



**West Wimmera  
Shire Council**

**MINUTES**

**UNSCHEDULED  
COUNCIL MEETING**

Tuesday 24 September 2024  
2:00 pm



## Councillors and Shire Map



**MAYOR**  
**Cr. Tim Meyer**



**DEPUTY  
MAYOR**  
**Cr. Tom  
Houlihan**



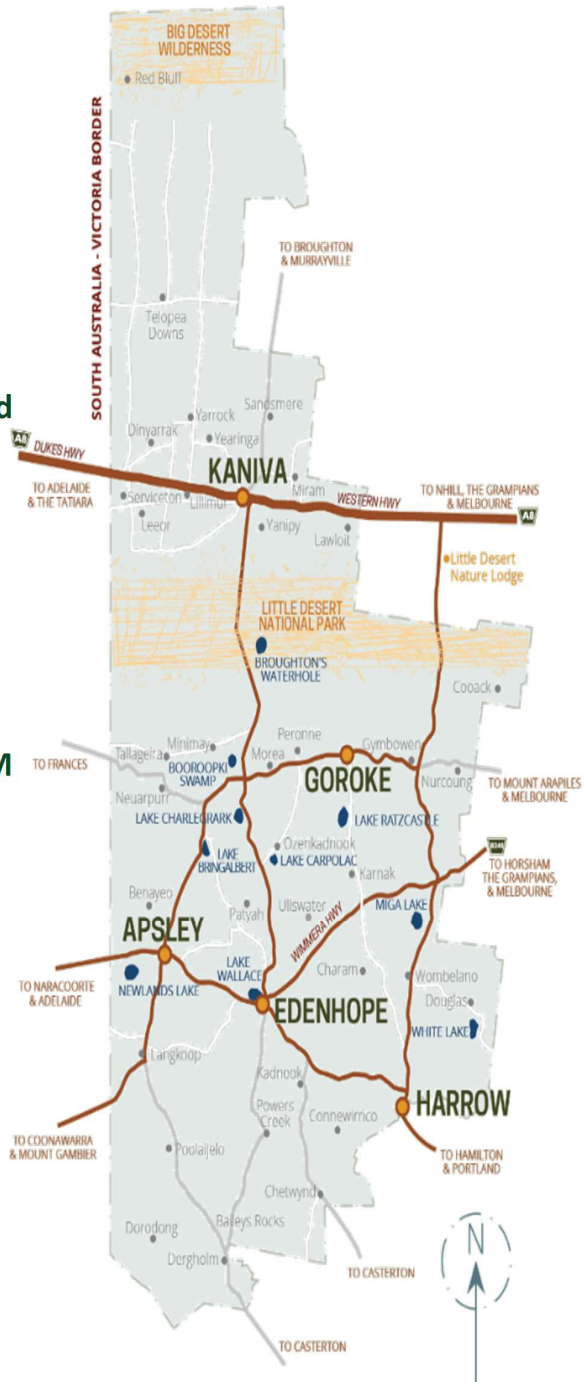
**Cr. Richard  
Hicks**



**Cr. Bruce  
Meyer OAM**



**Cr. Jodie  
Pretlove**





## COUNCIL VISION

**Our West Wimmera community is healthy, thriving, diverse, harmonious, prosperous, and self-sustaining, with regional and global connectivity.**

## OUR VALUES

**INNOVATIVE** – We will proactively respond to change, are optimistic about our future and pursue continuous improvement in everything that we do.

**ACCOUNTABLE** – We will be responsible, take ownership of our actions and are committed to good governance, excellence, transparency, achievement of goals and advocating for our community

**UNITED** – We will do everything within our ability to encourage and form trusting relationships, to work together as one team to achieve our goals and advocate for ‘One West Wimmera’.

**COLLABORATIVE** – We will actively and openly consult with you and work constructively with community organisations, agencies, the business community and other levels of government to our community’s benefit.

