

Benalla Rural City Council

Additional Council Meeting

Minutes

Date: Wednesday 29 October 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
	Adrian Gasperoni	Manager Assets and Infrastructure
	Courtney Naughton	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability
	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 Additional 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 Additional Council Meeting was be 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 5.

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

Officer Reports

1. ***Benalla Rural City Council Annual Report 2024/25***

The report presented for consideration the *Benalla Rural City Council Annual Report 2024/25*.

Cr Davis / Cr Merkel:

1. That the *Benalla Rural City Council Annual Report 2024/25* be received.
2. That the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make minor grammatical amendments to the operational section of the *Benalla Rural City Council Annual Report 2024/25* as required.
3. That the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make minor amendments to the *Financial Statement for The Year Ended 30 June 2025* as approved by the Council's external auditors.

Carried

2. ***Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029***

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

Cr Blore / Cr King:

1. That the *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029* be adopted.
2. That all submitters be written to and advised of the outcome.

Carried

3. ***Benalla Rural City Council Asset Plan 2025-2029***

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

Cr King / Cr Gunaratne:

1. That the *Benalla Rural City Council Asset Plan 2025-2029* be adopted.
2. That all submitters be written to and advised of the outcome.

Carried



4. Benalla Rural City Council Road Management Plan 2025-2029

The report presents for consideration and adoption the *Benalla Rural City Council Road Management Plan 2025-2029*.

Cr Blore / Cr Davis:

- 1. That the *Benalla Rural City Council Road Management Plan 2025-2029*, including the *Benalla Rural City Council Road Register*, be adopted.**
- 2. That all submitters be written to and advised of the outcome.**

Carried

5. 2025/26 Major Events Funding Program

It is noted that Cr Puna Gunaratne declared a material conflict of interest with item 5. Cr Gunaratne is an office bearer of the Benalla Migrant Association and left the meeting at 6.36pm.

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

Cr Davis / Cr Blore:

That a \$1,000 grant from the 2025/26 Major Event Funding program be allocated to the Benalla Migrants Association.

Carried

Cr Gunaratne returned to the meeting at 6.47pm.

6. Urgent Business

No urgent business was submitted to the meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink, located in the bottom right corner of the page. The signature is stylized and appears to be a combination of initials and a surname.

Cr Tolliday / Cr Davis:

That standing orders be suspended to allow for Councillor discussion.

Carried

Standing orders were suspended at 6.48pm.

The following statement was read aloud by Cr Nathan Tolliday.

I have asked to suspend standing orders tonight to advise councillors and those at home, of my intent to resign from the Council after tonight's meeting.

This decision follows my acceptance of a position as an Electorate Officer with Annabelle Cleeland MP.

In accordance with the Local Government Act 2020, I'm unable to hold both positions simultaneously and therefore must resign from my position as Councillor.

Serving as a Councillor has been one of the greatest honours of my life, being elected as the youngest Councillor in Benalla Rural City has been both a privilege and a responsibility that I've taken with immense pride.

It's provided me with an invaluable insight into governance, community leadership and the workings of local government and it has deepened my commitment to public service.

Throughout my term, although short, I have greatly valued the opportunity to represent the community and contribute to projects and initiatives that support the social and economic wellbeing of Benalla and its residents.

Working alongside my fellow councillors, council officers and members of the community has been an inspiring experience that has strengthened my belief in the power of collaboration and civic engagement.

Whilst it is difficult to step away from this role, my decision to accept a position as an electorate officer represents a continuation of my commitment to public service.

The new role will allow me to embed myself more deeply in the political sphere and continue advocating for the people of our region, albeit in a different capacity.

I see it as an opportunity to build upon what I've learned in local government and to contribute more broadly to the policies and initiatives that shape the future of rural and regional Victoria.

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to my fellow councillors, council staff and the Benalla community for their trust, encouragement and collaboration throughout my time on council.

I'm proud of what we have achieved together and remain deeply committed to supporting the ongoing success of Benalla Rural City.

Thank you.

Cr King / Cr Blore:

That standing orders resume.

Carried



Standing orders resumed at 6.59pm.

Confidential Business

It was proposed that the following item be considered in confidential business pursuant to the *Local Government Act 2020* as it contains personal information and 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:

7.1 *Churchill Reserve Indoor Recreation Centre Development Architecture Services Contract*

Cr King / 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

Confidential business commenced at 7pm.



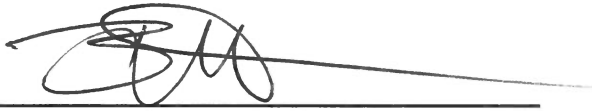
Confidential business concluded at 7.17pm.

Closure of the meeting

The Council Meeting closed at 7.18pm.

The minutes were confirmed on the nineteenth day of November 2025.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BH', written over a horizontal line.

Chair – Mayor Cr Bernie Hearn