



Whitehorse City Council

AGENDA

Council Meeting


on

Monday 25 July 2022

at 7:00pm

Members: Cr Liu (Mayor), Cr Massoud (Deputy Mayor), Cr Barker, Cr Carr, Cr Cutts, Cr Davenport, Cr Lane, Cr McNeill, Cr Munroe, Cr Skilbeck, Cr Stennett

Mr Simon McMillan, Chief Executive Officer



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AGENDA

1 Prayer

1.1 Prayer for Council

We give thanks, O God, for the Men and Women of the past whose generous devotion to the common good has been the making of our City.

Grant that our own generation may build worthily on the foundations they have laid.

Direct our minds that all we plan and determine, is for the wellbeing of our City.

Amen.

1.2 Aboriginal Reconciliation Statement

“Whitehorse City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners of the land we are meeting on and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from communities who may be present today.”

2 Welcome

3 Apologies

4 Disclosure of Conflict of Interests

5 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meetings

Minutes of the Council and Confidential Council Meeting 11 July 2022

RECOMMENDATION

That the minutes of the Council and Confidential Council Meeting 11 July 2022 having been circulated now be confirmed.

6 Public Presentations

7 Petitions and Joint Letters

8 Public Question Time

9 NOTICES OF MOTION

9.1 NOM 171 - Barker - Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) Future Membership

That Council seeks a report outlining Council's involvement with the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) in order for Council to consider future membership.

9.2 NOM 172 - Cr Barker - Introduction of the Food and Garden Organics Service

That Council seeks an independent report that reviews the environmental and financial advice provided to Council as part of the decision-making process to introduce the Food and Garden Organics Service and setting of the associated bin fees.

9.3 NOM 173 - Cr Davenport - Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) Targets

That Council:

1. Given that State Government has now implemented VC216, that a report be presented to Council to advise of any implications since Council's resolution on 23 May 2022 relating to Elevated ESD Targets Planning Scheme Amendment.
2. In addition to point 1 above, it is requested that the report indicates the process of withdrawing from seeking authorisation from the Minister for Planning under sections 8A and 8B of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to prepare and exhibit an Amendment to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme for the Elevating ESD Targets project.
3. Indicates to Council's who are participating in CASBE Stage 2 that Whitehorse Council is considering the implications of VC216 on it's participation in the CASBE Stage 2 scheme.
4. Supports the State Government ESD roadmap, and supports community awareness raising activities on the importance of ESD targets

10 Urgent Business

11 Council Reports

11.1 Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook 2022

Community Engagement and Development
Director Community Services
ATTACHMENT

SUMMARY

The Draft Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook (the Handbook) supports the implementation of Council's Community Engagement Policy and is intended to guide Council officers in the, design, implementation, and evaluation of community engagement plans, to the required high standard.

The Draft Handbook was developed in consultation with Councillors, cross-Council departments and the community and is based on the methodology outlined in Council's Community Engagement Policy, and the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) principles, which are considered best practice in community engagement.

Officers are seeking Council endorsement of the Draft Handbook to undergo a community consultation process to seek final feedback and close the loop with the community, prior to returning to Council in October 2022 to be adopted.

In addition, during the Handbook consultation period, Council's Community Engagement Policy will also be reviewed, with recommended changes being presented to Council in October 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses the Draft Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook for further community consultation.

Key Matters

Council is committed to effectively engaging on policy, programs, projects and initiatives that have an impact or are of interest to the local community.

In February 2021 Council endorsed the Whitehorse Community Engagement Policy. The Policy sets out Council's community engagement commitment, explains Council's role and how the community can expect to be involved in decision making. It establishes a clear standard of engagement, and encourages a consistent approach, which includes evaluation, review and feedback to continually improve our processes which leads to more effective outcomes.

The Policy also makes explicit Council's engagement principles which underpin how Council designs and delivers community engagement, meets the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020, as well as the Victorian Auditor General Office's (VAGO) Better Practice Guide: Public Participation in Government Decision-making.

11.1

(cont)

Appropriate planning is a critical success factor for any meaningful engagement process and this is reflected in the Policy.

The Draft Handbook has been developed to guide Council officers in the design, implementation and evaluation of their community engagement plans, to the required high standard.

The handbook is a ten-step guide to effective engagement and covers:

1. Engagement decision identification
2. Stakeholder identification
3. A tool to understand the appropriate level of engagement required
4. Budgeting for community engagement
5. Understanding timelines and key milestones
6. Key messages
7. Engagement activity plans
8. Risk management
9. Closing the loop evaluation

Officers are seeking endorsement of a further consultation period on the Draft Engagement Handbook to confirm it has met the communities' expectations in regard to Community Engagement processes and finalise the Draft Engagement Handbook for implementation.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook directly supports Theme 6 of the Community Vision and Strategic Direction 6 of the Council Plan: *An Empowered Collaborative Community*.

Policy

The Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook operationalises the Whitehorse Community Engagement Policy 2021.

BACKGROUND

The Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook is the supportive document for the implementation of the Whitehorse Community Engagement Policy.

The Local Government Act (Vic) 2020 requires all Councils in Victoria to develop a Community Engagement Policy (Section 55).

The Act is principles based which means that while it is a Local Government requirement to produce a policy, each Council's policy will look different in order to respond to local requirements. The Whitehorse Community

11.1

(cont)

Engagement Policy was developed with Council and community input and defines how Council intends to engage with the community into the future in ways that align with best practice principles.

SUPPORTING REPORT DETAILS

Legislative and Risk Implications

There are no legal or risk implications arising from the recommendation contained in this report.

Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights Considerations

It is considered that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

Community Engagement

The Draft Engagement Handbook supports the Community Engagement Policy and was developed through a community engagement process that included:

- Broad community engagement (via a survey with 160 responses)
- 3 Community Focus Groups
- 2 Officer Workshops
- 1 Councillor Briefing Session
- 1 Councillor Survey

Since that time, Officers have drafted the Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook and are now seeking Council endorsement to undertake further community engagement prior to returning to Council in October 2022. At the same time, Officers will also review the Whitehorse Community Engagement Policy and if there are recommended changes, will also present these to Council in October.

Financial and Resource Implications

The resources required to progress the Draft Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook was approximately \$15,000.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The Whitehorse Community Engagement handbook will facilitate a more consistent approach and higher standard of community engagement across the municipality.

Collaboration

Collaboration was incorporated into the development of the Draft Engagement Handbook via the community engagement process outlined above.

11.1
(cont)

Discussion and Options

Should Council decide not to endorse the Officers' recommendation, the Draft Engagement Handbook would miss the opportunity to be developed with important community insight and reputational damage could occur as a result.

Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

Conclusion

The Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook will form an integral part of Council's toolkit for delivering a high standard of engagement across the municipality. Whitehorse is committed to achieving this in partnership with the community and its shared development and engagement is a key step towards this outcome.