## OUR GOALS





### **Purpose of Council meetings**

- (1) Council holds scheduled meetings and, when required, unscheduled meetings to conduct the business of Council.
- (2) Council is committed to transparency in decision making and, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020, Council and Delegated Committee meetings are open to the public and the community are able to attend.
- (3) Meetings will only be closed to members of the public, in accordance with section 66 of the Act, if:
  - (a) there are clear reasons for particular matters to remain confidential; or
  - (b) a meeting is required to be closed for security reasons; or
  - (c) it is necessary to enable the meeting to proceed in an ordinary manner.
- (4) A meeting closed to the public for the reasons outlined in sub-rule 3(b) or 3(c) will continue to be livestreamed. In the event a livestream is not available:
  - (a) the meeting may be adjourned; or
  - (b) a recording of the proceedings may be available on the Council website

The West Wimmera Shire Council Governance Rules set out the meeting procedure rules for this Council Meeting.

This Council meeting will be recorded for live streaming.

### **Recording of Meeting and Disclaimer**

Please note every Council Meeting (other than items deemed confidential under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2020) is being recorded and streamed live on West Wimmera Shire Council's website in accordance with Council's Governance Rules. Live streaming allows everyone to watch and listen to the meeting in real time, giving you greater access to Council debate and decision making and encouraging openness and transparency. All care is taken to maintain your privacy; however, as a visitor in the public gallery, your presence may be recorded. By remaining in the public gallery, it is understood your consent is given if your image is inadvertently broadcast. Opinions expressed or statements made by individual persons during a meeting are not the opinions or statements of West Wimmera Shire Council. Council therefore accepts no liability for any defamatory remarks that are made during a meeting.

### **Councillors pledge**

*As Councillors of West Wimmera Shire Council, we solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that we will consider each item on this agenda in the best interests of the whole municipal community.*



**In Attendance:**

**Councillors:**

Tim Meyer, Mayor  
Tom Houlihan, Deputy Mayor  
Bruce Meyer OAM  
Jodie Pretlove

**Executive Leadership Team:**

David Bezuidenhout - Chief Executive Officer (CEO)  
James Bentley - Director Corporate & Community Services (DCCS)  
Brendan Pearce - Director Infrastructure Development & Works (DIDW)

**Officers:**

Abbas Mehr - Chief Financial Officer  
Katie Frost - Governance Manager



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## 1 Welcome

## 2 Acknowledgement of Country

The CEO read:

The West Wimmera Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays respect to their elders, past, present and emerging.

## 3 Opening Prayer

The CEO Read:

Almighty God, we humbly ask your blessing upon this Council. Guide and prosper our decisions to the advancement of Your Glory and the true welfare of the people of West Wimmera Shire. Amen.

## 4 Apologies, Leave of Absences, Declaration of Conflict of Interest

### 4.1 Apologies

Cr Richard Hicks

### 4.2 Leave of Absence

Nil

### 4.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None declared



## 5 Corporate and Community Services

### 5.1 Draft Annual Report 2023/24

*Directorate: Corporate and Community Services*

*Report Author: Chief Financial Officer*

*Report Purpose: For Decision*

#### **Purpose**

West Wimmera Shire Council (Council) is required under s 98 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) to prepare an Annual Report on the operations of Council in respect of each financial year.

The draft 2023-24 Annual Report including the Financial Statements and Performance Statement are presented to Council for the purposes of:

1. A Council resolution to approve 'in principle' the 2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statement
2. Authorisation for the 2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statement to be submitted to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office for final audit approval
3. Endorsement of two Councillors to certify Council's 2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statement in their final form
4. Adoption of the Draft 2023-24 Annual Report, with authorisation given to the Chief Executive Officer to make minor editorial changes as required

Following audit approval, Council will include the certified Financial Statements and Performance Statement in the 2023-24 Annual Report.





