



WHITEHORSE
CITY COUNCIL

Whitehorse City Council

AGENDA

Council Meeting

on

Monday 15 April 2024 at 7.00pm

**To be held in the
Council Chamber
Nunawading Civic Centre**

Members:

Cr Denise Massoud
Cr Andrew Davenport
Cr Blair Barker
Cr Raylene Carr
Cr Prue Cutts
Cr Mark Lane
Cr Tina Liu
Cr Amanda McNeill
Cr Andrew Munroe
Cr Trudy Skilbeck
Cr Ben Stennett

Mayor
Deputy Mayor

Simon McMillan

Chief Executive Officer

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AGENDA

1 Welcome

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.

Acknowledgement of Country

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 Apologies

A leave of absence was granted to Cr Carr at the 25 March 2024 Council meeting for Council meetings to be held on 15 and 29 April 2024.

3 Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

4 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Council Meeting 25 March 2024

RECOMMENDATION

That the minutes of the Council Meeting 25 March 2024 be confirmed.

5 Urgent Business

6 Public Presentations

7 Public Question Time

8 Petitions and Joint Letters

9 Notices of Motion

10 Council Reports

10.1 Whitehorse Youth Consultation and Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee Cyber Safety Project

Department Health and Family Services
Director Community Services

Attachment

SUMMARY

A comprehensive Whitehorse Youth Consultation Project was undertaken between March and May 2023 by Council's Youth Services Team with assistance from the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee (WYRC). The purpose of the consultation was to gain insights into the concerns and needs of young people in Whitehorse and to assess whether existing service supports adequately address their needs.

The findings of the consultation are highlighted in this report with a particular focus on two key issues that emerged as top priorities being mental health and cyber safety.

The issue of mental health and its impact on young people is an important and complex matter and will be addressed by Council Youth Services with a number of strategies to be implemented. These issues will also be included for consideration in the development of the next iteration of the Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan. The issue of cyber safety has been identified as a key priority area for the WYRC for its 2024 program and this report outlines details of the Cyber Safety Project.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the outcomes of the Whitehorse Youth Consultation Project with the top priorities being cyber safety and mental health.
2. Endorses the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee plan for 2024 noting the focus on the Cyber Safety Project, working towards empowering young people and the community to navigate the digital world in a safer manner.
3. Notes the priority of mental health in young people will be included for consideration in the development of the next iteration of the Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan

KEY MATTERS

The Youth Consultation Project was conducted between March and May 2023, involving 455 participants from various age groups and backgrounds. These participants provided 1,696 responses to the 5 key questions posed.

10.1 (cont)

Mental health emerged as the top issue for young people in Whitehorse with 13.4% of respondents highlighting this as a key issue. Cyber safety emerged as the next key issue with more than 9.5% of feedback focusing on this issue alone.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Youth Consultation Project implemented by Council Youth Services and the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee aligns with the Council Plan 2021 - 2025 as follows:

- The Youth Consultation project actively engaged with the community seeking feedback on the key issues and challenges for young people and secondly on the key strategies and actions that will best support them into the future:

Strategic Direction 6: An Empowered Collaborative Community

Objective 6.1: Engage with the community collaboratively and in partnership to hear their views on what needs to be done.

Objective 6.2: Create opportunities for every person in the community to be listened to and included in community decision-making processes.

- Implementation of strategies to address the linked issues of mental health and cyber safety to ensure community wellbeing:

Strategic Direction 7: Health and Wellbeing

Objective 7.4: Seek to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipal district.

- The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee involvement in the Youth Consultation Project provided the opportunity to enhance leadership skills, consultation, advocacy and community participation:

Strategic Direction 3 - Diverse and Inclusive Community

Objective 3.1: Increase social inclusion, community participation and access to community services.

BACKGROUND

The Youth Consultation Project incorporated a wide range of community engagement strategies. These strategies aimed to engage a diverse profile of community members and key stakeholders to seek their feedback on the issues/challenges for young people and the opportunities to improve the lives and wellbeing of young people in the City of Whitehorse.