ATTACHMENT

- 1 Community Engagement Handbook July 2022

11.2 Whitehorse Council Plan Review 2022

Community Engagement and Development
Director Community Services
ATTACHMENT

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of a revised Council Plan 2022-2023 (Year 2) that includes minor amendments reflecting our new Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

In addition, officers are proposing to undertake a thorough review of the Council Plan for implementation in Year 3 based on learnings from the past 12 months. This review will include all levels of the organisation, Councillor engagement, as well as broader community engagement. The review will commence in August 2022 and conclude in June 2023.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses the:

1. Council Plan 2022-2023 (Year 2)
 2. Proposed approach to the Year 2 Council Plan review.
-

Key Matters

Year 1 Council Plan Review – July 2022

The annual Council Plan review, undertaken as a desktop exercise, identified minor adjustments necessary to ensure the Council Plan remains current. Minor amendments for year two of the *Council Plan 2021-2025* are outlined below:

1. Included on the front cover - 'Council Plan 2021-2025 – Year Two'.
2. A changed 'Message from the Mayor' to reflect year two of the Council Plan 2021-2025.
3. Updated photo contained in the 'Message from the Mayor' to reflect the new Mayor (Cr. Tina Liu).
4. Updated 'Message from the Chief Executive Officer' to reflect year two of the Council Plan 2021-2025.
5. Updated 'Councillors' section to reflect the new Mayor (Cr. Tina Liu) and Deputy Mayor (Cr. Denise Massoud).

11.2
(cont)

Whitehorse City Council's Council Plan 2021-2025 was adopted in October 2021 following a deliberative and thorough community engagement campaign which provided Councillors, the community and staff an opportunity to inform and guide the new Council Plan. Given the comprehensive community engagement campaign that took place in 2021 and the minimal changes proposed to this year's plan, no additional consultation is required for year two of the Council Plan 2021-2025.

Year 2 Council Plan Review – May 2023

Over the next 12 months, officers will undertake a thorough review of the Council Plan with a focus on ensuring that:

1. Councillors are engaged and play an active role in the review process.
2. Objectives are statements that break down the intent of each strategic direction into a measureable outcome. As well as ensuring they are achievable and time-specific.
3. Strategic Actions are the initiatives, programs, services etc. that Council will develop, implement and monitor to achieve the objectives (and therefore contribute to the achievement of the Strategic Directions).
4. Indicators are developed that define the change needed to effectively progress towards the strategic directions and measure whether an objective has been successful. Indicators will be reduced in number and will be relevant, achievable and meaningful.
5. The integrity of the communities' and Council work undertaken through the Shaping Whitehorse consultation will be maintained and enhanced as a result of a strengthened Council Plan. Community engagement (including re-engaging with the Whitehorse 2040 Community Panel) will be a key part of ensuring that the Council Plan meets the needs of the Whitehorse community and Council.

11.2

(cont)

The proposed timeline is as follows:

July 2022	Councillor briefing Year 1 review and proposed year 2 approach
August 2022	Cross-Council engagement on proposed changes
October 2022	Councillor Workshop on Council Plan proposed changes and new additions, as well as the Budget
	Broad community engagement on the Council Plan and Budget
November 2022	Community Panel Workshop on the Council Plan and Budget
December 2022	Community engagement findings reported to Council
January 2023	Excluded time due to holiday period limitations
February 2023 – April 2023	Closing the loop with community and internal departments
	Final edits and report writing
June 2023	Council Plan taken to Council for final endorsement to coincide with the budget process

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Section 89 of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) requires Councils to provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reviews to identify and address changing circumstances within its Council Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Local Government Act 2020 was the most ambitious reform of the local government sector in over 30 years¹.

The Act was proclaimed in four sections, including Stage 3B that focuses on integrated strategic planning and reporting. The new provisions require Councils to undertake an integrated approach to strategic planning and reporting, and the requirements are principles-based and therefore not prescriptive in how to implement the planning and reporting sections².

¹ Department of Jobs, Planning and Precincts <https://djpr.vic.gov.au/what-we-do/local-government#:~:text=The%20new%20Local%20Government%20Act,the%20Act%20on%20Engage%20Victoria.>

² Engage Victoria <https://engage.vic.gov.au/project/local-government-act-2020/page/integrated-strategic-planning-and-reporting-framework>

11.2
(cont)

The Whitehorse Community Vision 2040 as well as the Shaping Whitehorse process (focused on the Council Plan, Finance Plan, Asset Plan and Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan) was the first time Council undertook a deliberative engagement process for the development of these plans which included community panels.

The engagement process, as well as the development of these key strategic plans, was undertaken in an extremely tight State Government timeframe and under difficult circumstances (during the COVID-19 lockdowns). While the documents meet legislative requirements and reflect the voice of the community, it is proposed that the Council Plan is reviewed to ensure that the actions contained in the plan are clearly articulated and progress is measureable.

Discussion and Options

Should Council decide not to endorse the Officers' proposed approach to the Year 2 Council Plan review, seven indicators will remain that are unable to be reported against (as data is not available) until this comprehensive review is complete. This is consistent with the reporting provided in year one.

A thorough review will ensure that the Council Plan indicators are relevant, achievable and meaningful, and enable Council to effectively report on the achievements that support the Council Plan's strategic directions.

SUPPORTING REPORT DETAILS

Legislative and Risk Implications

There are no legal or risk implications arising from the recommendation contained in this report.

Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights Considerations

It is considered that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

Community Engagement

The Year One Council Plan review has been undertaken as a desktop exercise and as only minor amendments to the Plan are proposed, community engagement is not required.

The comprehensive review of the Council Plan to inform years 3 and 4 of the Plan will require community engagement including re-engaging with Councillors, the Whitehorse 2040 Community Panel, cross-Council departments and the broader community.

Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications arising from the recommendation contained in this report.

11.2
(cont)

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The proposed year two Council Plan review is a key step in continuous improvement for Council and will have significant positive implications on planning across the organisation.

Collaboration

No collaboration was required for this report.

Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

Conclusion

Given the comprehensive community engagement campaign undertaken in developing the Council Plan 2021-2025 and the minimal amendments identified by the Year 1 annual review, no additional consultation is required for Year 2 of the Council Plan.

A more thorough review of the Council Plan is recommended for implementation in Year 3, based on learnings from the past 12 months. This would include selecting more relevant, achievable and meaningful indicators, as there are currently seven that are unable to be reported against. The review would include all levels of the organisation, Councillor engagement, as well as broader community engagement to ensure a robust review process is undertaken.

ATTACHMENT

- 1 Council Plan June 2022

11.3 2022 Community Satisfaction Survey Findings

Community Engagement and Development
Director Community Services
ATTACHMENT

SUMMARY

Council has received the results of the 2022 Community Satisfaction Survey (Attachment 1) and a summary analysis of the results has been undertaken (Attachment 2).

The 2022 Community Satisfaction Survey (CSS) was conducted by JWS Research for Local Government Victoria (LGV). Council participates in the LGV survey to provide an insight into community perceptions of Council's performance and to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework.