**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**

**That Council:**

- a. Approve in principle the 2023-24 draft Financial Statements and Performance Statement pending any material changes from the Victorian Auditor-General; and,
  - b. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to submit the 2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statement to the Victorian Auditor-General for final audit approval; and,
  - c. Nominate two Councillors to sign and authorise the 2023-24 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement in their final form; and
  - d. Authorise the Chief Financial Officer to make any material changes to the 2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statement arising from the completion of audit procedures and reporting the changes to Council.
2. Adopts the attached draft 2023-24 Annual Report; and,
  3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to make any minor editorial changes to the Annual Report as required.

**Moved:** Cr Jodie Pretlove

**Seconded:** Cr Bruce Meyer

**1. That Council:**

- a. Approve in principle the 2023-24 draft Financial Statements and Performance Statement pending any material changes from the Victorian Auditor-General; and,
  - b. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to submit the 2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statement to the Victorian Auditor-General for final audit approval; and,
  - c. Nominate two Councillors (as indicated in the attached 2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statement) to sign and authorise the 2023-24 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement in their final form; and
  - d. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to make any material changes to the 2023-24 Financial Statements and Performance Statement arising from the completion of audit procedures and reporting the changes to Council.
2. That Council adopt the attached amended draft 2023-24 Annual Report; and,
  3. That Council authorise the Chief Executive Officer to make an update to the project section on page 68 and any minor editorial changes to the Annual Report as required.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (4 / 0)**



### **Declaration of Interest**

No officer declared an interest under the Local Government Act 2020 (LGA 2020) in preparing this report.

### **Background**

The Annual Report summarises Council operations and provides general information about Council's activities over a 12 month period to 30 June 2024. The report contains statutory requirements and various local government indices along with the audited Financial Statements and the Performance Statement.

The Annual Report also provides a number of departmental reports which provide additional information regarding Council's activities throughout the 2023-24 financial year.

Section 98 (2) of the Act requires that Council produce as part of its annual report, a set of audited Financial Statements and audited Performance Statement for the financial year. Council's external auditors, Crowe Australasia, acting as agents for VAGO, have conducted their 2023-24 final audit.

Following this, Section 99 (3) of the Act requires that the Financial Statements and Performance Statement be certified by two Councillors in their final form after any agreed changes recommended by audit have been undertaken.

Therefore, to complete its legislative requirements, the procedure is as follows:

1. Council receives and approves in principle the draft Financial Statements and Performance Statement, following review by the Audit and Risk Committee;
2. Council passes a resolution in accordance with S.99(2) of the Act authorising two Councillors to sign the Financial Statements and Performance Statement in their final (post-audit) form;
3. After review by the Victorian Auditor General's contractor, and after any required and recommended changes to the draft statements are undertaken, the statements are then signed by the two nominated Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer and the Principal Accounting Officer;
4. The Victorian Auditor General issues an audit opinion on the Financial Statements and the Performance Statement;
5. The Financial Statements and Performance Statement are inserted into the Annual Report in their final post-audit form



6. Council holds a meeting to consider the Annual Report in accordance with section 100 of the Act by 25 October 2024 (this year being the Council elections year).

### **Risk Management Implications**

Risk identified: Business continuity risk

Financial risk

Information risk

Regulatory risk

Reputation risk

Strategic risk

Council may be exposed to multiple forms of risk by not adopting its Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement.

Failure to follow the process as set out under the Act will result in Council breaching its legislative requirements.

Council may be exposed to reputational risk if it fails to comply with legislative requirements and/or fails to report on its operations, including its financial performance and position. Council's reputation would be negatively impacted if the Annual Report was not submitted and presented in a professional manner.

Council may also be subject to financial and resource risk if it fails to provide Annual Financial Statements and the Performance Statement by failing to identify financial issues and opportunities, and an inability to be able to effectively plan resource allocation.

