



West Wimmera Shire Council

MINUTES

COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 19 March 2025
2:00 pm

Gymbowen Community Hall
Gymbowen



Councillors and Shire Map



MAYOR
Cr. Tim Meyer



**DEPUTY
MAYOR**
Cr. Jodie Pretlove



**Cr. Richard
Hicks**



Cr. Helen Hobbs



Cr. Tom Houlihan





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.

Members of the public are reminded that they are required to remain silent during this meeting, except during Section 5 Questions from the Gallery.

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
Jodie Pretlove, Deputy Mayor
Richard Hicks
Helen Hobbs
Tom Houlihan

Executive Leadership Team:

David Bezuidenhout - Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
James Magee – Acting Director Infrastructure Development & Works (DIDW)

Officers:

Philippa Hicks - Executive Assistant to the CEO
Katie Frost - Governance Manager



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1 Welcome

The Mayor declared the meeting open at 2:15pm.

2 Acknowledgement of Country

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

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

Brendan Pearce - Director Infrastructure Development and Works

James Bentley - Director Corporate and Community Services

4.2 Leave of Absence

Nil

4.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None Declared



5 Questions from the Gallery

5.1 Written Questions on Notice

None Received



5.2 Verbal Questions without Notice

Moved: Cr Richard Hicks

Seconded: Cr Helen Hobbs

That Council suspend Standing Orders for the purpose of receiving questions without notice from the members of the Gallery.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 / 0)

Geoff Dodson - Kaniva

Does the West Wimmera Shire Council always try to hide what they are doing or was this a special thing for the Kelly Street and Paterson Street housing development?

Cr Tim Meyer – The West Wimmera Shire Council have always tried to be transparent with letting the community know we are wanting to build more housing. The land is zoned as residential and it shouldn't be a surprise that people want to build houses on it.

Cr Tom Houlihan – Council only had a short time to get the grant application in and there was a lot of pressure on Council to have it completed.

Charles Ferrier - Kaniva

The Mens' Shed in Kaniva has a grant for building a new shed, where does the Shire sit in the progress of completing the new Mens' Shed and what do I need to do to make sure this happens?

Cr Tim Meyer - We will take the question on notice and follow up where this is at and get back to you.

Moved: Cr Richard Hicks

Seconded: Cr Jodie Pretlove

That Council resume Standing Orders.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 / 0)



6 Delegates Reports

Delegate Reports are for providing feedback on formal council business and are for information only

6.1 Councillor Tim Meyer (Mayor)

Date	Event
20/02/2025	Councillor Budget Workshop Meeting
20/02/2025	Timber Towns Victoria Meeting
25/02/2025	Kaniva Masterplan and Annual Plan Workshop
03/03/2025	Kaniva College Badge Assembly
07/03/2025	VLGGC Circular 1 - Statewide Info Sessions - March 2025
04/03/2025	Strategic Leadership Team Meeting
05/03/2025	Councillor Forum
12/03/2025	Unscheduled Confidential Council Meeting
18/03/2025	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting
19/03/2025	Gymbowen Community Forum
19/03/2025	Pre-Council Meeting
19/03/2025	Council Meeting

6.2 Councillor Jodie Pretlove (Deputy Mayor)

Date	Event
20/02/2025	Councillor Budget Workshop Meeting
25/02/2025	Kaniva Masterplan and Annual Plan Workshop
25/02/2025	Strategic Leadership Team Meeting
05/03/2025	Councillor Forum
07/03/2025	VLGGC Circular 1 - Statewide Info Sessions - March 2025
12/03/2025	Unscheduled Confidential Council Meeting
18/03/2025	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting
19/03/2025	Gymbowen Community Forum
19/03/2025	Pre-Council Meeting
19/03/2025	Council Meeting



6.3 Councillor Richard Hicks

Date	Event
20/02/2025	Budget Workshop Meeting
25/02/2025	Kaniva Masterplan and Annual Plan Workshop
05/03/2025	Councillor Forum Meeting
12/03/2025	Unscheduled Confidential Council Meeting
19/03/2025	Gymbowen Community Forum
19/03/2025	Pre- Council Meeting
19/03/2025	Council Meeting

6.4 Councillor Helen Hobbs

Date	Event
20/02/2025	Budget Workshop Meeting
25/02/2025	Kaniva Masterplan and Annual Plan Workshop
05/03/2025	Councillor Forum Meeting
12/03/2025	Unscheduled Confidential Council Meeting
19/03/2025	Gymbowen Community Forum
19/03/2025	Pre- Council Meeting
19/03/2025	Council Meeting

6.5 Councillor Tom Houlihan

Date	Event
20/02/2025	Budget Workshop Meeting
25/02/2025	Kaniva Masterplan and Annual Plan Workshop
05/03/2025	Councillor Forum Meeting
12/03/2025	Unscheduled Confidential Council Meeting
19/03/2025	Gymbowen Community Forum
19/03/2025	Pre- Council Meeting
19/03/2025	Council Meeting

7 Condolences

Nil



8 Confirmation of Previous Minutes

8.1 Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 19 February 2025

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 19 February 2025 be taken as an accurate record and confirmed.

Moved: Cr Richard Hicks

Seconded: Cr Jodie Pretlove

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 19 February 2025 be taken as an accurate record and confirmed.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 / 0)

Attachments

Nil

9 Business Arising From Previous Minutes

Nil

10 Notices of Motion

There were no Notices of Motion submitted for the agenda.

Nil



11 Councillor Forum Record

11.1 Councillor Forum Record Wednesday, 5 February 2025

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Record for the Councillor Forum Record Wednesday, 5 February 2025 be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Richard Hicks

Seconded: Cr Jodie Pretlove

That the Record for the Councillor Forum Record Wednesday, 5 February 2025 be received and noted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 / 0)

11.2 Councillor Forum Record Wednesday, 5 March 2025

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Record for the Councillor Forum Record Wednesday, 5 March 2025 be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Richard Hicks

Seconded: Cr Jodie Pretlove

That the Record for the Councillor Forum Record Wednesday, 5 March 2025 be received and noted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 / 0)



12 Deputations and Petitions

There were no Petitions or Deputations submitted for the agenda.

13 Chief Executive Officer

No Reports



14 Corporate and Community Services

14.1 Councillor Social Media Policy

Directorate: Corporate and Community Services

Report Author: Governance Manager

Report Purpose: For Decision

Purpose

This report presents a draft Councillor Social Media Policy (the Policy) which is intended to provide guidance to Councillors in the use of social media to ensure they do not breach the Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt the attached Councillor Social Media Policy.

Moved: Cr Jodie Pretlove

Seconded: Cr Tim Meyer

That Council adopt the attached Councillor Social Media Policy.

CARRIED (3 / 1)

Abstention 1

Cr Richard Hicks called for a division

For:

Cr Tom Houlihan, Cr Jodie Pretlove and Cr Tim Meyer

Against:

Cr Helen Hobbs

Abstained:

Cr Richard Hicks



Cr Richard Hicks moved a subsequent motion

Moved: Cr Richard Hicks

Seconded: Cr Helen Hobbs

That Council revisit this policy no later than the November 2025 Council Meeting and in particular, review our current policy in regard to other Councils that have adopted a Social Media Policy

CARRIED (3 / 1)

Abstention 1

Declaration of Interest

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

Background

From 26 October 2024, the *Local Government Act 2020* required all councillors to observe the Model Councillor Code of Conduct (Model Code of Conduct). This sets out individual standards of conduct expected to be observed by councillors when performing their roles as councillors. The Model Code of Conduct replaces the previous statutory requirement for each Council to develop its own Councillor Code of Conduct. The Model Code of Conduct establishes clear standards for the behaviour and responsibilities of councillors. Its purpose is to ensure that councillors can effectively perform their duties and functions, supporting the Council in its overriding role to provide good governance for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community. By setting these expectations, councillors are better equipped to perform their duties in a manner that reflects the values of integrity, transparency, respect and accountability.

In addition, Local Government Victoria provided a “Guidance on the Model Councillor Code of Conduct October 2024” document which states that:

‘to avoid breaching the Model Code of Conduct, Councillors should act consistently with any social media or communications policies or protocols that their own Council has developed to guide the responsible use of social media by Councillors.’

Application of the Model Code of Conduct to social media

It is important for Councillors to understand that the standards of conduct set out in the Model Code of Conduct apply equally when using social media. Social media refers to digital



platforms or services that are used to share content, information and opinions. These can include but are not limited to social networking sites (such as Facebook, LinkedIn), microblogging sites (such as X, Reddit), video and photo sharing sites (such as Instagram, TikTok). Where a councillor describes themselves as a councillor in a social media post or at the top of their page or in their username or profile it is reasonable for members of the public to assume that councillor's activities are being carried out in the performance of their role and that the post is covered by the Model Code of Conduct. While not mandatory, a Social Media Policy was recommended as part of the recent local government reforms. In December 2024, the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) offered a template Councillor Social Media Policy to member Councils. This template has formed the draft policy attached.

Not all councillors are active on social media, and many have no desire to be. This Policy makes clear that there is no presumption that councillors will maintain a social media presence. For those councillors who do maintain a presence, the Policy spells out the expectations that arise. Councillors who have made the decision to use social media triggers certain obligations.

The Policy sets out high level behavioural expectations for councillors on social media. It requires councillors to act in good faith on social media, and to uphold their obligation to ensure that their behaviour does not bring discredit upon the Council.

The role of councillors is a strategic one, and councillors should not be expected to undertake administrative tasks relating to the handling of customer requests. However, many councillors do engage in this activity. This section explains the limitations that exist in councillor handling of requests and what councillors can or can't do.

Risk Management Implications

Risk identified:

Regulatory risk

Reputation risk

Legislative Implications

The report complies with the requirements of the:
Local Government Act 2020

Environmental Implications

Not applicable



Financial and Budgetary Implications

Not applicable

Policy Implications

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

Not applicable

Model Councillor Code of Conduct

Council Plan Implications

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

Goal 4 – Good Governance

4.4 Develop a high performing accountable organisation.

Communication Implications

No Communication Implications

Equal Impact Assessment

No Equal Impact Assessment is required

Conclusion

This Policy provides Councillors with guidelines on how to use social media effectively to maximise community engagement, while balancing community expectations and reputational risk and has been designed to ensure integrity and good governance underpin how Council and Councillors operate.