The CSS breaks down results into demographic groups by age, gender and postcode. Council selected the following three areas to be analysed based on Census groupings:

- Nunawading East - Mitcham 3132; Nunawading/Forest Hill 3131; Vermont/Vermont South 3133
- Nunawading West - Blackburn/Blackburn North/Blackburn South 3130; Burwood East 3151; and
- Box Hill - Mont Albert/Box Hill North/3129; Box Hill/Box Hill South 3128; Burwood 3125; Mont Albert/ Surrey Hills 3127.

Core Performance

Core performance ratings for Whitehorse City Council have remained relatively stable compared to 2021, and are largely consistent across the past 5 years.

While the overall performance rating declined by two points from 2021 (69 down to 67), the index score was still higher than the Metropolitan grouping average (65) and statistically significantly higher than the State-wide average (59). Nunawading East residents rated our overall performance higher (71) than Box Hill (66) and Nunawading West (64) and residents aged 50-64 rated our overall performance lowest compared to other age groups.

The highest-rated core performance measure and a top performing area for Whitehorse is customer service (index score 76). This is significantly higher than the State-wide and Metropolitan group averages (68 and 72 respectively).

The lowest rated core performance measure is 'overall council direction' (index score 51) which is one of two core measures where Whitehorse rated lower than the Metropolitan group average (along with consultation and engagement with a score of 57).

11.3

(cont)

Contact

More than half of residents (55 per cent) have had recent contact with Council, which is marginally less than 2021 (by three per cent), but still higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019 where only 52 per cent of residents had contact with Council. Perceptions of customer service are positive with 42 per cent of residents rating Council's customer service as 'very good' and a further 33 per cent rating customer service as 'good'. Residents aged 50-64 years were the least satisfied, despite having the most contact with Council (score of 72).

Rates

More residents (49 per cent) indicated they would prefer maintaining and improving service levels with a CPI increase in rates, compared to 36 per cent who would rather reduce service levels, provided there was no increase in rates. Residents who preferred to reduce service levels with no increase in rates were asked a follow-up question about which services they would like to reduce to maintain rates at the current level. 'Council buildings / staffing levels / personal expenses' was the most common response (10%), followed by 'arts / cultural initiatives / events' (9%) and 'parks / landscaping' (6%).

Communication

Newsletters sent via mail (38 per cent) or email (34 per cent) are the preferred way for Council to inform residents about news, information and upcoming events. Social media was the third preferred form of communication with all respondents, and although significantly lower than mail or email, saw an increase of 5 percentage points up to 14%. Social media was the fourth preferred form of communication for those over fifty years of age, behind Council Newspaper displayed in shops and Council facilities.

Service Areas

The top three performing service areas for Whitehorse are waste management, appearance of public areas and art centres and libraries (index scores of 74 respectively). The responses to the verbatim question ('what is the one best thing about Whitehorse City Council?') support these findings.

The main areas for improvement are planning and building permits, community decisions, and consultation and engagement, where the importance of these areas exceed performance by 14 or more points. All four service areas were rated lowest by those aged 50-64 years, however Whitehorse still performed significantly higher than the State-wide average in each of these areas.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes this report.

11.3
(cont)

Key Matters

Perceptions of Council's performance across the individual service areas evaluated have not changed significantly in the last 12 months. Council should therefore focus on maintaining and improving performance in the individual service areas that most influence perceptions of overall performance.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Council's participation in the Community Satisfaction Survey is necessary to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework, which was introduced to improve the transparency and availability of performance information about councils.

Policy

The survey has identified areas of stronger and weaker performance and so further consideration should be given to the opportunity for this data to be used in future business planning undertaken by service areas, particularly where there are areas for improvement such as planning and building permits, community consultation and engagement, and informing the community.

BACKGROUND

The annual Community Satisfaction Survey asks the opinions of local people about the place they live, work and play and provides insight into the community's views on councils' overall performance, with benchmarking against State-wide and metropolitan Council group results. When coupled with previous data, the survey provides a reliable historical source of the community's views since 2012.

Participation in the State-wide Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey is optional. Participating councils have various choices as to the content of the questionnaire and the sample size to be surveyed, depending on their individual strategic, financial and other considerations.

Discussion and Options

The condition of sealed local roads continues to have the strongest influence on overall performance ratings, and Council performs relatively well here.

11.3
(cont)

Community consultation and engagement has a moderate to strong influence on overall performance perceptions but Council currently performs relatively less well in this service area. To improve perceptions of community engagement, Council needs to demonstrate that it consistently and effectively consults and engages with residents on relevant matters.

Extra attention should be paid to interactions with 50 to 64 year olds in the year ahead. Residents in this age group tend to be more critical of Council's performance and currently have the highest rate of contact with Council, so there is an opportunity to engage with them and improve their perceptions.

With the introduction of Council's Community Engagement policy, the soon to be released Community Engagement Handbook, training officers across Council to build their community engagement capability, the implementation of the new Your Say Whitehorse platform and strengthening relationships with community members and groups, it is anticipated that ratings in this space will increase in 2023.

SUPPORTING REPORT DETAILS

Legislative and Risk Implications

There are no legal or risk implications arising from the recommendation contained in this report.

Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights Considerations

In developing this report to Council, the subject matter has been considered in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

It is considered that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

Community Engagement

The survey was conducted by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing as a representative random probability survey of residents aged 18 years or over in the City of Whitehorse. A total of 500 completed interviews were achieved during January and March 2022.

The respondent sample is also matched to the demographic profile of Whitehorse with minimum quotas for gender, age and postcode. Questions about country of birth, language spoken at home and household structure are also included for comparison purposes.

The survey consisted of 12 compulsory/core questions and 33 optional questions including two tailored optional questions about maintaining and improving service levels with a CPI increase in rates.

The number of mobile numbers in the sample was 60 per cent in 2022. This assists greatly in reaching mobile only homes and gaining a representative sample of young residents.

11.3
(cont)

Financial and Resource Implications

While there are no direct financial implications associated with this report, resident preferences to maintain and improve service levels with a CPI increase in rates should inform Council decisions around long-term financial planning.

The cost of administering the Community Satisfaction Survey in 2022 was \$27,113 (excluding GST).

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The 2022 Community Satisfaction Survey findings highlighted a number of areas where community perceptions of Council's performance could be improved. In particular, community consultation and engagement has a moderate to strong influence on overall performance perceptions but Council currently performs relatively less well in this service area.

As discussed above, Council is taking steps to improve community engagement including development of a Community Engagement Handbook, training officers across Council to build their community engagement capability and strengthening relationships with community members and groups, which is anticipated to increase ratings for this service area.

Collaboration

The Community Engagement and Development Department sought input from across the organisation regarding which questions to include in the 2022 Community Satisfaction Survey. This year two new tailored questions were added to the survey, including the collection of respondent email addresses for those interested in subscribing to Council news and information.

The survey findings were presented to the Executive Leadership Group in June and will be presented to the Senior Leadership Team in August, with the Community Engagement and Development Department extending an offer to discuss the results with individual teams, exploring opportunities to improve overall perceptions of Council.

An article will also be published in the Whitehorse News sharing the CSS findings with the broader community, and the full report will be published on Council's corporate website in August.

Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

11.3
(cont)

Conclusion

Core performance ratings for Whitehorse City Council have remained relatively stable compared to 2021, and are largely consistent across the past 5 years. While the overall performance rating declined by two points from 2021, the index score was still higher than the Metropolitan grouping average and statistically significantly higher than the State-wide average.

The survey findings highlighted a number of areas where community perceptions of Council's performance could be improved. Council should focus on 'community consultation and engagement', and 'decisions made in the interest of the community' to ensure negative perceptions do not have an overly negative impact on perceptions of overall performance.

ATTACHMENT

- 1 Community Satisfaction Survey 2022 Whitehorse City Council Report
- 2 2022 CSS Results Analysis Summary Report

11.4 Whitehorse Community Grants

Community Engagement and Development
Director Community Services
ATTACHMENT

SUMMARY

This Report provides Council with recommendations for the 2022/2023 annual Whitehorse Community Grants program, which includes annual Cash Grants, Discount Support Free Tipping grants and the recipients to date of the Discount Support Hall Hire grant program.

The relevant Council Officers assessed the community grant applications. Officer recommendations were subsequently presented to the Councillor Panel meeting which was held on the evening of Wednesday 15 June 2022.

The Partnership Grants are not included in this Report as a specific item as Council awarded these grants in 2021/2022 financial year however, details of the financial support Council provides to community organisations under Partnership grants is detailed in the Financial section.

The Councillor Panel has recommended:

- \$139,579 in Cash Grants (Appendix A).
- \$34,422 in Discount Support (free tipping) (Appendix B).
- To date Council has received 85 Discount Support Hall Hire applications with 62 applications having been approved, totalling \$111,329 (Appendix C).

A review of the Community Grants Program will commence shortly to ensure a strengthened connection to the Whitehorse Community Vision 2040, the Council Plan and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP). The review will also respond to the recent VAGO review that provides recommendations relating to local government community grants programs, with a focus on their governance arrangements.

The community grants review findings and recommendations will be presented to Council in November 2022 to ensure that changes to the Whitehorse Community Grants program are in place for the 2023- 2024 grant round.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorse the recommendations of the Councillor Assessment Panel for the Whitehorse Community Grants program (cash grants) (Appendix A).
2. Endorse the Discount Support Free Tipping grant allocation for the 2022/2023 financial year (Appendix B).
3. Note the recipients of the Discount Support Hall Hire program received to date, for the 2022/2023 financial year (Appendix C).

11.4

(cont)

Key Matters

- Whitehorse Community Grants, annual Cash Grants (all categories)
- Whitehorse Discount Support (free tipping)
- Discount Support (Hall Hire) – allocation to date
- Review of the Community Grants program, policy and guidelines

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The initiatives financially supported by the Whitehorse Community Grants program respond to the Whitehorse Community Vision 2040, the Whitehorse Council Plan and the Whitehorse Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plan. The following table presents the Strategic alignment of the Community Grants Program:

Strategic Document	Relevant Priorities
Community Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverse and Inclusive Community - Empowered and Collaborative Community - Health and Wellbeing
Council Plan	<p>3.2- Celebrate difference and leading the community towards cohesion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of community grants that support cultural, faith and gender diversity <p>4.3.1 Work with community organisations to promote and encourage social connections and support community participation for isolated members of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of organisations receiving community grants <p>7.1- Advocate on behalf of the community and respond where appropriate to health and wellbeing needs.</p> <p>7.3- Enhance social connection within the community by facilitating social support groups for those in need and provide opportunities for participation and community involvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide grants to the community - Number of grants awarded
Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental wellbeing - Physical activity - Social and neighbourhood connection - Social inclusion, including digital inclusion - Climate change mitigation

11.4
(cont)

Policy

Councils Community Grants Policy and Guidelines provide the framework for the Whitehorse Community Grants program. In addition, the program aligns with the Whitehorse Community Vision 2040 as well as the MPHWP. Dependent on the initiative being applied for, initiative may also relate to the outcomes of other Council policies/plans, for example, initiatives engaging people with lived experience of mental illness, deliver on outcomes contained in the MPHWP and the Whitehorse Disability Action Plan. Initiatives with a focus on building the capacity of sporting clubs through the purchase of equipment can deliver on physical health outcomes of the MPHWP and contribute outcomes contained in the Whitehorse Recreation Strategy.

BACKGROUND

Over many years, the Whitehorse Community Grants program has provided financial support to not-for-profit organisations and incorporated associations located within the municipality or to those that benefit the local community. Community Grant funding aims to support these organisations to undertake a range of programs, services, initiatives and activities that align with identified community priorities in the Whitehorse Community Vision 2040, the Whitehorse Council Plan and MPHWP.

Each application has to meet a set of essential criteria that includes the provision of financial reports, evidence of incorporation or not for profit status and public liability insurance. The second phase of assessment requires all applicants to demonstrate that their proposed activity directly responds to both of the following:

- At least one of the five strategic directions set out in the Council Plan and MPHWP
- A specific community need, interest, or responding to an identified gap or emerging trend

Funding Streams

The Community Grants program consists of four grant streams:

1. Annual Community Grants program
2. Discount Support (Free Tipping)
3. Discount Support (Hall Hire)
4. Partnership Grants

Discussion and Options

The Councillor Assessment Panel met on Wednesday 15 June 2022 to consider the annual Community (Cash) Grant and Discount Support (Free Tipping) applications.

These recommendations are now presented to Council and are detailed in the Appendix A and Appendix B, attached to this Report.

11.4

(cont)

Cash Grants

The Annual Cash Grants offers four grant categories with specific funding levels, presented below:

Senior Participation Grants	Membership numbers determine the funding allocation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Up to 25 members- \$250 is allocated - \$10 is added per person up to 99 members - \$1000 is allocated for 100 or more members
Equipment Grants	Requests for equipment are limited to a maximum of \$1000 per organisation. Capital Works requests are not funded through the Community Grants Program.
Minor Grants	- Up to \$3,000
Major Grants	- \$3001 to \$10,000

The Community Grant Guidelines state that with the exception of Discount Support Hall Hire, Council will only accept one grant application from each organisation, per category, per year. If an organisation submits an application in more than one grant category, each application must meet the specified eligibility criteria and be for a **different** program, service, project or activity etc. Where applications are effectively the same, only the application requesting the lower level of funding will progress through the assessment process.

The following table shows the Whitehorse Community Grants applications by category for the 2022/2023 financial year, 238 applications were received for the 2022/2023 financial year.

Grant Category		Number of Applications
Community Cash Grants	Equipment	48
	Minor	32
	Major	20
	Senior Participation	29
	Total	129
Discount Support Free Tipping		24
Discount Support Hall Hire		85 (to date)
Total Applications (All Grants)		238

11.4

(cont)

The Councillor Panel have recommended funding to a total of \$139,578.89 for the 2022-2023 financial year, which leaves \$13,753 unallocated in the Community Grants budget for the 2022/2023 financial year.

The unallocated funding can be utilised if community organisations submit an application to Council outside of the substantive grants program. The process for this is the same as in previous years, whereby an officer assesses the application and the recommendation is then presented to the Mayor and Director Community Services for decision.