### **Legislative Implications**

The report complies with the requirements of the:

Local Government Act 2020

Section 98(1) of the Act requires Council to prepare an annual report in respect of each financial year. Section 98(2) prescribes that the annual report must contain;

- (a) a report of operations of the Council;
- (b) an audited performance statement;
- (c) audited financial statements;
- (d) a copy of the auditor's report on the performance statement;



- (e) a copy of the auditor's report on the financial statements under Part 3 of the *Audit Act 1994*;
- (f) any other matters prescribed by the regulations.

Per section 99(2) Council, after passing a resolution giving its approval in principle to the performance statement and financial statements, must submit the statements to the auditor for reporting on the audit. Section 100 of the Act prescribes that Council must hold a meeting to consider the Annual Report within 4 months of the end of the financial year.

### **Environmental Implications**

Nil

### **Financial and Budgetary Implications**

The financial risk rating has been assessed as: Medium

The draft Annual Financial Statements contain information on Council's financial performance and variances to the adopted budget for the 2023-24 financial year.

A summary of the outcomes contained within the Annual Financial Statements is as follows:

### **Financial Summary 2023-24**

Council's financial position continues to remain sound with sustainable indicators in all of Council's operations and service delivery. Council's audited Financial Statements and Performance Statement are included herein as part of our annual report.

### **Operating Position**

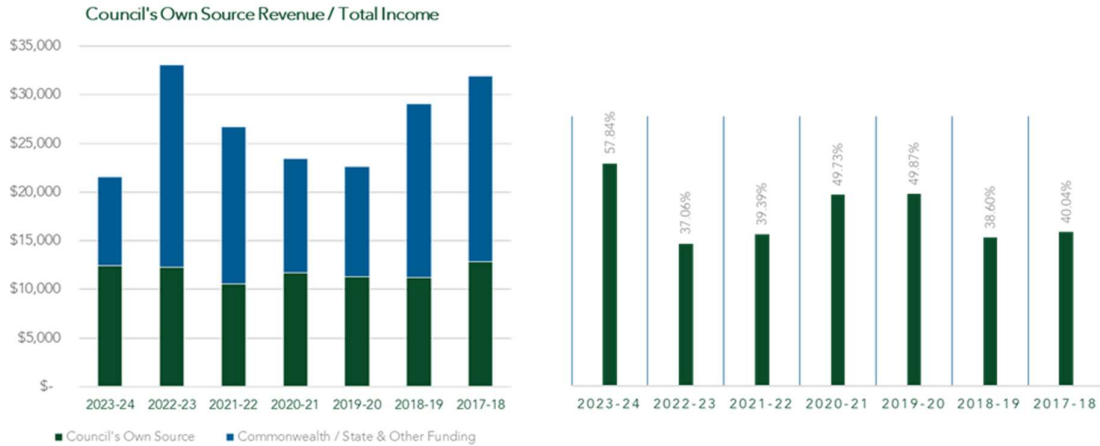
Council's operating results reflect a deficit of \$11.484 million (FY 2022-23: \$ 2.886 million surplus) for the year, primarily due to a strategic grants release schedule for our Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) by the Commonwealth. This allocation of \$7.406 million was budgeted as cash inflow for 2023-24 in accordance with historical funding policy. Also, the Council has also delivered over \$3.700 million in community projects – as part of Council's Annual Plan, and these projects are vital for community well-being and recreation activity needs.

The Commonwealth has released 85% of FAGs during July 2024 with balance to be funded in four equal instalments during the year. Despite this temporary impact of FAGs reschedule, the Council has reported \$8.052 million in cash reserves – with no external restrictions and reflects Council's strong ability to meet its current liabilities.

