in attendance at the Goulburn Murray Catchment authority Drought Information Webinar held on Friday 20 June 2025.

Cr King / Cr Tolliday:

That the report be noted.

Carried

4.11 Council Actions Pending

It is noted that Councillor Justin King declared a material conflict of interest as the report contained information on the *Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment Project*. Cr King has a relative who owns a business in close proximity of one of the sites being considered for the project. Cr King left the meeting at 7.01pm.

Council Actions Pending report was presented.

Cr Blore / Cr Merkel:

That the report be noted.

Carried

Cr King returned to the meeting at 7.03pm

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5. Reports by Councillors

Deputy Mayor Councillor Justin King reported on his attendance at:

- Benalla Theatre Company '9 to 5 the Musical' opening night on Friday 27 June 2025.
- Benalla Homelessness Response Group Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 24 June 2025.
- Benalla Future Sustainable Group Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 26 June 2025.

Councillor Puna Hewa Gunaratne reported on his attendance at:

- Benalla Neighbourhood Policing Forum held on Thursday 24 July 2025.

Councillor Jillian Merkel reported on her attendance at:

- 150 Year Reconsecration of Maranga Lodge held on Saturday 26 July 2025.

Councillor Nathan Tolliday reported on his attendance at:

- Benalla Theatre Company '9 to 5 the Musical' opening night on Friday 27 June 2025.

Cr King / Cr Tolliday:

That the reports be noted.

Carried

6. Notices of Motion

6.1 Notice of Motion: Winton Wetlands

Councillor Justin King submitted a motion.

Cr Gunaratne / Cr King:

That standing orders be suspended to allow for discussion on the item.

Carried

Standing orders were suspended at 7.13pm.

Cr Davis / Cr Gunaratne:

That standing orders resume.

Carried

Standing orders resumed at 7.19pm.



Cr King / Cr Blore:

- 1. That the Mayor, with advice from the Chief Executive Officer, writes to the Minister for Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), the Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP, seeking:**
 - **To discuss the future management, operational direction, and long-term vision for the Winton Wetlands.**
 - **Clarification of the decision-making process that led to the handover of the Winton Wetlands to DEECA.**
- 2. That the Mayor and/or Chief Executive Officer engage and with representatives from DEECA regarding the future of the Winton Wetlands.**
- 3. That the Mayor and/or Chief Executive Officer represent Benalla Rural City Council at all meetings or stakeholder forums concerning the future of Winton Wetlands and report back to the Council on progress and outcomes.**

Carried

A division of the vote was called.

Votes recorded in favour of the motion:

Cr Bernie Hearn (Mayor)

Cr Justin King (Deputy Mayor)

Cr David Blore

Cr Jillian Merkel

Cr Nathan Tolliday

Votes recorded against the motion:

Cr Peter Davis

Cr Puna Hewa Gunaratne

The motion was **carried**.



6.2 Notice of Motion: International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Cities Appeal and Acknowledgement of the 80th Anniversaries of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Atomic Bombings

Councillor David Blore submitted a motion.

Cr Blore / Cr Tolliday:

That the Council:

- 1. Acknowledges the 80th anniversaries of the US atomic bombings of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945. We honour the 210,000+ victims of these attacks, and the Hibakusha and Hibaku Nisei who continue to live with the legacy of nuclear weapons.**
- 2. Notes that Benalla Rural City Council is deeply concerned about the grave threat that nuclear weapons pose to communities throughout the world. We firmly believe that our residents have the right to live in a world free from this threat.**
- 3. Notes that any use of nuclear weapons, whether deliberate or accidental, would have catastrophic, far-reaching and long-lasting consequences for people and the environment.**
- 4. Endorses the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Cities Appeal, a global call from cities and towns in support of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and calls on our national government to sign and ratify it without delay.**

Carried

A division of the vote was called.

Votes recorded in favour of the motion:

Cr Bernie Hearn

Cr Justin King

Cr David Blore

Cr Nathan Tolliday

Votes recorded against the motion:

Cr Peter Davis

Cr Puna Hewa Gunaratne

Cr Jillian Merkel

The motion was **carried**.

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7. Notices of Rescission Motion

No notices of rescission motion were submitted.

8. Urgent Business

No urgent business was submitted to the meeting.

Confidential Business

It was proposed that the following items be considered in confidential business pursuant to the *Local Government Act 2020* as they contain personal information or private commercial information that would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about a person, their personal affairs or expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking if released:

- 9.1 *Australia Day Advisory Committee – Committee Member Nominations*
- 9.2 *Benalla Festival Advisory Committee – Committee Member Nominations*
- 9.3 *Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment Project*
- 9.4 *Tender for Contract CM25.081 Spray Sealing Works on Various Roads Within Benalla Rural City 2025/26 Program*
- 9.5 *Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Committee Recommendations*
- 9.6 *Confidential Reports by Councillors*
- 9.7 *Confidential Council Actions Pending*

Cr Davis / Cr King:

That standing orders be suspended to allow for discussion on the item.

Carried

Standing orders were suspended at 7.37pm.

Cr King / Cr Tolliday:

That standing orders resume.

Carried

Standing orders resumed at 7.39m.

Cr Tolliday / Cr Davis:

That the meeting be closed to the public for the consideration of the confidential business item noted above pursuant to Sections 3(1) and Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Carried



A division of the vote was called.

Votes recorded in favour of the motion:

Cr Bernie Hearn (Mayor)

Cr Justin King (Deputy Mayor)

Cr David Blore

Cr Peter Davis

Cr Jillian Merkel

Cr Nathan Tolliday

Votes recorded against the motion:

Cr Puna Hewa Gunaratne

The motion was **carried**.

The meeting was closed to the public at 7.40pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized 'S' or 'B' with a flourish.

10. Reopening of the meeting to the public

Cr Davis / Cr King:

That the meeting be reopened to the public.

The meeting reopened to the public at 8.38pm.

Closure of the meeting

The Council Meeting closed at 8.38pm.

The minutes were confirmed on the tenth day of September 2025.

Signed:



Mayor Cr Bernie Hearn