Attachments

1. 2025 02 25 Draft Councillor Social Media PolicyMarchCouncilMeeting [14.1.1 - 8 pages]



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COUNCIL POLICY							
COUNCILLOR SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%; padding: 2px;">Policy No:</td> <td style="width: 40%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Adopted:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Next review date:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Policy No:		Adopted:		Next review date:	
Policy No:							
Adopted:							
Next review date:							
Executive Director:	Director Corporate & Community Services						
Responsible Officer:	Governance Manager						
Functional Area:	Corporate & Community Services						
Introduction & Background	<p>Social media is a powerful tool to maintain connections between Councillors and members of the public. The use of social media can foster an environment of open communication between Councillors and the municipal community.</p> <p>Used well, social media can be used by Councillors to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthen community engagement; foster transparency and trust; provide a trusted voice in the social media environment; distinguish the role of the individual Councillor from that of the Council; provide another avenue to contact the Councillor directly; and enable Councillors to hear from members of the community that may otherwise be difficult to reach. <p>Councillor social media use also presents risks for Councillors, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the exposure to trolling, cyberbullying and other abusive behaviour; the creation of a platform for the dissemination of misinformation; the creation of an expectation about the 24/7 availability of a Councillor; a significant administrative workload associated with managing a platform; the risk of inadvertently disclosing confidential information; and an exposure to legal liability. 						
Purpose & Objectives	<p>To outline the benefits and risks of social media use by Councillors and provide guidance on its appropriate use and specific provisions which must be observed.</p>						



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<p>Definitions</p>	<p>In this policy:</p> <p>confidential information has the same meaning as at section 3 of the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)</p> <p>health information has the same meaning as at section 3 of the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)</p> <p>social media means online interactive technologies through which individuals, communities and organisations can share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content or pre-made content posted online. Social media may include but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social networking websites (eg Facebook, LinkedIn, Yammer, Threads) • video and photo sharing websites (eg Flickr, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Vimeo, YouTube) • blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs • blogs hosted by media outlets (eg 'comments' on news articles) • micro-blogging (eg Mastadon, Truth Social, X) • wikis and other online community generated forums (eg Wikipedia) • forums, discussion boards and groups (eg Google groups) • vodcasting and podcasting • group messaging technologies/apps (e.g. WhatsApp, SMS) • streaming platforms (e.g. Twitch, Mixer) • geospatial tagging (eg Foursquare, Facebook checkin); • any other tool or emerging technology that allows individuals to publish or communicate in a digital environment (excluding website content) <p>Model Councillor Code of Conduct has the same meaning as at section 3 of the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)</p> <p>personal information has the same meaning as at section 3 of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)</p>
<p>Response to the Overarching Governance Principles of the Local Government Act 2020</p>	<p>Section 9 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> states that a Council must in the performance of its role give effect to the overarching governance principles.</p> <p>This policy is in response to the following overarching governance principle/s of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>:</p> <p>(a) the community engagement principles (section 56)</p> <p>(b) the public transparency principles (section 58)</p>



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Policy Details	
1.	<p>Scope</p> <p>Councillor Social Media</p> <p><i>This part makes clear that a Councillor is not required to have a social media presence but that they have a right to do so. For those Councillors that decide to be active on social media, it sets out their rights and responsibilities relating to their activity.</i></p> <p><u>1.1</u> Councillors are under no obligation to maintain a social media presence.</p> <p><u>1.2</u> Councillors who choose to maintain a social media presence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do so of their own volition; • have a right to express an independent view consistent with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006; and • acknowledge that they are required to adhere to the Model Councillor Code of Conduct. <p><u>1.3</u> Councillors who choose to maintain a social media presence are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance with this policy; • administration of the social media platform; • moderation of community content; • compliance with the terms of service of the social media platform in use. <p><u>1.4</u> The provisions applicable to Councillor social media also apply to a social media presence operated by another person who, with the Councillor's authorisation, administers, moderates, or uploads content on the Councillor's behalf.</p>
2.	<p>Council Resources and Support</p> <p><i>This part outlines the support available from the organisation to Councillors who choose to maintain a social media presence. It also explains the prohibition on the use of Council resources for certain social media activity.</i></p> <p><u>2.1</u> Councillors who choose to maintain a social media presence will be provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical support for Council provided hardware; • access to Council's employee assistance program - a voluntary and confidential service designed to assist Councillors with personal concerns that affect their personal wellbeing and/or performance as a Councillor. <p><u>2.2</u> Councillors will not be provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical or other support for the use of social media platforms; • social media monitoring or reporting services; or • legal advice regarding social media content.



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	<p><u>2.3</u> Councillors must not use Council resources, including Council facilities, computer equipment, smartphones and internet connections for social media activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to gain or attempt to gain, directly or indirectly, an advantage for themselves or for any other person; • to cause, or attempt to cause, detriment to the Council or another person; • in a way that is intended to, or is likely to, affect the result of an election under the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic); • in a way that is intended to, or is likely to, affect the result of an election for a state or federal parliament; or • in the furtherance of private business or commercial activity.
3.	Good Faith Behaviour
	<p><i>This part sets out a requirement for Councillors to act in good faith on social media, and to uphold their obligation to ensure that their behaviour does not bring discredit upon the Council.</i></p> <p>The Model Councillor Code of Conduct requires that Councillors act with integrity, exercise reasonable care and diligence and take reasonable steps to avoid any action which may diminish the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of local government. For Councillors who maintain a social media presence this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not posting content which could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of the Council; • not creating a social media presence purporting to represent a Council auspiced entity, such as an advisory committee, reference group, steering committee or similar; • not posting anonymously, or by using a fake or intentionally misleading identity; • not engaging in trolling, harassment, personal attacks or similar behaviour; • not intentionally publishing misinformation, falsehoods or misleading material; • not engaging in doxing; • not engaging in cyberbullying; and • not publishing defamatory material.
4.	Freedom of Expression
	<p><i>This part sets out the lawful restrictions reasonably necessary to ensure Councillor expression is consistent with the Model Councillor Code of Conduct and with various laws applicable to social media content. It makes clear that the right of Councillors to freely express their views is not otherwise limited.</i></p> <p><u>4.1</u> Councillors enjoy the human right to freedom of expression which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, subject to any lawful restrictions reasonably necessary.</p>



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4.2 Subject to this part, Councillors are free to express an independent view on social media, provided it is made clear to the audience that it is their personal view and does not represent the Council. This includes, but is not limited to:

- expressing a personal view that differs from that of the Council;
- stating a desire for change to a Council policy or position;
- expressing an opinion on a matter that is to come before the Council (without expressing a pre-determined decision);
- encouraging members of the public to participate in the decision-making process;
- expressing disappointment or dissatisfaction or stating that they do not support a Council position or decision;
- explaining why they voted on a matter in the way that they did in a meeting that was open to the public; or
- otherwise engaging in robust public debate.

4.3 Councillors must not post content on their social media that, if posted, would be contrary to the Model Councillor Code of Conduct in that it:

- could reasonably be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of the Council where the Councillor has not been authorised by the mayor to make such a comment;
- is demeaning, abusive, obscene, threatening or of a sexual nature;
- intentionally causes or perpetuates stigma, stereotyping, prejudice or aggression against a person or class of persons;
- constitutes discrimination or vilification
- undermines the council when applying the council's community engagement policy to develop respectful relationships and partnerships with traditional owners, Aboriginal community controlled organisations, and the Aboriginal community;
- undermines the council in fulfilling its obligation under the Act or any other Act (including the Gender Equality Act 2020) to achieve and promote gender equality;
- are not in line with the Council's policies and procedures as a child safe organisation and obligations under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 to the extent that they apply to Councillors;
- adversely affect the health and safety of other persons;
- would bring discredit upon the council;
- would deliberately mislead the council or the public about any matter related to the performance of the councillor's public duties;
- makes council information publicly available where public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest;
- expressly or impliedly requests preferential treatment for themselves or a related person or entity; or
- is otherwise contrary to the Model Councillor Code of Conduct.



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	<p>4.4 Councillors must not post content on their social media where publication would be contrary to law including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic), insofar as it relates to misuse of position, including the disclosure of confidential information; • the Privacy and Data Protection Act (Vic) 2014, insofar as it relates to the disclosure of personal information; • the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic), insofar as it relates to the disclosure of health information; • the Defamation Act 2005 (Vic), in a manner that constitutes defamation; • the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth), in a manner that constitutes an infringement of copyright; • the Summary Offences Act 1966 (Vic), in a manner that is obscene, indecent or uses threatening language and behaviour etc; • the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), in a manner that constitutes stalking; and • the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth), in relation to the use of a carriage service to menace or harass. <p>4.5 Councillors shall not post content that creates a reasonable apprehension of bias in relation to matters to subject to, or potentially subject to, Council decisions.</p>
5.	Customer Requests
	<p><i>This part sets out the process for dealing with customer requests and other inquiries sent to Councillors that are intended for the Council. This part recognises that Council's privacy obligations do not ordinarily enable it to collect personal information via a third party.</i></p> <p>5.1 From time to time, Councillors may receive service requests, complaints, feedback or other correspondence intended for the Council (customer requests) from members of the public via social media channels.</p> <p>5.2 The receipt and handling of customer requests is an operational function of the Council. Councillors in receipt of customer requests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may pass on customer requests to Council's centralised customer request handling process; • may provide the customer with details of the Council's official communication channels; • may refer a customer to Council's website which sets out the official communication channels; or • may determine to take no action. <p>5.3 Councillors shall not solicit customer requests or otherwise encourage members of the public to bypass the Council's official communication channels.</p>