Council's own source income for the year is reported at 57.84% of the total income aggregating to \$12.462 million with another \$9.082 million received in Commonwealth and

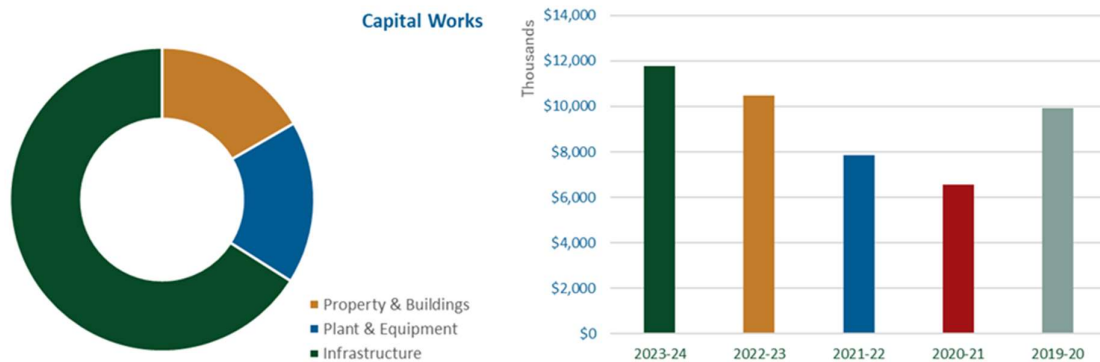


State grants and subsidies. Council raised \$8.605 million in Rates and Charges, \$1.751 million in reimbursements for roads maintenance works, \$0.743 million in User Fees, \$0.602 million in interest and \$0.292 million in gain on sale of Council assets. Council has shown significant yearly growth in its assets' utilisation which have generated improved financial results.



Operating Grants aggregated to \$5.568 million, which was less than budgeted estimates as the result of FAGs release in July 2024. As per the guidance provided by Local Government Victoria, in accordance with *AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities*, this amount has been recognised in financial year 2024/25. Capital Grants for FY 2023/24 are reported at \$3.514 million and have also remained lower than the budgeted projections. Council continues to be dependent upon grants and funding from the Commonwealth and State Governments for its service delivery to the community.

Council has achieved a significantly high delivery of capital works program during FY 2023-24 with over \$15.500 million completed and delivered projects. This program delivery includes \$11.774 million spent on Council owned assets including major infrastructure and roads network and another \$3.711 million spent on community projects. This has been one of the highest capital works projects deliveries in many years and Council continues to set higher delivery benchmarks in the region.



Council's reported expenses for the year are represented by Employee Costs of \$10.687 million which account for 30% of total expenses. Materials & Services aggregate to \$13.829 million and considering the value of capital works delivery for the year, the combined total



of Employee Costs and Materials & Services have made a significant value-added contribution towards Council's overall service delivery.

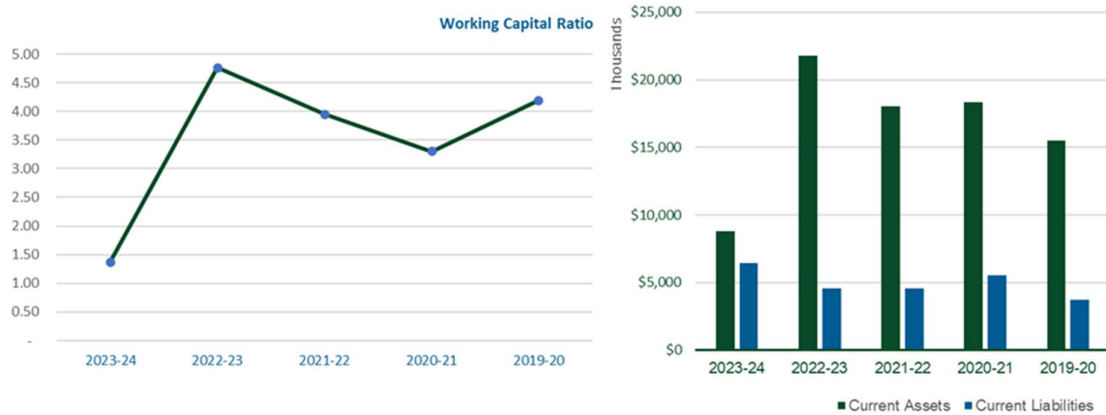
Depreciation for the year is reported at \$8.052 million and Council has an integrated mechanism regarding its asset management plan and the asset renewals linked to critical infrastructure. Council has over \$266.296 million worth of assets, incorporating comprehensive condition assessment and management plan to maintain these assets over their useful life.