These strategies included:

- ‘Your Say’ online surveys. 38 respondents (16 parents, 10 young people, 4 workers, 8 other – community)
- Consultations directly with young people (Whitehorse youth volunteers committees, Box Hill High School, Livingstone Primary School, Gateway Local learning Network Careers Expo. 101 respondents (young people)
- Feedback boxes at libraries (Nunawading, Box Hill and Vermont South) and at Box Hill Community Arts centre. 84 respondents from the community.

10.1 (cont)

- Outreach 'vox pop' consultation sessions at three locations (Box Hill Skate Park, Box Hill Mall and Box Hill Gardens) 199 respondents from the community.
- Workshop with Council Coordinators. 15 respondents across Council
- Whitehorse Youth Services Providers Workshop. 18 youth service workers.

In total, 455 people provided 1,696 responses during the consultation phase and included feedback from family members, youth service providers, young people and the general community.

Feedback on 5 key questions were sought during the engagement process:

- 1 *What makes the City of Whitehorse a positive place for young people aged 12 – 25?*
- 2 *What do you see as the key issues and challenges facing young people in the City of Whitehorse?*
- 3 *What gaps, problems or weaknesses are you aware of in services and supports available to young people in the City of Whitehorse*
- 4 *How could existing services and supports be improved for young people in the City of Whitehorse?*
- 5 *What opportunities exist for partnership-based initiatives between Council and other service providers to improve services and support for young people in the City of Whitehorse over the coming years?*

There were 910 comments received in relation to key issues and challenges facing young people. These comments were categorised into 4 key themes:

- Health & Wellbeing related matters – 51.7%
- Personal & Family Relationship related matters – 6.9%
- Safe & Welcoming Communities related matters – 25.1%
- Quality & Accessible Services related matters – 16.3%

Mental Health

Mental health emerged as the number one issue for young people in Whitehorse with 13.4% of community feedback focusing on this issue alone.

Key findings regarding mental health issues include:

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| High Prevalence | A significant number of participants expressed experiencing mental health challenges or knowing someone who does, highlighting the widespread nature of this issue among the youth. |
| Stigma | Many youth shared concerns about the stigma attached to mental health problems, which often hinders them from seeking help or discussing their struggles with friends and family. |
| Lack of Support | Participants noted a perceived shortage of accessible mental health resources and support systems within the community, including schools and public spaces. |
| Education and Awareness | There was a consensus among youth participants that greater education and awareness campaigns are needed to reduce the |

10.1 (cont)

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| | stigma surrounding mental health issues and to promote early intervention. |
| Youth-Friendly Services | The consultation highlighted a need for youth-friendly mental health services that cater to the unique needs and preferences of young individuals. |

Cyber safety

Cyber safety emerged as another critical concern among young people in Whitehorse with more than 9.5% of respondents highlighting this as a key challenge facing young people.

Key findings regarding cyber safety include:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Prevalence | A significant number of participants reported experiencing or witnessing cyberbullying, including online harassment, social media-based cruelty, and digital exclusion. |
| Emotional Impact | Participants shared the emotional and psychological impact of cyberbullying, which includes increased stress, anxiety, depression, and, in some cases, suicidal ideation. |
| Reporting Barriers | Many participants expressed reluctance to report cyberbullying incidents due to concerns about retaliation or inadequate resolution measures. |
| Education and Prevention | Youth participants overwhelmingly supported the implementation of education and prevention programs to tackle cyberbullying, including digital citizenship programs and online safety campaigns. |

Other Issues/Challenges

- Education & Training (particular emphasis on the pressure and quality of academia) - 7.7%
- Drugs, Alcohol & Substances (particular emphasis on Vaping) - 6.9%
- Family & Relationships (particular emphasis on peer group pressure) - 5.4%
- Social Isolation - 4.5%
- Impact of Technology on social skills - 4.0%
- Housing affordability & Homelessness - 3.7%
- Financial pressures - 3.6%
- Job Opportunities - 3.4%

Addressing Mental Health

Council's Youth Services team will focus on actions to address the issues and concerns raised in the Youth Consultation Project. Mental health is already recognised by the Youth Services team as a major concern for young people. Pending the outcome of a current service review and the implementation of the future operating model for Youth Services, the team will focus on the following actions to address mental health:

- In collaboration with key partners, an increased provision of information and resources for young people regarding mental health and support services.
- Work with local mental health services namely, the newly established Headspace Box Hill to educate and support young people.