Discount Support (Free Tipping)

The Discount Support (Free Tipping program) is available annually as part of the Community Grants program and offers free tipping at Councils Recycling and Waste Centre for not for profit and incorporated associations. The Discount Support Free Tipping program utilises a voucher system rather than being a direct cash grant.

Costs applied at Councils Recycling and Waste Centre for a 6x4-trailer load of waste are reflected in the vouchers provided to the successful community organisations. For the 2022/2023 budget cycle, this cost is \$285 for general waste and \$132 for green waste.

Council received 24 applications for Discount Support (free tipping) and allocated 114 general waste vouchers and 6 green waste vouchers. The Discount Support Free Tipping Budget for the 2022/2023 financial year is \$34,663.27. The allocation of 114 general waste vouchers and 6 green waste vouchers has expended \$34,422 of the budget, leaving a balance of \$241.27. The allocation of the Discount Support Free Tipping vouchers is attached (Appendix B).

Discount Support (Hall Hire)

Discount Support Hall Hire is a subsidy to the cost of hiring the Council venues listed below. Discount Support Hall Hire also includes the option of organisations having one free fundraising event annually at one of these venues.

Box Hill Community Arts Centre
Box Hill Town Hall (excluding the Town Hall Hub)
Blackburn North Community Hall
East Burwood Hall
Forest Hill Hall
The Horticultural Centre
Rentoul Hall
Strabane Avenue Hall
Willis Room (Civic Centre)

11.4
(cont)

There are three levels of Discount Support Hall Hire based on eligibility and group type:

- 90% for seniors groups
- 75% for service clubs
- 50% for all other not for profit organisations or incorporated associations

Discount Support Hall Hire grants operate on a calendar year. For the period June to December 2022, Council received 85 applications to 1 June 2022, with 62 applications approved to date, totalling \$111,328.54. Applications for Discount Support Hall Hire will continue throughout the calendar year and approved in accordance with the Community Grants Guidelines and there is sufficient budget.

Administration:

Council utilises the *SmartyGrants* program to administer the Community Grant program (cash grants, discount support and partnership grants). The online program allows community groups, organisations, and Council to submit applications, funding agreements and acquittals online and allows Council to communicate directly with grant applicants. In addition, the system provides an excellent audit trail.

Upon submission of an application via *SmartyGrants*, relevant Council Officers assess each application against key eligibility criteria.

For the 2022-2023 financial year, officer recommendations for the 129 Cash Grant applications and 35 applications for Discount Support (Free Tipping) were presented to the Councillor Panel on Wednesday 15 June 2022.

Information sessions/Grant writing workshops:

Council Officers held three information sessions for community groups and organisations to develop their understanding of the Community Grant guidelines and process and to provide guidance in using the *Smarty Grants* program. To assist community groups and organisations in writing their applications a grant-writing workshop was held to provide expert advice on how to develop a successful application.

Thirty people, representing 21 community organisations, attended the information sessions. Twenty-three people that registered to attend one of the information sessions also attended the grant-writing workshop.

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Community Grants Review

A review of the Whitehorse Community Grant program will commence shortly. Research regarding best practice models and benchmarking will be undertaken and a thorough engagement plan will be developed to ensure that key stakeholders such as community, community organisations and sporting clubs that have, or have not, applied for a community grant in the past will all be invited to contribute to the review.

The review will assess the effectiveness, reach, strategic alignment, funding amounts and the impact of the Whitehorse Community Grants Program as well as identifying opportunities to streamline administrative processes and monitoring of funded projects.

Importantly the review will take into consideration the recent VAGO Report that reviewed local government community grant programs with a specific focus on decision making and governance arrangements.

The recommendations resulting from the review will be presented to Council in the November 2022 for consideration and implementation in time for the 2023/2024 Whitehorse Community Grants program.

SUPPORTING REPORT DETAILS

Legislative and Risk Implications

The SmartyGrants online program manages the documentation associated with the Community Grants program. Inbuilt software features prevent alterations to applications and financial information of organisations, once submitted by the applicant. The software captures all user actions and prevents the risk of financial mismanagement. In addition, the system manages the acquittal of grants.

A community grant program must be transparent, auditable and administered in line with good governance practice.

Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights Considerations

Applications for the Community Grants Program provide opportunities to work towards addressing human rights inequities in the local community.

The following few examples highlight how Community Grant initiatives can contribute to the United Nations Universal Human Rights, as well as linking to other Conventions and Declarations.

11.4
(cont)

Initiative	Human Rights Link/other Conventions/Declarations
Providing the opportunity for older members of the Chinese Community to develop life stories and share with the community.	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination
Supporting the adaptation and delivery of a culturally specific Baby Makes 3 program for new parents from Chinese communities	Convention on the Rights of the Child Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
Fostering partnerships between the family violence and disability sectors to develop the “Leaders in Change” youth focused program for young people with disability, to be change-makers in the community.	United Nations Convention on the Rights Of Persons with Disability

Community Engagement

Engagement across Council with the relevant officers and departments was required to assess the Community Grants program.

As previously mentioned, Council Officers engaged with the community by holding two Information sessions and a grant-writing workshop. Council Officers also provided support over the phone, email and in person upon request.

Promotion

The 2022/2023 Whitehorse Community Grants program was advertised extensively:

- The Whitehorse News
- Direct email to all previous applicants via SmartyGrants
- The Community Engagement & Development eNewsletter (sent to 412 community organisations)
- Via Council officer networks
- On Council's web site and Facebook page
- The Asian Multimedia newspapers
- Posters at community venues
- Articles highlighting previous successful applicants “telling” their stories

Financial and Resource Implications

The following table highlights the budget amounts and funding recommendations determined at the Council Panel meeting.

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(cont)

Appendices to this report contain details of specific funding allocations.

Grant Category	Total 2022/2023 Amount	Allocated amounts
Cash Grants (Annual)	\$153,331.89	\$139,578.89
Partnership Grants	\$749,910.53	\$749,910.53
Discount Support Free Tipping	\$34,663.27	\$34,422.00
Discount Support Hall Hire	\$314,744.40	\$111,328.54 (to date)
Total	\$1,252,650.09	\$1,035,239.96

Council allocated Partnership Grants in 2021. The total amount of Partnership funding for the 2022/2023 financial year is \$749,910.53

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

To continuously improve the Community Grants program, Council Officers will undertake a review of the Community Grant Policy and Guidelines in preparation for the 2023/2024 grants round. Council and other key stakeholders will be engaged as part of the review and recommendations will be and be presented to Council in the November 2022.

Collaboration

The Community Grants program requires collaboration between cross-Council departments who assess and provide recommendations regarding each application. The program is then a collaboration between Council and the community organisations, clubs and groups that implement their initiatives, which respond to the needs and priorities of the local community.

Conflict of Interest

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff, and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council, to disclose any direct or indirect interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The SmartyGrants Program includes a declaration of conflict of interest. Council Officers participating in the assessment of all Community Grants, Discount Support Hall Hire and Discount Support Free Tipping assessments have completed these statements, with no conflict of interest identified.