Council's current assets of \$8.821 million provide sufficient capacity to meet current liabilities of \$6.450 million and demonstrate a balanced current ration of 1.4X. Cash reserves stand at \$8.052 million and Council has demonstrated significant yield growth.

Current liabilities at close of the financial year remained \$6.450 million comprising \$3.097 million in trade and other payables. Project completion and other work completed in Q4 are reflected in this liability and settled in accordance with the terms of trade. The amount of \$2.301 million in our current liabilities provides coverage to employee leave entitlements and other financial obligations expected to be settled within the next financial year. Contract liabilities of \$0.946 million reflect initial funding released for projects planned for FY 2024-25 and community contributions towards these projects. These funds have not been recognised as income in this financial year in accordance with provisions of *AASB 1058* and *AASB 15*.

Council's non-current assets have experienced steady growth to aggregate at \$266.296 million with the highest representation from infrastructure assets worth \$235.753 million. Council regards these infrastructure assets as critical and allocates its financial resources to maintain these assets accordingly. A recent statewide condition assessment comparison demonstrates that WWSC is amongst the top performing Council for road and infrastructure assets conditions. The community surveys also reflect higher satisfaction level for Council's delivery services to its residents and rate payers.

Working capital adequacy is reflected by Council's continuing ability to meet its financial obligations. Working capital adequacy for FY 2023-24 is at an optimal level and reflects the changes in grant disbursements by the Commonwealth. Council's financial indicators demonstrate this sustainability.



### Policy Implications

This report is supported by the following West Wimmera Shire Council Policy/s:

- Asset Capitalisation Policy
- Asset Disposal Policy
- Asset Management Policy
- Borrowings Policy
- Communications Policy
- Community Engagement Policy
- Community Support Fund Policy
- Corporate Credit Card and Purchase Cards Policy
- Council Grants Policy
- Fraud & Corruption Control Policy
- Guarantor Policy
- Investment Policy
- Procurement Policy

### Council Plan Implications

This report supports the following sections of the West Wimmera Shire Council Plan 2021 – 2025:

#### **Goal 4 – Good Governance**

- 4.1 Ensure long term financial sustainability.
- 4.2 Engage with the community in a timely and respectful way.
- 4.3 Advocate for our community on issues important to our future.
- 4.4 Develop a high performing accountable organization.
- 4.5 Maintain a rigorous risk management framework.



### **Communication Implications**

Upon audit clearance of the Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement, these documents will be appended to the 2023-24 Annual Report and will become freely available to the public.

In accordance with section 100 of the Act, public notice via local media and Council's website will be provided 14 days prior to the Council Meeting to consider the Annual Report that Council will consider the Annual Report for 2023-24 at a Council Meeting that is open to the public.

This document will be available for inspection by the public and will be published on Council's website. Copies will also be on display at Councils' Edenhope and Kaniva Customer Service Centres.

### **Equal Impact Assessment**

No Equal Impact Assessment is required

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this report recommends that Council approves in principle the 2023-24 draft Financial Statements and Draft Performance Statement and authorises them to be submitted to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office for final audit approval. Following audit approval, Council will include the certified Financial Statements and Performance Statement in the 2023-24 Annual Report.

### **Attachments**

1. 2023-24 annual report v 3 20 September 2024 [5.1.1 - 115 pages]
2. WWSC Annual Financial Statements-( Draft)-2024 19092024 1130 [5.1.2 - 58 pages]
3. WWSC 2023-24 Performance Statement 20092024 [5.1.3 - 14 pages]





## 6 Close of Meeting

**Meeting closed:**

The Unscheduled Council Meeting - 24 September 2024 was declared closed at 2:10 pm

Mayor's Signature

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