10.1 (cont)

- Work with local youth service providers as part the Whitehorse Youth Issues Network to develop strategies to address mental health challenges for young people.
- The Whitehorse School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) will work with local schools and service providers to implement interventions to support students to overcome mental health challenges.
- Seek secondary consultation from the Eastern Health Child Youth and Mental Health Service clinicians to ensure enhanced support is provided to young people presenting with mental health issues.

Addressing Cyber Safety

The WYRC played a pivotal role in the facilitation of the Youth Consultation Project. As a result of the outcomes of the consultative process, the WYRC identified cyber safety as a key focus for its 2024 program.

It is important for communities to address the growing concerns related to cyber safety and bullying, online harassment, and the associated mental health implications for young people.

The WYRC is committed to working collaboratively with Council and the broader community to foster a safer and more secure online environment for young people in the City of Whitehorse.

Key Matters

The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee conducted an extensive research and community consultations to shed light on the gravity of this issue:

- According to [research done by the E-safety Commissioner](#) 44% of young people aged 12-17 reported negative online experiences in 2020. This amounts to 5,232 teenagers in the City of Whitehorse.
- [research from 2020](#) showed that between 15% to 35% of young people have experienced cyberbullying.
- The impact of cyberbullying on the mental health of young people is substantial. [A study](#) revealed that 93% of individuals victimized by cyberbullying reported feelings of sadness, powerlessness, and hopelessness, indicating severe emotional distress.
- Almost 41% of children reported that they experience social anxiety as a result of cyberbullying, demonstrating its detrimental effect on their psychological well-being. <https://www.ditchthelabel.org/research-report/Annual%20Bullying%20Survey%202020>
- 25% of children feel that cyberbullying leads to self-harm, and nearly 26% believe it causes suicidal thoughts, highlighting the severe consequences cyberbullying can have on young people's emotional state. <https://www.broadbandsearch.net/blog/cyber-bullying-statistics>
- A substantial portion of young residents, approximately 64%, report that cyberbullying affects their ability to learn and feel safe in their

10.1 (cont)

environment, illustrating the negative educational and psychological consequences. <https://cyberbullying.org/facts>

- Sexting, the sharing of explicit content, has become a norm among young people, but it comes with its own set of dangers. Non-consensual distribution of sexts can lead to public humiliation, bullying, and even blackmail. A study published in JAMA Pediatrics in 2018 found that about 14.8% of adolescents had sent a sext, while 27.4% had received one.

Cyber Security Risks

Identity theft, phishing, and scams are persistent cybersecurity and fraud concerns affecting young people.

Identity Theft:

Identity theft involves the fraudulent use of someone's personal information. Identity theft is a significant concern, with cases involving the misuse of personal information for financial gain or fraudulent activities.

Phishing

Phishing attacks typically involve cybercriminals sending deceptive emails or messages to individuals, often with the aim of obtaining sensitive information, such as login credentials or financial data.

Scams

Scams come in various forms, including online scams, phone scams, and investment scams.

Young people face a challenging task in addressing these issues and creating a safer online environment. Cyber safety is a community concern that requires immediate attention and comprehensive solutions to safeguard the wellbeing of young people.

WYRC Cyber Safety Project 2024

Whilst the WYRC believe there are strategies in place attempting to address cyber safety (appendix 1), they identified a need for local responses to improve online safety for young people. The WYRC have formulated the Cyber Safety Project with a range of youth activities and initiatives designed to empower young people and families to navigate the digital world in a safer manner.

Council Youth Services is currently under a Service Review in order to determine the future operating model for Youth Services to best support young people. The facilitation of the Cyber Safety Project by the WYRC and Youth Services will occur during the Youth Services Interim Operating Model during which time the long-term service delivery model is determined and implemented.

Project Goal and Objectives

The Cyber Safety Project aims to provide a 'grassroots' local response to the issue of cyber safety. The goal is to prevent the negative impact of young

10.1 (cont)

people's online engagement and connect those who have been negatively affected by cyber issues to access appropriate information, resources and support.