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6.	Moderation of community content
	<p>Councillor social media pages are not official communication channels of the Council and are privately hosted by individual Councillors. This part sets out the rights and obligations of Councillor to moderate content and limit participation on their social media platform.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors have an absolute right to moderate community content on their social media platforms, including comments, reactions and other contributions. • Councillors must remove community content that, if published by the Councillor, would be contrary to the Model Councillor Code of Conduct. • Councillors have an absolute right to block or ban persons from their social media platform at their sole discretion.
7.	Record Keeping
	<p><i>Councillors are not employed by a public office and are therefore not public officers as defined by the Public Records Act 1973 (Vic). This part clarifies that a Councillor does not have any record keeping obligations in respect of social media content.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents made or received by councillors are not public records (regardless of the content) unless they are then received by an employee of the Council. • Councillors are not required to maintain records of social media content for record-keeping purposes.
8.	Clarification Statements
	<p><i>This part provides a series of clarification statements for inclusion on a Councillor's social media platform (in the 'about me', 'biography', 'impressum' or similar place). The statements required will depend on the content hosted by the councillor, and the inclusion of multiple or all of the statements may be required.</i></p> <p>8.1 Councillors who maintain a social media presence must ensure their profile clarifies that their social media presence is not an official platform of the Council. For example:</p> <p><i>"This page is hosted by me in my capacity as an individual. This is not an official page of [Council name] and should not be used for making service or maintenance requests or otherwise contacting Council. Council can be contacted at [link to Council's website]."</i></p> <p>8.2 Councillors who use their social media presence to comment on Council matters must ensure their profile makes it clear that they are speaking in an individual capacity, and not on behalf of the Council. For example:</p> <p><i>"The views expressed made on this social media platform are my own and not that of the Council."</i></p>



Council Policy Manual WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

	<p>8.3 Councillors who enable community content on their social media presence should include a statement asserting the Councillor’s right to control access to the page and to moderate third-party content. For example: <i>“As the host of this page, I endeavour to maintain a safe, positive space for the discussion of Council issues and I reserve the right to hide or delete content and to block or ban users.”</i></p> <p>8.4 Councillors who use their social media presence to publish electoral material must include an authorisation statement in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic), noting that this obligation applies at all times, not just during a formal election period. Councillors may not use a Council address for this purpose. For example: <i>“Authorised by J Citizen, 123 Main Street SUBURB VIC 9999.”</i></p>
9.	Related Documents
	<p>Council Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Privacy Policy • Legislation • Copyright Act 1968 (Cth) • Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) • Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) • Defamation Act 2005 (Vic) • Equal Opportunity Act 2000 (Vic) • Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic) • Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) • Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 (Vic) • Local Government Act 2020 (Vic) • Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) • Summary Offences Act 1966 (Vic)

Policy Adopted:	Ordinary meeting	Minute Book Page	SRV Governance-Policies, Procedures, Plans Strategies
Policy Reviewed:			
Policy Reviewed:			
Policy Reviewed:			



14.2 Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Draft Minutes and Chair Bi-annual Report

Directorate: Corporate and Community Services

Report Author: Finance and Rating Coordinator

Report Purpose: For Decision

Purpose

This report presents Council with the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 10 December 2024 and the Chair bi-annual report relating to Committee meetings held 11 June 2024, 8 August 2024 and 19 September 2024.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

1. **Receives the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held 10 December 2024.**
2. **Receives the Audit and Risk Committee Chair Bi annual report relating to the Committee meetings held on 11 June 2024, 8 August 2024 and 19 September 2024.**

Moved: Cr Jodie Pretlove

Seconded: Cr Richard Hicks

That Council:

1. **Receives the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held 10 December 2024.**
2. **Receives the Audit and Risk Committee Chair Bi annual report relating to the Committee meetings held on 11 June 2024, 8 August 2024 and 19 September 2024.**

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 / 0)

Declaration of Interest

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

Background

Section 53 (1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that each Council establish an Audit and Risk Committee. The Audit and Risk Committee is a formally appointed Advisory Committee of Council.



The Audit and Risk Committee's role is to report to Council and provide appropriate advice and recommendations relevant to its charter in order to facilitate decision making by Council in relation to the discharge of its responsibilities. The Audit and Risk Committee plays a key role in assisting Council to fulfil its governance and overseeing responsibilities in relation to financial reporting, internal control, risk management systems, ethical accountability and the internal audit function.

The Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) does not have executive powers or authority to implement actions in areas over which management has responsibility and does not have any delegated financial responsibility. The Committee does not have any management functions and is therefore independent of management. Their role is to review, report and provide independent advice.

Risk Management Implications

Risk identified:

Financial risk

Regulatory risk

Reputation risk

Strategic risk

Legislative Implications

The report complies with the requirements of the:
Local Government Act 2020

Environmental Implications

Not applicable

Financial and Budgetary Implications

Not applicable

Policy Implications

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

Fraud & Corruption Control Policy

Risk Management Policy

Council Plan Implications



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

Goal 4 – Good Governance

4.5 Maintain a rigorous risk management framework.

Goal 5 – Our Commitment Values

Accountability - We will be responsible, take ownership of our actions and are committed to good governance, excellence, transparency and advocating for our community.

Communication Implications

No Communication Implications

Equal Impact Assessment

No Equal Impact Assessment is required

Conclusion

The draft minutes of the previous Audit and Risk Committee meeting and the Chair Bi-annual report are attached for Council's information.

Attachments

1. 2024 12 10 Audit and Risk Committee Minutes [**14.2.1** - 18 pages]
2. West Wimmera ARC Half Yearly Report November 2024 [**14.2.2** - 5 pages]



West Wimmera Shire Council

Audit and Risk Committee Meeting MINUTES

Tuesday 10 December 2024
2:00 pm

Microsoft Teams

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.



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1 Procedural

1.1 Required to Attend

Committee Members

Mick Jaensch (Chair)
Andrew Johnson
Celeste Gregory
Cr Tim Meyer

Executive Leadership Team, Managers and Officers:

David Bezuidenhout, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
James Bentley, Director Corporate and Community Services (DCCS)
Brendan Pearce, Director Infrastructure Development and Works (DIDW)
Abbas Mehr, Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
Phillip Gillin, Occupational Health, Safety and Risk Manager
Janet Watt, Human Resources Manager
Leanne Lucas, Finance & Rating Coordinator
Philippa Hicks, EA to the CEO

External Parties:

Kathie Teasdale, RSD Audit
Paul Harrison, RSD Audit

1.2 Apologies

Cr Jodie Pretlove
Katie Frost, Governance Manager

1.3 Conflict of Interest Declarations

All Members have a personal responsibility to ensure they are aware of the provisions mandated in the Local Government Act 2020 with regard to Conflict of Interest disclosures.

No disclosures were made.



2 General Business

2.1 Confirmation of Previous Minutes

All meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee are minuted in line with good governance practices. The minutes of the previous meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held 19 September are attached for members' endorsement.

Celeste Gregory Moved and Mick Jaensch Seconded that the Audit and Risk Committee endorse the minutes from the previous meeting held 19 September 2024.



4 Internal Audit

4.1 Internal Audit Update Report

Item 4 was moved to allow Kathie Teasdale and Paul Harrison from RSD Audit to provide an update on the internal audit program before leaving the meeting.

Status report was provided to the Committee to show progress against three-year plan. The Infrastructure Asset Management Audit is not yet finalised. Report is currently with management to provide responses.

The Infrastructure Asset Management Audit to be reviewed and a response provided to the internal auditors as soon as possible.

RSD have recently completed the internal audit into Human Resources, with the final report attached for members' information and an update provided with the report being positive overall and the Human Resources function operating effectively.

4.2 Draft scopes for projects to be completed in the next 12 months

RSD Audit will be conducting an internal audit into Occupational Health & Safety during 2025. RSD has submitted the Draft Project Scope for this upcoming internal audit as per plan and subject to review and feedback provided by the Audit & Risk Committee, this Draft Project Scope will be finalised.

An audit into Internal Audit Actions should be considered by the Committee in the future.

The Audit & Risk Committee noted the Internal Audit Update.



3 Financial Reporting

3.1 Quarterly Budget Report

This report presents the Quarterly Budget Report for the period ended 30 September 2024.

The Local Government Act 2020 ('the Act') requires Council to implement the principles of sound financial management (s.101). Section 97 of the Act requires that Council be presented with a Quarterly Budget Report comparing actual to budgeted revenue and expenditure for the financial year to date every quarter.

The financial reports show an analysis of the actuals to budget forecasts at 30 September 2024. The financial results for Q1 FY 2024-25 present most of the financial indicators developing in line with budgeted targets and no adverse variances to report. The report also includes a summary of various category of capital works started during Q1 FY 2024-25 and as the suitable weather conditions support these works during October to March every year, the capital works have gained right momentum construction and development activities are underway.

The Audit and Risk Committee received and noted the Quarterly Budget Report as at 30 September 2024.

3.3 CEO Corporate Card Expenditure

West Wimmera Shire Council holds a small number of credit cards for the use of staff and the Mayor. Statements from the Chief Executive Officer's credit card along with a quarterly report detailing the usage by cardholder and by expenditure type are provided for the Committee's information.

A standing item at all Audit and Risk Committee meetings will be a sighting and check of the review of WWSC Credit Cards.

In addition to the presentation of the CEO Credit Card statements, quarterly reports are presented for the period July 2024 to November 2024 detailing the usage by cardholder and by expenditure type. The report provides different categories of expenses paid through the credit card for information.

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the use of CEO's Council Credit Card report.



3.4 Budget timetable

The Local Government Act 2020 requires the Council to prepare and adopt its annual budget along with its deliverable objectives provided in Council's Annual Plan. This process of budget development undergoes various stages of planning, development, internal consultations, Council's internal workshop for reviews before the Draft Annual Budget goes into public domain for community consultation.

WWSC has initiated its planning phase for Annual Budget 2025-26 and Annual Plan 2025-26 and first few rounds of manager meetings have been completed. Discussions have covered our internal workflow as well as basic parameters driving the budget development process. There will be startup activities happening in the process which may include service reviews to set performance targets, workforce planning, capital works planning, prospective funding and grants etc.

The Senior Leadership Team has been provided with a timeline of various annual and strategic documents which will be developed in next few months / quarters. WWSC has demonstrated business process improvements in development and consolidation of its annual budget and delivering this strategic document to the community and to the regulatory authorities in a timely manner.

The 2025 Council Strategic Documents Development Timeline and 2025/26 budget timeline was attached for the Committee to note.

The Audit & Risk Committee noted the 2025 Budget Timeline and Council Strategic Documents Development Timeline.

Action: Review of the Draft Long Term Financial Plan to be added in annual work plan in June or September 2025.

Action: Community engagement needs to be included under the Long Term Financial Plan in the timeline.



3.5 Councillor and CEO Reimbursements

The *Local Government Act 2020* allows that Councillors and staff including the Chief Executive Officer are not left out of pocket for the carrying out of Council business. Accordingly, any out of pocket expenses incurred by Councillors and the Chief Executive Officer can be reimbursed to them upon receipt of a suitable claim.