A conflict of interest declaration was provided to Councillors and officers attending the Community Grants Panel meeting held on the 15th June 2022. Councillors participating on the panel and officers in attendance have signed declarations.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, the Whitehorse Community Grants program is Council's demonstrable financial commitment to the community, supporting and responding to the needs and priorities of the local community.

Endorsement of the Community Grants as recommended in this report will trigger the notification of the outcome to all applicants.

ATTACHMENT

- 1 Appendix to the 2022 Community Grant Report

11.5 Energy Management Fund and Carbon Neutrality

City Services
Director Infrastructure
ATTACHMENT

SUMMARY

This report is in response to a Council resolution on 19 March 2018 for Council to become carbon neutral in its operations in 2022 as described in the Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022. The resolution included setting up an Energy Management Fund (Fund) by redirecting what would have been spent on purchasing GreenPower (accredited 100% renewable electricity) for three years into the Fund to further invest in energy efficiency initiatives that would permanently reduce Council's electricity consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

A progress report on the implementation of Council's Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022 was considered at the Council Meeting on 26 April 2022. This report also outlined the process in developing Council's next Sustainability Strategy 2030 – 'Taking Climate Action,' which is currently being drafted.

To achieve carbon neutrality in 2022, Council will need to purchase offsets. Based on 2020/21 emissions, this will cost approximately \$262,000 depending on the market and cost of selected offsets at the time of purchase. If Council is to be recognised as a certificated carbon neutral organisation, an additional \$20,000 is required for verification and certification costs. These cost estimates are based on Climate Active (previously known as the National Carbon Offset Standard), the Australian Government's Carbon Neutral Standard. There is an opportunity to utilise the Fund balance to fund the offset costs to achieve certified carbon neutrality. Maintaining carbon neutrality in future years will require a budget allocation to purchase the required offsets at that time.

The three year operation of the Fund ended on 30 June 2022. The Fund is estimated to have a balance of \$457,080 in the 2022/23 financial year.

The Embedded Utilities Officer (EUO) program has been funded from the Fund and has brought improvements to how utility, including electricity, gas and water, is managed across the organisation. This is a contracted resource shared across a number of Councils, at Whitehorse up to two days per week. Over the three years of the Fund from 2018/19, the EUO program generated \$334,036 of utility savings and avoided costs. In recognition of the benefits derived from this resource, it is recommended it continues in 2022/23, funded by the Energy Management Fund and further consideration of this resource be part of developing the 2023/24 Budget.

Attachment 1, 'Summary Options for Carbon Neutrality' provides a summary of the high-level options in becoming carbon neutral.

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Endorses the carbon neutral target as set in the Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022 at cost of approximately \$262,000 (based on 2020/21 emissions) depending on the market and cost of selected offsets at the time of purchase;
 2. Seeks carbon neutral certification at an additional cost of approximately \$20,000;
 3. Notes the three year Energy Management Fund has concluded and its balance in 2022/23 will be approximately \$450,000; and
 4. Allocates the funding available from the Energy Management Fund to carbon offsets in 2022/23 and an Embedded Utilities Officer resource for a further 12 months.
-

Key Matters

The Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022 includes an action for Council to become voluntarily carbon neutral in its operations by 2022.

Based on 2020/21 emissions, the cost to become voluntarily carbon neutral is approximately \$262,000 depending on the market and cost of selected offsets at the time of purchase.

‘Voluntarily’ becoming carbon neutral means that no certification is required. However, it is recommended that carbon neutral certification is sort. The certification will ensure credibility when referring to carbon neutrality, and is estimated to cost an additional \$20,000.

In accordance with the Council resolution on 19 March 2018, an Energy Management Fund (Fund) was set up by redirecting what would have been spent on purchasing GreenPower (accredited 100% renewable electricity) for three years into the Fund to further invest in energy efficiency initiatives that would permanently reduce Council’s electricity consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The Fund’s three year life has been reached.

There is an opportunity to utilise the Fund balance to fund the carbon offset costs to achieve certified carbon neutrality. Maintaining carbon neutrality in future years will require a budget allocation to purchase the required offsets at that time.

In addition, it is recommended that the Fund be used to continue funding the Embedded Utilities Officer (EUO) in 2022/23 for two days per week and further consideration of this resource be considered as part of the 2023/24 Budget.

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STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022 is a key guiding document to outline how Council will progress towards Council Plan Strategic Objectives:

5.1: Take a leadership role in tackling climate change;

5.1.1: We will adapt to climate change and build the resilience of our community, infrastructure and the built environment through relevant Council plans and policies; and

5.2: Consider our natural environment when making decisions including creeks, wetlands, lakes, bushlands, flora and fauna.

Actions within the Strategy also support Council Plan Strategic Objectives 4, 6 and 7 in helping to develop an empowered, informed and healthy community that is able to live more sustainable and be more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Policy

Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022

Council has a current Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022. At the Council Meeting on 19 March 2018, it was resolved:

“That Council:

- 1. Voluntarily becomes carbon neutral for corporate emissions in 2022 rather than pursuing formal accreditation, due to the ongoing cost of accreditation;*
- 2. From July 2018 no longer purchases GreenPower for current purposes and instead purchase accredited carbon offsets to continue to offset the current level of greenhouse gas emissions;*
- 3. Diverts funds currently used to purchase GreenPower to an Energy Management Fund over the next 3 years until 2021/22 for the implementation of an integrated program of additional energy efficiency measures and renewable energy projects to accelerate energy-efficiency in Council facilities. Measures implemented over 3 years using this Fund will place Council in a better position to become carbon neutral in 2022;*
- 4. Develops suitable protocols and guidance for the operation of the proposed Energy Management Fund in 2018/19, including a review of the Fund and the funded project outcomes in 2021/22 before proceeding to carbon neutral status;*
- 5. Implements a Utilities Management project by engaging a suitably qualified and specialist Utilities Management consultant for a period up to 3 years, to identify energy cost savings and implement process improvements in managing Council’s electricity, gas and water utilities.”*

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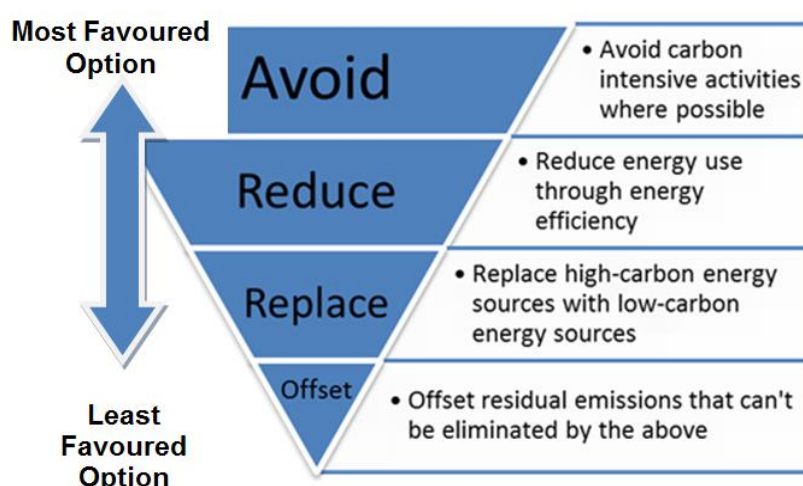
A progress report on the implementation of Council's outgoing Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022 was considered at the Council Meeting on 26 April 2022. This report also outlined the process in developing Council's next Sustainability Strategy 2030 – 'Taking Climate Action' which is currently being drafted.