The Cyber Safety Project will:

- Recruit, train and empower local young leaders to educate young people on cyber safety by:
 - Facilitating engaging activities in local primary schools and the community.
 - Delivering a social media campaign to young people and their families.
- Be an access point / community connector to:
 - Provide referrals to local support organisations
 - Connect young people to local community groups.
- Educate parents with regard to cyber safety through a parent education seminar/s.
- Explore the need cyber safety education in Whitehorse secondary schools, and where possible fund this through School Focused Youth Service.

Project RationaleRecruiting, training and empowering local young leaders:

Young people in the WYRC have expressed an interest in facilitating community and school-based activities to raise awareness in regard to the issue of cyber safety. Training and empowering young leaders will develop long lasting volunteers and attract other young people to contribute to their local community.

Local response:

There are many global or national organisations providing resources, information, posters, workshops etc. in regard to cyber safety. However, there are no local organisations strategically distributing this information or acting as a connection point for local young people when they are negatively impacted by cyber safety issues.

Peer support and delivery:

Young leaders are interested in addressing the issue of cyber safety and wishing to contribute more effectively to their local community. Having the activities delivered by young leaders makes the project more relevant and credible to peers.

Social media activity:

Social media campaign ensures the project targets and reaches local young people in the community. It also promotes the work of Council Youth Services and other programs and services delivered by community organisations. Young people impacted by cyber safety issues but may not be aware of the local available supports which is be promoted to them via a social media campaign.

10.1 (cont)Activities in schools

By facilitating short engaging activities in schools on cyber safety, the project raises awareness of the supports / resources available to students to address the issue. Schools will have the opportunity to have a greater connection to Council Youth Services and other community support services.

Referrals:

Project Worker will engage students in the facilitation of cyber safety activities in schools and will refer students to appropriate youth service providers in Whitehorse with the capacity to provide support to address presenting issue.

Project Deliverables

| Deliverable | Timeline | Responsible |
|---|-----------------|---|
| Establish a Project Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint Project Officer (PO) • Recruit Young Leaders (YL) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create and post volunteer advertisement. - Interviews and appointments • Establish team 'charter' and Induct volunteers | May / June | Youth Services Team Leader, PO |
| Recruit and train local young leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit young leaders • External cyber safety training for young leader (Friendly Phishing, Vic Pol, 'Think You Know') • Community engagement training | May / June | PO, External Org's and Council's Community Development Dep't, |
| Collect resources and information on cyber safety for the Whitehorse community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and collate available cyber safety resources • Develop 'cyber safety' page on Council website for young people and parents | June / July | PO, YL and Strategic Marketing and Comm (SMC) |
| Develop partnerships with VicPol and external community organisations (EACH and Headspace) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further explore joint activities in Whitehorse primary schools • Detail referral pathways | June / July | PO and YL |
| Develop social media plan and content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop social media content • Schedule posting | July | PO, YL and SMC |

10.1 (cont)

| | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Deliver awareness activities in schools and the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop lunchtime activities • Liaise with schools • Deliver activities in schools • Share cyber safety information to schools / students | August - September | PO, YL and SFYS Coordinator |
| Facilitate referrals to support organisations or community groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a central communication point. • Project Worker to facilitate referrals. | July - October | PO and YL |
| Evaluation and reporting | October - November | PO |

Project Evaluation

Evaluation of the Project to include the following:

- Quantitative evaluation
 - Number of Young people in leadership group
 - Number of Young people engaged in awareness activities
 - Number of young people engaged online.
 - Number of referrals done
- Qualitative evaluation
 - Questionnaire on skill development of young leaders
 - Questionnaire of young people engaged in awareness activities.

The evaluation of the Cyber Safety Project will determine its effectiveness and whether changes in service delivery need to be implemented in the following year/s.

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

This report outlines the extensive community engagement conducted as part of the Youth Consultation Project.