From time-to-time Councillors and the Chief Executive Officer incur expenses in the course of undertaking Council Business. These expenses may include travel, accommodation, meals or minor equipment necessary to undertaking Council business. It is reasonable that these expenses be reimbursed.

Reimbursement is made after a claim is submitted in the appropriate form including the provision of receipts. Councillor claims are approved or rejected by the Chief Executive Officer, with the any claims made by Chief Executive Officer being approved or rejected by the Mayor.

Reimbursements are approved in accordance with Council's Councillor Expense Policy and must show a nexus to formal Council business.

Councillor and Chief Executive Officer reimbursements are attached for Member's information, in accordance with s.40(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The Audit & Risk Committee received the report on Councillor and Chief Executive reimbursements.



5 Risk Management & Internal Controls

5.1 OHS & Risk Management Update

This report provides an update to the Audit and Risk Committee on current and emerging risk management and OHS issues.

Council's risk register provides a high-level rating of risks which affect Council's service provision. All actions carry some level of risk, whilst it is not possible to eliminate risk, Council can employ a system of internal controls to mitigate the potential occurrence and effects of risk. The register records those risks which are at a strategic level which Council believes may have a material impact upon its operations, and a summary of the internal controls in place to manage the risk. Council is currently working on improving the structure of the risk register.

A verbal update was provided by the OHS & Risk Manager outlining the following attachments:

Appendix 1: OHS Committee Minutes No 170 18 November 2024

Appendix 2: West Wimmera Shire Council Business Continuity Plan Test Report and Recommendations

Appendix 3: West Wimmera Shire Council Risk Register Current

Appendix 4: Strategic Risk Review Committee Minutes 5 December 2024

Appendix 5: Strategic Risk Register Current

Appendix 6: West Wimmera Shire Council 2025-26 EML Premium Forecast

OHS Responsibilities Training

On the 6 August 2024 the Council engaged AEGIS to deliver a session on OHS Responsibilities to ELT, Managers, Supervisors and Coordinators, the 4-hour session was attended by 31 key stakeholders.

This training has increased managers/supervisor's enquiries regarding their OHS responsibilities and creating conversations about risk mitigation/elimination.



Incident Reporting

Title	2023					2024					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	%	Total
Incidents	3	3	7	9	22	10	6	3	5	9.09%	24
Hazard	8	8	15	6	37	12	5	7	5	21.62%	29
Near Miss	4	2	6	9	21	9	3	5	2	9.52%	19
Vehicle	6	7	2	3	18	6	4	3	5	0%	18
Total	21	20	30	27	98	37	18	18	17	8.16	90

The 2024 Q4 report ended on 12 November 2024 there are 7 weeks remaining in the 2024 reporting period, so the data above is not a true comparison of incident reporting.

Notifiable Incidents

There were no notifiable incidents during the reporting period.

Training Update

- Council First Aid (Extra sessions) 14 October 2024 15 participants.
- Children's Services and Community Support Workers Manual Handling 4 November 2024 positive feedback from all that attended.
- Skin cancer checks 29,30 and 31 October 2024 63 Council staff had skin cancer checks there were 7 referrals for further medical advice.
- Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) Refresher 29 October 2024
- 1 5-day Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) course 2 December 2024
- Fork-Lift license's
- Electrical spotter's tickets
- Fire Warden training January/February 2025.
- White Card Construction Induction ongoing
- All employees reinduction approximately 60% complete
- Asbestos awareness (online)



Policies and Procedures update

Approved

Nil

In Progress

Fit for Work Policy to align with recent OHS Responsibilities training.

OHS Management Plan

The OHS Management Plan is being developed as a key strategic OHS document, it will provide a framework of OHS within the Council and will link external documents within the plan. The OHS Management Plan will be managed on the Intranet, also on the intranet will be links to insurance, risk management and Work Cover procedures.

Incorporated in the plan will be a 3-year quality plan to improve both compliance and capacity of OHS within Council.

It is currently 70% complete.

OHS Committee Minutes

Appendix 1 OHS Committee Minutes No 170 18 November 2024

Contractor Induction

The KPI for contractor induction is to have all contractors inducted that work for the West Wimmera Shire Council.

Date	Completed
13-9-2023	64 contractors
6-3-2024	176 contractors
4-6-2024	200 contractors
10-9-2024	253 contractors
9-12-2024	265 contractors



Business Continuity Plan (BCP)

Appendix 2 West Wimmera Shire Council Business Continuity Plan Test Report and Recommendations

The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) has been reviewed and updated with minimal changes other than contact detail changes. It was approved on the 1 May 2024.

The BCP will be reviewed in January 2025 updating contact details and implementing the recommendations from the West Wimmera Shire Council BCP Test conducted by MAV LMI Insurance on the 31 July 2024, the revised/approved BCP will be presented to the first Audit and Risk Committee Meeting in 2025.

Council will engage MAV LMI to conduct an annual audit of the BCP during November/December to coincide with Councils BCP review in January.

Legal Matters

- A former employee has lodged a conciliation hearing after their work cover claim was denied twice. During conciliation an agreement could not be reached by either party. Work Safe has issued a genuine dispute between both parties. This has been referred to the Work Safe Wickes Committee for a decision.

Risk Management Update

Strategic Risk Register

Appendix 3 Strategic Risk Register Current

All current Strategic Risks remain unchanged.

The Executive Leadership Team has created the Strategic Risk Register Committee (SRRC) and will focus on developing and maintaining a current effective robust strategic risk register.

The SRRC will meet quarterly prior to Audit and Risk Committee meetings to develop, review and discuss emerging risks. The committee is made up of the Senior Leadership Team Members.

Appendix 4 Strategic Risk Review Committee Minutes



Insurance

The 2025-26 Insurance renewals process will begin in early January 2025

Insurance Revaluation of Combined Artworks and Collectables

On the 17 September 2024 Council have engaged Simon Storey Valuers to revalue Councils Artworks and Artifacts, the last valuation undertaken was in 2012.

The current collection is valued at \$2,321,465, an increase of approximately \$500,000 from the 2012 valuation. The increase to Councils premium is less than \$1,000.

Appendix 5 West Wimmera Shire Council 2023-24 Combined Artworks and Collectables

Workcover

The transition to Councils new Work Cover insurer EML on the 1 October 2024 has been excellent with improved communication and return to work outcomes.

EML have provided a 2025-26 premium forecast predicting a premium reduction of \$125,000.

Appendix 6 West Wimmera Shire Council 2025-26 Premium Forecast

The Audit and Risk Committee received and noted the OHS & Risk update.



5.2 Instrument of Delegation

The *Local Government Act 2020* provides that a council and its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) may, by Instrument of Delegation, delegate to a member of staff, any power, duty or function of the Council other than some powers (such as adoption of the budget), that are reserved for Council decision. The S6 Instrument of Delegation allows for the Council to delegate to various positions in the organisation.

Every six months, delegations are reviewed by Council's solicitors who update any new, changed or deleted provisions of legislation. Updated provisions include the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the *Food Act 1984* and the *Residential Tenancies (Caravan Parks and Movable Dwellings Registration and Standards) Regulations 2020*. These updated provisions (see attachment) will be included into the S6 Instrument of Delegations to be approved by Council.

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the updated provisions to be included in the S6 Instrument of Delegation and for future reports to include detail on changes in report rather than the attachment.

5.3 Completion of Network Project Upgrade

On 29 November, the internal (LAN – Local Area Network) and external (SD WAN- Software-Defined Wide Area Network) network upgrade was completed, and there is now significant improvement in the stability and connectivity on the WWSC networks within our Council sites. This project commenced in June 2024 and has been completed with the support of Kenstra and CentorrinoTechnologies. It was supervised by Council's Information Systems Lead, Ms Morgaan Wilson.

At each Council office, depot and kinder there is now a more secure and consistent internet connection. The updated IT hardware and software will also provide robust additional network security, to ensure that Council is in the best position to deal with cybersecurity threats.

Upgrading from the existing Multi-Protocol Label Switching network to a modern SD WAN network will facilitate enhanced security countermeasures and more consistent and reliable network connectivity.

The Audit & Risk Committee noted the Completion of Network Project Upgrade.



6 Other Responsibilities

6.1 CEO Update

The Chief Executive Officer provided a verbal update on organisational matters relevant to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Contract Renewal – RSD Audit

- We have renewed our contract for internal audit services with RSD Audit for a term of 3 years from April 2024 to April 2027. RSD Audit has accepted the contract and we have shared the update with Audit & Risk Committee as advised by the Chair.

Budget 2024-25

- Our Draft Budget was presented to the Council Meeting in April 2024 and was approved for Community and Public Advertisement for a mandatory period of 28 days.
- During the advertisement period, we had notifications of non-successful applications on two capital grants worth \$1M each.
- The discontinuation of Heavy Vehicle Safety & Support Program (HVSSP) caused another reduction of \$1.789 million in grants income. The new Safer Local Roads & Infrastructure Program (SLRIP) will replace this discontinued grant and the funding details will be available later in Q1, 2024-25
- Due to these changes, the budgeted programs and capital works had to be reviewed and the final budget was redrafted with a deficit operational result of \$697K and reduction in Capital Works Program from \$13.005M to \$9.395M.

Quarterly Report

- Our Q3 Report presents \$6.878M (Budget: \$ 11.710M) worth of capital works delivered or progressed with some projects nearing completion.
- We estimate our capital works delivery to exceed \$10.150M during final quarter as project milestones are accounted for in Q4.
- Our indicative Financial Assistance Grants for 2024-25 is \$7.405M as communicated by the Victorian Local Government Grants Commission (VLGGC). Disbursement plan has not yet been released.

2022/23 Audit finalisation

- Meeting with VAGO and Auditors, action points determined, all parties working to resolve.

The Audit and Risk Committee noted the CEO update.



6.2 Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan

Part of providing effective oversight to Council activities by the Audit & Risk Committee (the Committee) includes the schedule of regular activities to be reviewed by the Committee.

This allows the Committee to ensure that all important aspects of the Council's activities are being overseen.

An Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan provides the Committee with a set process to review and assess important documentation and reports and a chance to analyse key risks to Council in a structured manner. Attached is a proposed Annual Work Plan as developed for Council by RSD Audit.

There are a number of items listed on the Work Plan which fall due in December which are included as items of business (either new or standing items) separately in this agenda.

The Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan provides the Committee with a clear process to assess and analyse risk to Council.