BACKGROUND

Energy Management Fund

The Energy Management Fund (Fund) was set up in 2018/19 for a three year period. Council ceased purchasing GreenPower from 1 July 2018. GreenPower was a voluntary payment to ensure electricity purchased for selected sites was accredited as 100% renewable. The cost of what would have been spent on GreenPower was diverted into the Fund.

The Fund has allowed Council to further its efforts in addition to what is allocated in the operational and capital works budget to focus on reducing Council's corporate greenhouse gas emissions. The reduction has been in accordance with the energy hierarchy below:



Over the last three years, the Fund has fully and partially funded projects such as:

- The \$2M Energy Performance Contract
- Embedded Utilities Officer (EUO) program
- Independent technical and specialist advice for Council to participate in Procurement Australia's Power Purchase Agreement, Victorian Energy Collaboration and other.

Further details of the achievements were provided in the Sustainability Strategy progress report to Council on 26 April 2022.

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A summary of the Fund's balance is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Summary of Energy Management Fund

Program Year	FY	Amount	Description
Year 1	2018/19	-\$354,965	GreenPower savings
	2018/19	-\$62,108	EUO savings
	2018/19	\$139,424	Operating spending
		-\$277,649	Balance at 30 June 2019
Year 2	2019/20	-\$347,430	GreenPower savings
	2019/20	-\$45,000	EUO savings
	2019/20	\$124,755	Operating spending
	2019/20	\$377,000	Capital spending
		-\$168,324	Balance at 30 June 2020
Year 3	2020/21	-\$313,545	GreenPower savings
	2020/21	-\$16,787	EUO savings
	2020/21	\$56,882	Operating spending
	2020/21	\$323,000	Capital spending
		-\$118,774	Balance at 30 June 2021
	2021/22	-\$286,521	Vic Energy Efficiency Certificates from street lighting upgrades
	2021/22	\$139,215	Operating spending
		-\$266,080	Balance at 30 June 2022
	2022/23	-\$191,000	Vic Energy Efficiency Certificates from decorative street lighting upgrades
		-\$457,080	Balance at 30 June 2023

The Fund's three years has concluded with residual benefits from projects commenced during the three years realised in 2021/22 and 2022/23. No GreenPower savings or EUO savings have been attributed to the fund in after Year 3. It is recommended to utilise the Fund's balance in 2022/23 to achieve carbon neutrality for the organisation and to fund other important energy consumption reduction work.

Discussion and Options

In 2018, Council endorsed an approach towards reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that included a target to become carbon neutral in 2022 for its operations.

There are a variety of carbon offsets that can be purchased from the market, including (and not limited to):

- From locally or internationally established and generated carbon offsets (or a combination).
- If carbon offsets are Climate Active accredited.

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- What type of project it is generated from (e.g. tree planting).
- When carbon offsets are purchased.

The choice of purchasing carbon offsets all have different financial, social and ethical, as well as environmental impacts associated with them. In addition, over the last six months, the price of local carbon offsets has increased and may continue to increase in the future.

If Council is to pursue a voluntary carbon neutral status in 2022 in accordance with the Australian Standard there is an assumption this will be maintained on an annual basis. In addition to this and following the energy hierarchy above, ongoing efforts will continue to be made to permanently reduce Council's corporate emissions, with or without pursuing carbon neutrality.

Table 2 shows it will cost approximately \$262,000 per year based on 2020/21 emission data of 14,268.5 tCO₂-e (tonnes of equivalent carbon dioxide emissions). This includes the purchase of 20% local offsets (@ \$30/tonne) and 80% international offsets (@ \$15/tonne). Table 2 shows the different costs when the ratio for local and international offsets are adjusted:

Table 2 – Carbon Neutrality Costs

Breakdown of Offset Type			Option 1			Option 2		
			Offset Cost Only (\$)			Certification Cost	Third-Party Verification Cost	Total Cost incl. Offsets
Scenario	Local	International	Local	International	Total			
Scenario 1	50%	50%	\$ 218,241	\$ 109,120	\$ 327,361	\$13,238	\$7,000	\$ 347,599
Scenario 2	30%	70%	\$ 130,944	\$ 152,768	\$ 283,713			\$ 303,951
Scenario 3	20%	80%	\$ 87,296	\$ 174,593	\$ 261,889			\$ 282,127

Note:

- Climate Active (previously known as the National Carbon Offset Standard) is the Australian Government's Carbon Neutral Standard.
- Climate Active is currently exploring a minimum 20% local: 80% international scenario to certify carbon neutrality.
- Council's target is 'voluntary' so, although the Climate Active methodology is to be followed, certification and third-party verification costs is not a requirement. However, certification will ensure credibility when referring to carbon neutrality, and is estimated to cost an additional \$20,000.

Prior to the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) and accessibility to power purchase agreements, Council was limited to purchasing GreenPower to ensure its electricity was sourced from a local renewable energy project. Council has the opportunity to roll its remaining large and small market accounts into VECO at its next committed contract expiry date of 30 June 2024. This will further lower GHG emissions.

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In Attachment 1 there is a table with a summary of options for carbon neutrality that include:

- Option 1 – Carbon Neutral (2022) – Current Strategy 2016-2022
This option is to purchase non-certified offsets to voluntarily achieve carbon neutral status voluntarily.
- Option 2 – Certified Carbon Neutral – Climate Active
This option is to arrange third-party verification, purchase eligible offsets and obtain carbon neutral certification.
- Option 3 – Applying Step Scenarios
This is to not pursue the target to becoming carbon neutral by 2022, but instead:
 - Adopt the Climate Active Reporting Framework (previously known as the National Carbon Offset Standard) to report its annual greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Explore opportunities to further reduce corporate emissions including (not limited to): energy efficiency measures; procurement of 100% renewable electricity for the remaining of its energy contracts not currently committed to purchasing renewables; and seeking carbon offsets at the source by working with contractors where possible, to embed this as a requirement as part of their contract specifications. This is to be articulated in the draft Sustainability Strategy 2030 and its first 4-year action plan.
- Option 4 – Business as Usual
This option is not to pursue the carbon neutral target by 2022.

To achieve Council's ambition to be carbon neutral in 2022, it is recommended that Option 2 be pursued in accordance with Climate Active. As further emission reduction and energy efficiency are made, the annual GHG emission profile to offset carbon emissions is expected to reduce.

Embedded Utilities Officer Program

Council's annual spend on utilities (electricity, gas and water) in 2020/21 was \$2,905,968. Prior to 2018/19, utility management was decentralised. There was no defined utility management process, nor a resource to guide internal stakeholders on how to manage utilities. This impacted the Finance team, where unidentified invoices would be received for unknown assets.