10.1 (cont)**Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial or resource implications arising from the recommendation of this report. The cost to deliver the Cyber Safety Project (Project Worker, marketing / promotion, training and development of young leaders: approximately \$8,500) will be incorporated within the current Youth Services budget.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

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

Collaboration

Council Youth Services and the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee worked collaboratively on the Youth Consultations 2023 and will do so in the delivery of the Cyber Safety Project in 2024.

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.

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

Conclusion

The findings of the Youth Consultations underline the importance of addressing mental health and cyber safety as top priorities for Council and the community.

Whitehorse Youth Services and the WYRC are committed to addressing the issues of mental health and cyber safety. The Cyber Safety Project endeavours to empower young people to stay safe in the digital world. The project will also assist to provide young people with appropriate resources / information and support to address issues impacting upon them.

ATTACHMENT

- 1 WYRC Council Report Dec 23 Existing Cyber Security Safety Strategies & Tools

10.2 Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee 2023 Annual Report

Department Health and Family Services
Director Community Services

Attachment

SUMMARY

The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee (WYRC) plays an important role in representing the interests of young people within the municipality. This report provides a summary of the outcomes and achievements of the 2023 WYRC and initial plans for 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Acknowledge the work of the 2023 Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee; and
2. Endorses the Committee's initial action plan for 2024.

KEY MATTERS

The WYRC comprises a group of young volunteers aged 12-25 years that act as a voice for young people, advocating on their behalf to Council and to the wider community on important youth related issues.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee is commissioned each year to undertake a 12-month program to develop leadership skills and training in the areas of consultation, public speaking, marketing / promotion, event management, advocacy and community participation. Members gain valuable experience and use their skills throughout the year to connect with young people, schools and youth organisations, implement events, projects and initiatives that benefit young people and address important youth issues.

The WYRC aligns to the strategic priorities of the Council Plan:

- Strategic Direction 3 - Diverse and Inclusive Community
Objective 3.1: Increase social inclusion, community participation and access to community services.
- Strategic Direction 6: An Empowered Collaborative Community
Objective 6.1: Engage with the community collaboratively and in partnership to hear their views on what needs to be done.
Objective 6.2: Create opportunities for every person in the community to be listened to and included in community decision-making processes.

10.2 (cont)

- Strategic Direction 7: Health and Wellbeing
 - Objective 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.
 - Objective 7.4: Seek to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipal district

BACKGROUND

The WYRC was established in 2002 to provide a formal link between young people and Whitehorse City Council. The key objectives of the Committee are to develop a positive profile of young people in the community, consult with the broader youth population, report to Council on the aspirations of young people and to assist in the creation of new opportunities for young people to be involved in their community.

There are a number of important benefits for young people to be involved in the WYRC. These include a greater understanding of local government, the development of leadership and project management skills and a greater connection with their local community.

WYRC representatives are selected through a nomination process that is promoted to schools, youth service providers, clubs and through local and social media. Due consideration is given to the selection process to ensure a diversity of gender, age, background and life experiences of young people. If deemed appropriate young people can remain on the Committee for a maximum two-year period. The committee representatives are not paid and volunteer their time to benefit the community.

2023 COMMITTEE REPORT

The 2023 WYRC consisted of 11 young people who delivered a diverse range of activities, events and projects. The Committee was coordinated by Council's Youth Participation Officer and supported by Council's School Focused Youth Services Officer.

The WYRC events and activities in 2023 included the following:

- Members were inducted into the committee and made aware of Whitehorse City Council and relevant policies and processes. WYRC members also had the opportunity to meet the Mayor and tour the Council Chambers.
- Completion of training including youth advocacy, community engagement, leadership, first aid, event management and promotion / marketing.
- Youth Consultation and Cyber Safety Project: The committee facilitated youth consultation to determine key issues and challenges faced by young people. A key issue identified was cyber safety, which the WYRC wishes to address to ensure safe online practices by young people (refer to the previous Council Report this evening).