The Audit and Risk Committee received and noted the annual work plan and to ensure the work plan items are checked for each agenda.

6.3 Audit & Risk Committee Chair Bi-Annual Report

As outlined in section 5.7 of the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, and in accordance with section 54(5) of The Act, the Audit and Risk Committee shall prepare a biannual audit and risk report that describes the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee and includes its findings and recommendations. This report must be provided to the Chief Executive Officer for tabling at the next Council meeting.

The report has been prepared by Chair Mr Mick Jaensch and has been provided to Members for review. It will be tabled along with the minutes of this meeting at the next Council meeting.

The Audit and Risk Committee received and noted the Audit & Risk Committee Chair Bi-Annual Report.



6.4 Adopt Annual Meeting Schedule 2025

As outlined in the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, the committee must meet at least four times per year, with authority to convene additional meetings as circumstances require. To assist with planning, a proposed meeting schedule for the following 12 month period was developed and provided for members consideration and feedback.

The Audit and Risk Committee endorse the meeting schedule for the 2025 calendar year.

6.5 Review outstanding action items

The Audit Committee recommends particular actions to Council and management from time to time with an aim of improving governance and accountability.

For the Audit and Risk Committee to be effective it should make recommendations to Council and management on improvements that can be made to Council's governance controls and must then follow up with Council and Management as to the implementation status of these recommendations.

The attached schedule outlines the status of recommendations the Audit Committee has made at its meetings.

It is important that the Audit Committee follow up on the progress of any recommendations it has made to ensure that Council maintains a sound governance and internal control framework.

Action: Register of Internal Audit Actions are to be provided to the next meeting.

Cyber Security audit management response

The cyber security audit undertaken by RSD Audit made a number of observations, two of which were identified with a "High" risk rating, namely "Data Integrity Protection – Penetration Testing" and "Data Integrity Protection – Review of Event Logs".

As described in agenda item 5.3 "Completion of Network Project Upgrade", a substantial project relating to the upgrade of Council's internal (LAN) network and external (SD WAN) network was completed on 29 November 2024.

The successful completion of this project involving the upgrade of Council's network infrastructure was the essential first step in addressing the observations identified in the



Cyber Security audit. It is anticipated that action regarding the issues identified will be completed early in the 2025 calendar year and will accordingly be reported to the Committee at its first meeting in 2025.

The Audit and Risk Committee receives the report on Audit Committee actions update for information.

6.6 Resignation of Mick Jaensch, Chairperson

On the 18 November 2024, Council received a letter of resignation from Mr Mick Jaensch, Chairperson of our Audit and Risk Committee.

Mick has served as Chairperson for four years. During that time, Council has had the benefit of his extensive experience in local government, and his wise and insightful counsel has been an invaluable contribution to the enhancement of our organisational sustainability and accountability. The Committee has flourished under his stewardship, and we thank him for playing such an integral role in driving the continuous improvement of our Council's policies and processes.

We wish Mick all the very best in his future endeavours, secure in the knowledge that his work advancing the interests of local government will continue for a long time to come.

Next Meeting:

11 March 2025

**West Wimmera Shire Council
Audit & Risk Committee
Activity Report
November 2024**

This report covers the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC or Committee) activity for the three ARC meetings held on 11 June 2024, 8 August 2024 and 19 September 2024. All Committee members have reviewed this report.

1. Purpose of this Report

This report meets the reporting requirements to the Council as mandated by the *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA) under section 54(5). It importantly provides the Council with a summary of the matters the ARC has addressed in the reporting period in discharging its responsibilities under its Charter.

2. Committee Charter

The ARC's Charter is set by the Council and was reviewed and approved by the Council following changes recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee on 9 April 2024.

3. What has the Council asked the ARC to do?

As a reminder to the Council, the business of the Committee is briefly summarised below and is based on the requirements Council established in the Committee Charter referred to above. The work of the Committee is to assist the Council regarding its prudential, governance, and responsibilities under sections 8 and 28 of the LGA.

In essence, the work of the Committee includes the following key matters:

- a) Monitor the quality of the annual financial report and the annual performance statement.
- b) Monitor the effectiveness of the Council's risk management performance.
- c) Monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the systems and controls management has in place to enable the business to deliver on Council strategic and operational plans.
- d) Ensure that the annual external audit of those statements is completed, and that management addresses any serious matters raised by the auditors.
- e) Monitor the quality of the internal audit program and delivery of internal audit plans. These plans are aimed at identifying any system and control concerns that the Council may have in key areas of operations.
- f) Monitor Council performance regarding legislative and policy compliance.

4. Committee Business

The agendas for our meetings are driven by the Committee's Annual Work Plan (AWP). At the meetings held in this reporting period, the key matters considered are summarised in the table below.

Key Matters Considered at Recent Meetings

Item Number	Topic	11-Jun-24	8-Aug-24	19-Sep-24
1	Received a report on the Annual Budget and Annual Plan for the 2024/25 year	√		
2	Reviewed the Council's Quarterly Financial Report	√		
3	Received a report on proposed debtor write offs			√
4	Received an update on the status of the 2022/23 External Audit of the Councils Financial Statements	√		
5	Reviewed the 2022/23 Annual Financial Statements and met with the external auditors and discussed the audit closing report and Management letter. The ARC recommended that the Council adopt in principle the Annual Financial Statements		√	
6	Reviewed the 2023/24 Annual Financial Statements and met with the external auditors and discussed the audit closing report and Management letter. The ARC recommended that the Council adopt in principle the Annual Financial Statements			√
7	Received an update on the status of the internal audit program and outstanding management actions against previous internal audits	√		√
8	Received a report on the draft information, communication technology and digital strategy			√
9	Received a report on the progress of capital spending against the budget	√		
10	Received the OHS and Risk Management Update report	√		√
11	Received a draft of the Strategic Risk Register	√		√
12	Reviewed Councillor and CEO Reimbursements & Credit Card usage	√		√
13	Received an update on the Revenue and Rating Plan of the Council.	√		
14	Reviewed a report on supplier spend analysis			√
15	Received an update from the CEO on matters relevant to ARC	√		√
16	Reviewed Policy Tracker Listing	√		√
17	Noted the actions arising from audit committee discussions	√		√
18	Reviewed the ARC Work Plan	√		√
19	Reviewed the Audit and Risk Committee Bi-Annual Report	√		

5. Meetings & Membership

Committee Meetings

As noted above, the Committee met three times on 11 June 2024, 8 August 2024 and 19 September 2024. Councillors Bruce Meyer and Jodie Pretlove were the Council's representatives on the Committee.

The independent members of the Committee appointed by the Council are Mick Jaensch

(Chair), Celeste Gregory, and Andrew Johnson.

Member attendance at the three meetings was excellent with all members attending all meetings.

6. The Committee's Annual Work Plan

The Committee has dealt with all matters scheduled for consideration in the ARC AWP in the reporting period.

7. Key Activities for the Reporting Period

The ARC's work has continued to be guided by the Annual Workplan (AWP), and all matters listed in the AWP for the three scheduled meetings have been addressed. The AWP is reviewed at each meeting to ensure its continued relevance.

In terms of highlights, outside of the normal recurring business items discussed at each meeting, the following were significant discussions at the Audit and Risk Committee.

June Meeting

- The key issue at the June 2024 meeting continued to be a focus on the outstanding external audit for 2022/23. The ARC expressed concern over the time that had elapsed without this matter reaching a resolution. Management assured the ARC that it was doing all that it could to resolve the matter urgently.
- The ARC reviewed the status of the 2024/25 Annual Budget process and was satisfied that the process would be completed in line with the 30 June 2024 legislative requirement.
- There was a focus at this meeting on the ARC reviewing the asset valuation and condition policy position of the Council for this to be applied in the preparation of the 2023/24 audit outcomes.
- The ARC noted that the Council was not proposing to amend its existing Revenue and Rating Plan but would undertake a more thorough review in the period post the election where the Plan is required to be re-adopted.

August Meeting

- The August meeting was a special meeting of the ARC called specifically to allow the Committee to review the final draft of the 2022/23 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement. The ARC met with the external auditors both in the open meeting and held an in-camera meeting with the auditors. The ARC considered both the Closing Report from the auditors and the Management letter. The ARC recommended to the Council that it adopt in principle the 2022/23 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement.

September Meeting

- Similar to the August meeting, the key item of business on the agenda at the September meeting was a review of the 2023/24 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement. The ARC again met with the external auditors and considered the final Closing Audit report and interim Management Letter. It was noted that the one remaining item that was outstanding related to further information required by the auditor concerning the Performance Statement. The ARC recommended to the Council that it adopt in principle the Annual Financial Statements, noting that it could not offer the same recommendation in respect of the Performance Statement due to the outstanding items.

- Another key item discussed at this meeting related to the ICT and Digital Strategy and the ARC noted the importance of this strategy for the Council moving forward.
- The IT environment of the Council is considered by the ARC to be one of the key risk areas for the Council but also an area of opportunity for the Council to improve its ability to efficiently and effectively deliver quality services to its community. Ongoing financial investment in this area is supported by the ARC.

8. Frequency and Timing of Activity Reports

As indicated earlier in this report, these reports are required to be provided to the Council twice per annum. The Committee is of the view that these reports need to be informative about the business of the Committee. Feedback on this report by the Council is welcomed.

9. What This Report Means for Council

This section of the bi-annual report is usually reserved for any concerns the Audit and Risk Committee wants to be made known to the West Wimmera Shire Council.

In the last report, the matter of the outstanding annual audit for the 2022/23 Annual Financial Statements was raised. This matter was finally concluded on 8 August 2024 from an ARC perspective, with the committee recommending to the Council to adopt in principle the financial statements and, subsequently, the Council adopting the Statements and VAGO providing final sign-off.

This process was extremely protracted, with these accounts essentially concluding almost 12 months after what would be considered a normal outcome.

Whilst that outcome was not positive for either the Council or the ARC, what was very pleasing was the work that management undertook on the 2023/24 Annual Financial Statements with the ARC being in a position to recommend to the Council to adopt in principle the Statements at its meeting on 19 September 2024.

Whilst there remained some further work to be undertaken to finalise the performance statement, Council officers quickly attended to this, and advice was provided to the ARC in late October that VAGO had provided final sign-off on both the accounts and the performance statement.

On behalf of the ARC, we would like to extend our thanks to the Council Officers for the significant improvement in the approach to the 2023/24 audit process.