To improve on the monitoring and reporting of Council's sustainability targets, the need was identified to verify and consolidate all utility meters (electricity, gas and water), including invoicing requirements.

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The Embedded Utilities Officer (EUO) program has brought improvements to how utilities are managed across the organisation. Over the three year program since its inception in 2018/19, the EUO program has generated \$334,036 of utility savings and avoided costs. This amount includes direct savings of \$123,895, which have been added to the Fund and \$210,141 of avoided costs.

After Year three of the Fund, in 2021/22, the EUO identified \$55,138.00 of utility savings and avoided costs with \$11,486.20 from Duplicate Charges Review Refund and \$43,651.76 from refunds for water leaks, estimated water use and COVID business relief. These amounts would not have otherwise been identified. Some of these are recurrent savings.

In 2022/23 it is recommended that the EUO continue to facilitate how utilities are managed and continue what has been established as part of the EUO work program. The work of the EUO provides a focus on data analysis and technical advice to prioritise future energy efficiency and sustainability projects that provide the best cost and environmental benefits. This will contribute to Council's efforts to continuously assess its carbon emissions profile in accordance with Climate Active and identify permanent consumption reduction opportunities. The EUO will also continue to ensure a seamless transition for Council's new electricity fixed contracts that commenced 1 July 2022.

The EUO was appointed based on a joint procurement process led by Manningham City Council, where service provider CarbonetiX was contracted to deliver this program. The cost to continue with the EUO for two days per week for 12 months is \$76,050 excluding GST.

SUPPORTING REPORT DETAILS

Legislative and Risk Implications

The Local Government Act (LGA) 2020 and the Climate Change Act 2017 require Councils to consider climate change. Part 2, Section 9 of the LGA 2020 requires that the following are the overarching governance principles:

- (a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law;*
- (b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;*
- (c) The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.*

It is a requirement under the Victorian Climate Change Act 2017 for Council to strategically tackle climate change and assist the local community to become more climate resilient.

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Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights Considerations

In developing this report to Council, the subject matter has been considered in accordance with the requirements of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Community Engagement

The consultant supporting Council to develop its next Sustainability Strategy 2030 and has been informed of the work that this report presents on the carbon neutrality target. Any outputs from this will be communicated to the consultant for consideration and establishing Council's next Strategy 2030 and first 4-year Action Plan.

Relevant teams including Finance and Corporate Performance, Capital Works and Facilities Maintenance have been consulted on the resource implications if the EUO program is to cease beyond 30 June 2022.

Financial and Resource Implications

The 2022/23 Budget was established on maintaining the Fund's balance "as is" based on it reaching its three year anniversary. As outlined earlier, the Fund is considered to have ceased during this financial year and as such the expenditures activities identified below are unbudgeted. There are financial implications if Council is to pursue its carbon neutral target by 2022. Based on 2020/21 emission data, it will cost an estimated \$262,000 to meet this target. If carbon neutral certification is sort, this will additionally cost approximately \$20,000. The balance of the Fund of \$457,080 will cover the full cost for this annual offset for 2022/23.

If Council decides to become carbon neutral, then the expectation is to maintain this status on an annual basis until an alternative resolution is made. This will need to be factored into Council's future budgets.

With the remainder of the Fund, it is recommended that the Embedded Utilities Officer continue in 2022/23 for two days per week (\$76,050 excluding GST), and further consideration be given to making this an ongoing resource for Council.

Responding to climate change is one requirement of Council. Council has a wide range of responsibilities and must consider finance and resource allocation across all service areas. While funding from the Fund is available to purchase carbon offsets so Council can be a carbon neutral organisation, Council could choose to allocate this funding differently. The \$262,000 recommended to be spent on carbon neutrality could be diverted to further energy reduction work or to other programs like community services, sport and recreation, transport initiatives, parks and gardens, infrastructure, etc. In doing so would not achieve Council's goal of carbon neutrality in 2022.

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Innovation and Continuous Improvement

There are no Innovation and Continuous Improvement matters arising from the recommendation contained in this report.

Collaboration

No collaboration was required for this report.

Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

Conclusion

To achieve Council's ambition to be carbon neutral in 2022 in accordance with the Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022 and Council's resolution on 19 March 2018, it is recommended that Council purchase carbon offsets estimated to be \$262,000. It is recommended that carbon neutral certification is sought at a cost estimated to be \$20,000. The offset and certification can be funded from the Energy Management Fund. It is further recommended that the Fund be used to continue the Embedded Utilities Officer position for two days per week for a further 12 months.

ATTACHMENT

- 1 Summary Options for Carbon Neutrality

11.6 Records of Informal Meetings of Councillors

RECOMMENDATION

That the record of Informal Meetings of Councillors be received and noted.

Councillor Informal Briefing 11.07.22 6.30pm -6.37pm		
Matter/s Discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Public PresentationsConfidential Reports: Potential Land Exchange Central Box Hill	Councillors Present	Officers Present
	Cr Liu (Mayor & Chair) Cr Massoud (Deputy Mayor) Cr Lane Cr McNeill Cr Skilbeck Cr Davenport Cr Munroe Cr Barker	S McMillan J Green L Letic S Cann S White S Sullivan V Ferlaine K Woods K Podolak C Altan M Hofsteter
Disclosures of Conflict of Interest	None Disclosed	
Councillor /Officer attendance following disclosure	None Disclosed	
Councillor Briefing 18.07.22 6.30pm - 9.23pm		
Matter/s Discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Feasibility Study for a Shared User Path Bridge over the Rail Corridor in Box HillSouth East Metropolitan Advanced Waste Processing Project Update - July 2022Whitehorse Community Engagement Handbook 2022Whitehorse Council Plan Review 20222022 Community Satisfaction Survey FindingsUpdate on Waste Service ChargeDraft Council Agenda 25 July 2022	Councillors Present	Officers Present
	Cr Liu (Mayor & Chair) Cr Lane Cr Davenport Cr Munroe Cr Barker Cr Cutts Cr Davenport <u>Virtual</u> Cr Carr Cr McNeill Cr Massoud (Deputy Mayor) – attendance from 6.35pm	S McMillan J Green L Letic S Cann S White S Sullivan V Ferlaine C Altan P Cummings
Disclosures of Conflict of Interest	None Disclosed	
Councillor /Officer attendance following disclosure	None Disclosed	

12 Councillor Delegate and Conference / Seminar Reports

12.1 Reports by Delegates

(NB: Reports only from Councillors appointed by Council as delegates to community organisations/committees/groups)

RECOMMENDATION

That the reports from delegates be received and noted.

12.2 Reports on Conferences/Seminars Attendance

RECOMMENDATION

That the record of reports on conferences/seminars attendance be received and noted.

13 CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS

RECOMMENDATION

That in accordance with Section 61 (1) and 66 (2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 the Council should resolve to go into camera and close the meeting for the consideration of this item, as the matter to be discussed is confidential information for the purposes of section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2020, because it is Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released (Section 3(1)(a)).

This ground applies because the matter concerns recruitment matters.

14 Close Meeting