The only other matter that the ARC would like to draw particular attention to is the ongoing attention that is being paid to the future information technology environment at West Wimmera. From an audit and risk perspective, this is essential, and the committee would like to continue to urge the Council to keep investing in this critical area.

Finally, I would like to note that this half-yearly report will be my last with my resignation from the Audit and Risk Committee to take effect following the next meeting to be held on Tuesday 10 December 2024.

I would like to thank West Wimmera Shire Council for providing me with the opportunity to chair this committee over the past four years and wish the Council well in the future.

10. Meeting Schedule for 2025

At the time of writing this report, the meeting schedule for 2025 has yet to be set but will be resolved at the December meeting.

Yours sincerely

Mick Jaensch

Chair
On behalf of the Audit & Risk Committee
2 December 2024



14.3 Edenhope and District Community Centre - Community Financial Contribution

Directorate: Corporate and Community Services

Report Author: Director Corporate and Community Services

Report Purpose: For Decision

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors of the current status of the community donations which have been received with respect to the construction of the Edenhope and District Community Centre, and to seek a resolution to write-off the outstanding amount owing by the community

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

That Council write-off the amount of \$11,151.59 owed to Council by the Edenhope Hall Development Project Advisory Group on behalf of the community.

Moved: Cr Richard Hicks

Seconded: Cr Jodie Pretlove

That Council write-off the amount of \$11,151.59 owed to Council by the Edenhope Hall Development Project Advisory Group on behalf of the community.

CARRIED (4 / 1)

Declaration of Interest

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

Background

The cost of the redevelopment of the Edenhope and District Community Hall included a community commitment in the amount of \$135,915.00. Council records indicate that donations were received from the community in the amount of \$122,983.82. In early 2024, Mr Geoff Langsworth approached Council as the sole active committee member and suggested that a public sale of items still held in storage from the old Mechanics' Hall had the potential to further reduce the community contribution owing to Council. With Council's support and assistance from Officers, public sales were conducted on site on 17 March 2024 and 24 March 2024, and the amount of \$1,084.00 was raised, which Mr Langsworth remitted to Council on 13 May 2024. Mr Langsworth spent considerable time and effort in



raising these sale proceeds, and his genuine commitment and passion was evident to all who were involved in this matter and appreciated by Councillors.

In addition, there is an amount of \$695.59 remaining in the Bendigo Bank account which was used for community donations. Accordingly, after all these amounts have been accounted for, the amount of \$11,151.59 remains outstanding.

The community committee responsible for raising the community contributions was called the Edenhope Hall Development Project Advisory Group and consisted of Helen Mulraney-Roll, Fred Carberry, Geoff Langsworth, Sara McDonnell, Jess Nelson and Alex King. The last meeting of the Advisory Group was convened on 18 April 2023. Due to various reasons, it has no longer been possible for a quorum to be achieved at any proposed committee meeting.

Considering that the Edenhope Hall Development Project Advisory Group is now defunct, it is highly improbable that any further funds will be received as community contributions with respect to this project.

Risk Management Implications

Risk identified:

There are no obvious risks for Council to mitigate or eliminate in regard to the proposal considered for funding support in this report.

Legislative Implications

Not Applicable

Environmental Implications

Not applicable

Financial and Budgetary Implications

Council may be required to write-off any outstanding community contribution amount \$11,151.59 should no further donations be received from the community. It is very unlikely that any such further donations will be received.

Policy Implications

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

Not applicable



Council Plan Implications

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

Goal 1 – Liveable & Healthy Community

1.3 Provide well planned and sustainable community infrastructure.

Goal 4 – Good Governance

4.1 Ensure long term financial sustainability.

Communication Implications

No Communication Implications

Equal Impact Assessment

No Equal Impact Assessment is required

Conclusion

The community contribution for the Edenhope and District Community Centre has not been paid in full. It is highly unlikely that any outstanding balance will be recoverable and therefore consideration must be given to the viability of the debt being retained.

Attachments

Nil



15 Infrastructure Development and Works

15.1 Asset Management Policy and Asset Management Strategy Review

Directorate: Infrastructure Development and Works

Report Author: Assets & GIS Coordinator

Report Purpose: For Decision

Purpose

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider a reviewed Asset Management Policy and Asset Management Strategy.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt the attached Asset Management Policy and Asset Management Strategy.

Moved: Cr Richard Hicks

Seconded: Cr Helen Hobbs

That Council adopt the attached Asset Management Policy and Asset Management Strategy.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 / 0)

Declaration of Interest

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

Background

The Asset Management Policy is the framework that enables strategic and quality governance of Council's owned and controlled assets. The Policy reflects Council Plan objectives pertaining to Asset Management and service delivery.

An Asset Management Strategy seeks to implement best practice in asset management by:

- ensuring asset management decisions are based on whole of life costing.
- monitoring the condition and performance of all assets.
- understanding the service level, the asset is required to provide.



- understanding the remaining useful life of an asset or its components.
- understanding the current deterioration and consumption model for each asset category.
- using a condition degradation model to determine future renewal demands.
- evaluating alternative means of service provision.
- balancing competing needs across functions to minimise duplication.
- continually seeking opportunities for multiple use of assets.
- considering any proposal to dispose of an asset, where such disposal may affect the level of service being provided.
- endeavouring to align the timing of expenditure on assets, particularly renewal or upgrade, with the actual use of the asset to avoid deferred expenditure being borne by future generations.
- aligning WWSC's asset management practices with the industry best practice.
- applying the Australian Accounting Standards.
- referencing the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia International Infrastructure Management Manual.

Council has had an Asset Management Policy and Strategy in place previously to assist in guiding Council in the management and renewal of assets with a medium to long term view. Both policies are now due for renewal.

The review of the policies aligns with Council's Asset Management Plan as required by the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Risk Management Implications

Risk identified:

There are no obvious risks for the Council to mitigate or eliminate in regard to the proposal considered for funding support in this report.

Legislative Implications

The report complies with the requirements of the:
Local Government Act 2020

Environmental Implications

Nil

Financial and Budgetary Implications

Not applicable



Policy Implications

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

Asset Disposal Policy
Asset Management Policy
Asset Management Strategy

Council Plan Implications

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

Goal 1 – Liveable & Healthy Community

1.3 Provide well planned and sustainable community infrastructure.

Goal 2 – Diverse and Prosperous Economy

2.6 Provide infrastructure to sustain economic activity.

Goal 4 – Good Governance

4.1 Ensure long term financial sustainability.

Communication Implications

No Communication Implications

Equal Impact Assessment

No Equal Impact Assessment is required

Conclusion

It would be appropriate for the Council to adopt the amended Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Policy. Both documents should be reviewed in four years along with the Asset Management Plan.

Attachments

1. Asset Management Policy Cnl Mtg [15.1.1 - 6 pages]
2. Asset Management Strategy 2025 [15.1.2 - 10 pages]



Council Policy Manual WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL POLICY							
ASSET MANAGEMENT POLICY	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Policy No:</td> <td style="padding: 2px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Adopted by Council:</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">19 March 2025</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Next review date:</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">March 2029</td> </tr> </table>	Policy No:		Adopted by Council:	19 March 2025	Next review date:	March 2029
Policy No:							
Adopted by Council:	19 March 2025						
Next review date:	March 2029						
Executive Director:	Director Infrastructure Development & Works						
Responsible Officer:	Assets Manager						
Functional Area:	Asset Management						
Introduction & Background	<p>The Asset Management Policy is the framework that enables strategic and quality governance of Council's owned/controlled assets.</p> <p>The Policy reflects Council Plan objectives pertaining to Asset Management and service delivery.</p>						
Purpose & Objectives	<p>The purpose of the Asset Management Policy, is to ensure that Council manages its assets in accordance with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and State legislation, guidelines, frameworks and codes, Council's policies and procedures, and Council's current Council Plan. <p>The primary objective is to provide 'fit for purpose' assets to enable sustainable service levels.</p>						
Response to the Overarching Governance Principles of the Local Government Act 2020	<p>Section 9 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> states that a Council must in the performance of its role give effect to the overarching governance principles.</p> <p>This policy is in response to the following overarching governance principle/s of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>:</p> <p>(a) the community engagement principles (section 56)</p> <p>(b) the public transparency principles (section 58)</p>						



Council Policy Manual WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

Definitions	
	<p>An Asset is a physical item (e.g., roads, drainage, buildings, parks, etc.) owned/controlled by Council that contribute to meeting community need for services.</p> <p>For the purpose of this policy and Council's Asset Management Strategy, the assets include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land and land improvements • Roads • Buildings • Other Structures • Parks, Open Space and Streetscapes • Plant and Equipment • Furniture and Fittings • Bridges • Drainage • Footpaths and Kerb and Channel <p>Asset Management is the combination of management, financial, economic, engineering, and other practices applied to physical assets with the objective of providing the required level of service in the most cost-effective manner over the life of the asset.</p> <p>An Asset Management Plan is a plan developed for the management of specific asset categories that outlines the activities, programs and resources applied to sustainably providing defined levels of service in the most cost-effective manner.</p> <p>The Council Plan is a legislative requirement where each local government must develop a four-year strategic plan. The Council Plan is a key component in the corporate planning framework. It provides guidance and direction to the organisation by setting organisational goals, outcomes, strategies, actions, resource requirements and performance measures for the next four years.</p> <p>Levels of Service is a relevant measurable standard that reflects the required performance of the asset to meet agreed community expectations and usually relate to quality, quantity and reliability.</p> <p>Life cycle cost is the total cost of an asset throughout its life including planning, design, construction, acquisition, operation, maintenance, rehabilitation, and disposal costs.</p> <p>Long-Term Financial Plan contains 10 year budgeted financial statements and associated key financial performance indicators that assesses the financial integrity of the plan.</p>
Policy Details	
1.	Asset Management Principles



Council Policy Manual WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

	<p>Council will, as part of its consideration of asset management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the priority to renewal of assets over new, expansion and upgrades • In the implementation of the Council Plan, provide quality assets that support services that are appropriate, accessible, responsive, and sustainable to the community • Provide the priority to renewal of assets over new, expansion and upgrades • Undertake to develop industry standard and financially sustainable asset management plans that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assess the capacity of the assets to provide the required level of service b. Assess future asset needs based on likely changes in demographics, demand and technology c. Assess future asset replacement needs d. Assess future asset maintenance needs to provide approved service levels e. Identify likely sources of funding for future asset requirements • Undertake a critical needs analysis where necessary and whole-of-life cost analysis before allocation of funds on all major capital projects for new or existing assets. • Develop and implement a framework for the evaluation and prioritisation of capital projects. • Allocate appropriate resources for asset management practices. • Consult with the community and key stakeholders in determining service standards. • Ensure asset information is timely, and accurate, allowing for informed decision making and appropriate asset planning, both in the short and long term. • Manage its assets utilising a multi-discipline cross-functional asset management group. • Promote environmentally sustainable practices in future capital investments.
2.	<p>Associated Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan 2021-25 (or subsequent plan) • Asset Management Plan 2022-2032 • International Infrastructure Management Manual • Australian Infrastructure Financial Management Manual • Asset Management Strategy



Council Policy Manual WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

3.	<p>Roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Councillors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To act as stewards for the assets• To develop and maintain a long-term organisation wide Asset Management Plan that satisfies the Local Government Act 2020• To set corporate Asset Management Policy and vision with linkage to the Council Plan• To set levels of service, risk and cost standards• Approve and review Asset Management Plans for individual assets• To ensure appropriate resources and funding for asset management activities are made available to integrate Asset Management Policies, Asset Management Strategies and Asset Management Plans into the corporate governance framework• Provide consistent and transparent decision making based on adopted criteria; and• To provide an advocacy role with State and Federal Governments and the community. <p>Chief Executive Officer and Senior Leadership Team (SLT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To continually promote asset management across the Council and with the community• To validate and challenge proposals to ensure they meet the Corporate Plan objectives and community service needs• To develop and continue to refine the overarching Asset Management Policy and Asset Management Strategy with linkage to the Corporate Plan for consideration by Council• To develop and support the multi discipline cross functional Asset Management Steering Committee• To support staff and monitor the performance of the staff implementing asset management• To ensure the community and key stakeholders' inputs are integrated into Asset Management Plans and monitor the outcomes• To ensure staff are appropriately trained and skilled to perform the required
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Council Policy Manual WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

	<p>asset management functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure that accurate and reliable information is presented to Council for decision making• To provide effective communication between staff, Council and the community• In consultation with the community and key stakeholders identify asset management Levels of Service for Council consideration <p>Asset Management Steering Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development and implementation of Asset Management Strategy• To develop, implement, review, and monitor the outcomes for the Asset Management Plan• Continually seek innovative ways of meeting service needs• Continual review of Asset Management Policy• In consultation with key stakeholders and managers, assist with development of levels of service• Assist in the delivery of levels of service• Ensure efficient and effective use of Council funds and optimise life cycle cost of all assets• To provide effective communication between staff and Senior Management• To develop and implement maintenance, refurbishment, and capital works programs in accordance with Asset Management Plans and report to Senior Management and Council• To develop and implement procedures that ensure the asset database is maintained and updated and provide required reports to Council to meet statutory and legal responsibilities• Promote and raise awareness of asset management to the Council, staff and users.
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Council Policy Manual WEST WIMMERA SHIRE COUNCIL

Policy Adopted:	Ordinary Meeting 16/07/15	Minute Book Page 31424	RecFind 15/003528
Policy Reviewed:	Asset Management Steering Committee 18/09/2017		
	Asset Management Steering Committee 5/02/2018		
	Councillor Workshop 14/02/2018		
	Council Forum 07/03/2018		
	Ordinary Meeting 21/03/18	Minute Book Page 37704	RecFind 18/001104
	Council Meeting 18/06/20	Minute Book Page.....	RecFind E20/000146
	Council Forum 6/04/2022		
	Council Meeting 20/04/2022		RecFind E22/000144
	Council Meeting 21/06/2023		SRV – Policies and Procedures
	Council Forum 5/03/2025		
Council Meeting 19/03/2025		SRV – Policies and Procedures	

Asset Management Strategy 2025



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The West Wimmera Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, and pays respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.



Next review date: October 2029
Senior Manager: Director IDW
Responsible Officer: Assets and GIS Manager
Functional area: Infrastructure Development and Works

Document Control: West Wimmera Shire Council – Asset Management Strategy

Rev No	Date	Revision Details	Author	Reviewer	Approver
	19/08/2004	Original Strategy	Asset Manager		
1	06/04/2006		Asset Manager		
2	11/03/2010		Asset Manager		
3	16/07/2015		Asset Manager		
4	02/2018	Total Strategy Review	Assets and GIS Coordinator		
5	16/03/2022	Review	Assets and GIS Coordinator	Manager IDW	Director IDW
6	06/04/2022	Discussed at Council Forum	Assets and GIS Coordinator	Manager IDW	Council
7	20/04/2022	Council Meeting	Assets and GIS Coordinator	Manager IDW	Council
8	04/02/2025	Director/Manager Review	Assets and GIS Manager	Manager Infrastructure and Engineering	Director IDW
9	05/03/2025	Discussed at Council Forum	Assets and GIS Manager	Manager Infrastructure and Engineering	Council
10		Council Meeting	Assets and GIS Manager	Manager Infrastructure and Engineering	Council



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INTRODUCTION

West Wimmera Shire Council (WWSC) is the owner and/or custodian of a large portfolio of assets which includes roads, drains, buildings and facilities, open space, plant & equipment, libraries, materials, art works and land. These assets enable the community to access and enjoy all the services and facilities that WWSC has to offer.

These assets represent a vast investment built up over many generations, which presents a significant challenge as many assets were constructed or acquired many decades ago and as such are approaching the end of their useful lives. Infrastructure costs consume a large part of Council's budget and can have a substantial impact on Council's human and capital resource planning.

The efficient management of these assets is vital in maintaining safe, reliable, and efficient services that help achieve the strategic priorities and goals of Council. Failure to adequately plan for the replacement of existing assets and the development of new assets will result in assets not meeting the needs of the community, now and in the future. Furthermore, it might lead to the situation where current decisions may lead to a liability for future generations.

The environment in which Local Government operates is constantly changing. As assets continue to age, Council will need to demonstrate an accepted level of skill, expertise and a duty-of-care in relation to management practices and maintenance of assets.

There are several factors that require Council to critically assess the way in which it manages these assets. These include:

- Limitations in Council's ability to raise funds.
- Increased pressure from the community for improved service delivery at less cost.
- Changes in legislation.
- Identification, and depreciation of infrastructure assets.
- Compliance with legislation, codes, and standards.

This strategy seeks to implement best practice in asset management by:

- Ensuring asset management decisions are based on whole of life costing.
- Monitoring the condition and performance of all assets.
- Understanding the service level the asset is required to provide.
- Understanding the remaining useful life of an asset or its components.
- Understanding the current deterioration and consumption model for each asset category.
- Using a condition degradation model to determine future renewal demands.
- Evaluating alternative means of service provision.
- Balancing competing needs across functions to minimise duplication.
- Continually seeking opportunities for multiple use of assets.
- Considering any proposal to dispose of an asset, where such disposal may affect the level of service being provided.
- Endeavour to align the timing of expenditure on assets, particularly renewal or upgrade, with the actual use of the asset to avoid deferred expenditure being borne by future generations.
- Aligning WWSC's asset management practices with the industry best practice.
- Applying the Australian Accounting Standards.
- Referencing the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia International Infrastructure Management Manual.

WHAT IS ASSET MANAGEMENT?

Asset Management is a process used to guide the planning, acquisition, operation and maintenance, renewal, and disposal of assets. Its objective is to maximise the asset service delivery potential and manage related risks and costs over the entire life of the asset.

Asset Management ensures that Council's assets can provide services, of an agreed quality, in a sustainable manner, for present and future generations.

WHY IS ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT TO COUNCIL?

Asset Management delivers benefits that are realised in the areas of improved accountability, sustainable service delivery, risk reduction and financial management and forecasting. Specific benefits can include:

- More informed decision-making.
- Improved efficiency of limited capital funds and asset operation costs.
- Ability to plan for present and future generations.
- Improved long-term financial forecasting and management.
- Assets that are suitable and capable of supporting the service delivery needs of the community.

Council's Asset Management Framework shows the relationship between the Council Plan, the Asset Management Policy, this Strategy and Council's Asset Management Plan. The Long-Term Financial Plan, Strategic Resource Plan and Budget are also directly linked to the Asset Management Plan outputs. This framework will ensure a strategic approach to Asset Management.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

To comply with the Local Government Act 2020, Council was required to adopt an Asset Plan by 30 June 2022 and review it within a year of the election of each new Council. That plan will assist Council to manage the following over a ten-year timeframe.

- Ensure that the assets are managed properly so to deliver Council's strategic outcomes.
- Ensure that the assets provide the specified asset levels of service in the most cost-effective manner.
- Anticipate, plan, and prioritise spending on the assets.
- Use a lifecycle approach to manage the assets in the most cost-effective manner over time.
- Ensure efficient operation and continued sustainability of the assets.
- Provide a basis for asset performance monitoring (condition assessment, performance targets and improvement actions).
- Identify and minimise environmental risk and liability resulting from asset usage.
- Conduct consultation to establish community expectations in relation to asset service standards through the community's representatives (Councillors).
- Undertake a risk-based approach to identify operational, maintenance, renewal, and capital development needs, and apply best value economic analysis to select the most cost-effective asset treatment program.
- Continually review and improve asset management practices.
- Continuously review and improve the plan.

CURRENT STATE OF THE ASSETS MANAGED BY COUNCIL

Current Assets

Council's assets are made up of a wide range of different asset types, all of which are fundamental in meeting the needs of the community.

Assets may be physical (i.e., tangible e.g., plant, buildings) or non-physical (i.e., intangible e.g., intellectual property, goodwill).

This strategy only considers physical infrastructure assets. The major characteristics of an asset are:

- There must be service potential or future economic benefits.
- The future economic benefits must be quantifiable; and
- Council must have control of the service potential.

Asset Values

The replacement values of Councils assets are listed below.

ASSET CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	REPLACEMENT VALUE
Buildings	Various Council-owned or controlled buildings.	\$57,376,000
Land Improvements	Playgrounds, bores, streetscape, transfer stations, amenities.	\$5,434,000
Bridges and culverts	Bridges and major culverts.	\$10,271,015
Footpath	36,908m ²	\$5,094,808
Kerbing	48,108m	\$9,149,220
Sealed Pavements	4,822,754 m ²	\$184,599,080
Unsealed pavements	6,309,469 m ²	\$38,091,018
Sealed Surface	4,032,002 m ²	\$25,530,988
Plant	Heavy plant and equipment	\$10,955,985
Fleet	Sedans, SUVs	\$961,444

ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025

CURRENT ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

The Core Asset Management practices, essential for effective Asset Management across the organisation, falls into three broad categories:

- Asset data recorded in Council’s Corporate Asset Management Systems.
- System process models that link Council’s Asset Management System data to mapping data through to documented data representing key asset management functions and processes across the whole Council organisation.
- Information systems which support the above functions.

Investment in asset data collection and condition assessment of other asset classes like buildings, and open space assets is deemed necessary. Condition assessment and valuation of building assets was undertaken under a new methodology in 2022 and will be repeated in 2025. This investment will enable Council to make informed decisions and equitably distribute renewal funding across all asset classes.

Council’s mapping is done through the POZI Geographical Information System (GIS). There are links between POZI and AssetAsyst. Ongoing efforts are undertaken to improve the availability and quality of data on POZI.

The following information has been identified as a requirement for the organisation to support effective asset management.

ASSET DATA AND CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

WWSC has tried various Asset Management Systems in the past. The Moloney Asset Management System (MAMS) was introduced with the first condition survey in 2003 and has been running since the initial implementation time dealing primarily with road, footpath and kerb and channel assets. Asset Management functionalities in this system are limited primarily to a condition-based data analysis system, and as a result from this AssetAsyst was introduced in 2013, primarily as a system to allow the field inspections for defect data to be collected and processed as work orders to staff. The Road Management Plan inspections and data recording are also done via the AssetAsyst software.

The Pitney Bowes Confirm Asset Management System was trialed from 2015 to 2018 but that version was found to be resource hungry and not feasible in a small rural Council. AssetAsyst was used throughout that trial period and continues to be utilised to the present day. Other software systems for asset management will be explored as a process of continuous improvement and compliance. Improving the functionality of the system already in place is also being explored.

ASSET DATA	Status
Asset Hierarchy	The asset hierarchy has been developed for Council’s road and footpath network. For bridges, there are “Bridges and major culverts” and “minor culverts”. No hierarchy has been developed for other asset types at this stage.
Asset Identification	Asset identification exists for roads, buildings, footpaths and kerb and channels. Other assets are generally listed in spreadsheets.
Condition History	Condition history exists for roads, footpaths, kerbing, buildings, bridges, and major culverts.
Life Cycle Costing	The Moloney Management System is currently utilised to analyse the condition, remaining life and renewal cost of roads, footpaths and kerb and channels. Similar information is available for buildings, bridges and major culverts.

ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025

GAP ANALYSIS ON CURRENT ASSET MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

During the development of Council's initial Asset Management Plan, developed to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 during 2021, assessment of Council's status with respect to asset management revealed that there were some gaps in current systems, resourcing, and practices. Improvement items have been identified and are listed within section 8.

ASSET MAINTENANCE

The maintenance of assets has been on a reactive basis for most of the asset classes except for roads, bridges footpaths, kerb and channel and road related assets, where the safety activities are managed as per Council's Road Management Plan.

Building inspections conducted by an external contractor each three years provides input to maintenance and renewal programming.

Maintenance activities for the road and footpath assets can be managed via the AssetAsyst system with greater utilisation in this area in recent time. Maintenance activities relating to building assets are being recorded by the building work staff against each asset with associated costs. These inspections can be recorded within AssetAsyst if resourcing is adequate.

Being able to develop realistic maintenance regimes for all asset categories, by analysing maintenance data is a future goal.

ASSET RENEWAL GAP

Excellent renewal gap data is available for roads, footpaths and kerb and channel assets. This is obtained via the Moloney Asset Management System (MAMS). Asset condition inspections are undertaken every three years with the last one undertaken in 2023. MAMS provides renewal expenditure required to ensure the assets are maintained to a specified service level which is nominated by Council.

Good and current valuation data is available for bridge and building assets where a formal condition assessment is undertaken every three years. This means the major asset classes of Council have good data to inform future decision making.

Ideally condition data should be available for other major assets to enable calculation of asset renewal data although estimates are currently based on depreciation.

Asset condition, valuation and renewal data as well as maintenance defect information is available for buildings, which will be renewed in 2025.

Data collection and condition assessment of other asset classes will enable us to realise the actual renewal gap and subsequent renewal forecasting.

ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Council identified an improvement plan when developing its Asset Management Plan in 2021/22. The improvements are over a ten-year span, and it is understood that priorities may change over this period. Hence the review process of the Asset Management Plan, Asset Management Policy and Asset Management Strategy will be undertaken in conjunction with one another.

The Asset Management Plan is due for review by the end of 2025.

Those improvement items are shown below.

TASK	Task	Responsibility	Resources Required	Timeline
1	Development of an Asset Acquisition Policy	Director Corporate and Community Services	Benchmarking with similar policies from other sources	2023
2	Development of a cyclic annual inspection regime of buildings utilising AssetAsyst for recording of defects and renewal data for budgeting purposes	Assets GIS Coordinator	AssetAsyst software upgrade	2022
3	Development of a Resilience Register which includes the type of threats and hazards and the current and future measures that the organisation takes to ensure service delivery resilience.	Occupational Health, Safety and Risk Coordinator	Analysis by Managers and Directors	2024
4	Update of the asset management software to cloud based to allow tablet use by additional users enabling more efficient inspection, data recording and defect signoff.	Assets GIS Coordinator	Software upgrade of current system	2023
5	Inclusion of bridges and culverts data on to AssetAsyst enabling renewal data to be generated.	Assets GIS Coordinator	Software upgrade of current system	2025
6	Development of a 10-year maintenance and operations forecast.	Works and Finance departments	Judgement on future trends for maintenance and operations.	2025
7	Development of a 10-year capital works program for buildings.	Director of Infrastructure, Development and Works.	Annual inspection data showing costed capital renewal tasks and urgency.	2025

ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025

TASK	Task	Responsibility	Resources Required	Timeline
8	Asset condition assessment and valuation of underground drainage system.	Manager Infrastructure and Engineering.	Camera assessment with condition rating.	2027
9	Asset condition assessment and valuation of assets with Moloney Asset Management System.	Assets GIS Coordinator.	Ensure in budget.	2023, 2026, 2029 & 2032
10	Asset condition assessment and valuation of bridges and culverts.	Assets GIS Coordinator.	Ensure in budget.	2023, 2026, 2029 & 2032
11	Implementation of a system to provide photographic evidence of existing condition is obtained for all paved and sealed roads to satisfy natural disaster funding criteria.	Assets GIS Coordinator.	Equipment purchased. Need to implement survey, retrieve, and store data.	2023
12	Develop individual Asset Management Plans with service levels included for each category of asset as deemed necessary by Council.	Manager Infrastructure and Engineering.	Condition, asset life and depreciation information required.	2024 -2029
13	Develop implementation plan for roll out of individual Asset Management Plans.	Director Infrastructure, Development and Works.	Timeline for AMP roll out.	2023.
14	Enable computer generated depreciation for majority of assets.	Director Infrastructure, Development and Works and Chief Financial Officer.	To satisfy audit recommendation.	2024.
15	Undertake external valuation of all buildings.	Chief Financial Officer.	Undertaken every three years.	2023, 2026, 2029 & 2032
16	Undertake condition assessment of all buildings.	Director Infrastructure, Development and Works.	To enable renewal and depreciation calculations.	2024
17	Develop a policy for replacement of plant and fleet.	Contracts and Procurement Manager.	Develop policy.	2022
18	Continually review the road hierarchy on an annual basis with a formal review every four years.	Assets GIS Coordinator.	Report to Council.	Next formal review 2025

STRATEGIC REVIEW

Council will formally review this strategy on a four-year basis.

The review will take into consideration the Council Plan, the Asset Management Plan, Local Government Performance Reporting Framework and Council's Risk Management Policy.



16 Sealing Schedule

Nil.

17 Late Items of Business

Nil

Pursuant to West Wimmera Shire Council Governance Rules – Division 3 Section 20:

20. Urgent Business

If the agenda for a Council meeting makes provision for urgent business, business cannot be admitted as urgent business other than by resolution of Council, and only then if it:

- *20.1 relates to or arises out of a matter which has arisen since distribution of the agenda; and*
- *20.2 cannot safely or conveniently be deferred until the next Council meeting.*

18 Confidential Reports

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council pursuant to Section 66 (2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 close the meeting to members of the public to resolve on matters pertaining to the following items:

18.1 C-JAN2025-C001 Edenhope Recreation Reserve Changeroom Project

Reasons for Confidentiality - Reasons for Confidentiality - Local Government Act 2020, Section 3 - Private commercial information

18.2 Provision of Aged Care Services

Reasons for Confidentiality - Reasons for Confidentiality - Local Government Act 2020, Section 3 - Council business information

18.3 Kaniva Racecourse & Recreation Reserve - Expression of Interest

Reasons for Confidentiality - Reasons for Confidentiality - Local Government Act 2020, Section 3 - Private commercial information

18.4 Proposed application for funds to Safer Local Roads and Streets Program

Reasons for Confidentiality - Local Government Act 2020, Section 3 - Council business information



Moved: Cr Jodie Pretlove

Seconded: Cr Richard Hicks

That Council pursuant to Section 66 (2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 close the meeting to members of the public at 3:00pm to resolve on matters pertaining to the following items:

18.1 C-JAN2025-C001 Edenhope Recreation Reserve Changeroom Project

Reasons for Confidentiality - Reasons for Confidentiality - Local Government Act 2020, Section 3 - Private commercial information

18.2 Provision of Aged Care Services

Reasons for Confidentiality - Reasons for Confidentiality - Local Government Act 2020, Section 3 - Council business information

18.3 Kaniva Racecourse & Recreation Reserve - Expression of Interest

Reasons for Confidentiality - Reasons for Confidentiality - Local Government Act 2020, Section 3 - Private commercial information

18.4 Proposed application for funds to Safer Local Roads and Streets Program

Reasons for Confidentiality - Local Government Act 2020, Section 3 - Council business information

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 / 0)

19 Close of Meeting

Meeting closed:

The Council Meeting - 19 March 2025 was declared closed at 3:30pm

Next Meeting:

16 April 2025

Edenhope Council Chambers

Mayor's Signature