10.2 (cont)

- Provided feedback to external consultants Spark Strategy regarding Council's Youth Service Review to determine the future operating model to best support young people.
- Planned and facilitated the 'youth area' at Whitehorse City Council's annual Spring Festival featuring a range of engaging activities and incorporated the 'youth stage' that was facilitated by the FReeZA Youth Committee.
- Reviewed and endorsed young people nominated for the 'Young Person of the Month' Award which recognises and celebrates the efforts and achievements of young people in Whitehorse.
- Consent and Healthy Relationships Workshop: Worked collaboratively with Box Hill TAFE and Sexual Health Victoria to facilitate workshop on how to maintain healthy relationships.
- Online Workshops: Planned in 2022 at a time when COVID was prevalent in the community however, the workshops were then held in 2023. The online format struggled to appeal to young people with the WYRC, leading to the planning of 'in person' events for remainder of the year.
- Two WYRC members undertook the role of Social Media Coordinator to facilitate the youth committee Instagram account to provide information / support young people and promote the work of the WYRC.
- Visited the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) which reinforced the notion of young people taking action to inspire positive change for peers and the youth sector.
- The Annual Youth Forum - Whitehorse Youth Summit was held at the Box Hill Town Hall on 4th August for young people covering the topics of cyber safety, vaping, consent, healthy relationships and bullying. The Youth Forum included:
 - Keynote presentation from Aayushi Khillan from the Centre for Multicultural Youth highlighting the issue of mental health and their experience of racism as an immigrant in Australia
 - Workshops facilitated by Victoria Police, Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS), Bully Zero, and Sex Education Australia.
 - Lunchtime expo with information and resources available to young people from organisations: Eastern Access Community Health, Headspace, Family Access Network, Victoria Police and Free from Family Violence (FVREE)

For further information on events, initiatives and activities please refer to the WYRC 2023 Annual Report at Attachment 1.

10.2 (cont)**COMMITTEE INITIAL PLANS FOR 2024**

Recruitment for the 2024 WYRC has been successful with 15 members appointed, including a number of young people continuing from 2023. The newly recruited committee have participated in an induction program looking at the role of the committee within Council. At this stage, the activities the committee will consider undertaking and implementing in 2024 include:

- Advocating for the best interests of young people.
- Organising and implementing the Whitehorse Municipal Youth Forum and/or community workshops on issues impacting young people as highlighted from the Youth Consultation 2023.
- Specifically addressing the issue of cyber safety, this being a key challenge for young people identified during consultation conducted in 2023. The WYRC are planning to implement a range of cyber safety initiatives to address this issue (refer to the previous Council Report this evening).

Discussion and Options

This WYRC report highlights the work undertaken by the Committee in 2023 and outlines their initial plans for 2024. It provides the opportunity for the WYRC to present directly to Council to have their volunteer work acknowledged in representing the interests of young people.

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 Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee with the assistance the Youth Services team adopt consultative processes in the planning and facilitation of activities for young people and in the investigation of issues pertinent of the lives to young people in the community.

Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications arising from the recommendation contained in this report. The cost of the activities undertaken by the WYRC is incorporated within Council's Youth Services annual budget. The committee representatives are not paid for their time on the committee.

10.2 (cont)**Innovation and Continuous Improvement**

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

Collaboration

The WYRC works in collaboration with Youth Services and community organisations in the planning and delivery of activities for young people.

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.

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

Conclusion

The 2023 WYRC completed initiatives that support young people in the Whitehorse community and are to be commended for their efforts.

Council's Youth Services Team is encouraged that the 2024 WYRC members, like their predecessors, will make an active and positive contribution to the Whitehorse community. The WYRC members are appreciative that Council sponsors opportunities that advance their development as young leaders.

Council's Youth Services Team, particularly the Youth Participation Officer will continue to support the 2024 WYRC and will work towards developing and implementing the Committee's plans and aspirations.

ATTACHMENT

- 1 WYRC 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

10.3 Impact of Minister's Good Practice Guidelines for Service Rates and Charges

Department City Services
Director Infrastructure

Attachment

SUMMARY

This report is in response to the 'Local Government Service Rates and Charges Minister's Good Practice Guidelines for their use - December 2023', as shown in **Attachment 1**, that relate to Council's Waste Service Charge arrangements and outline:

- the impacts to the Council long term financial plan, should compliance with the Minister's Guidelines be achieved;
- what elements can be immediately accommodated in the 2024/25 budget; and
- advocacy opportunities that seek to minimise the implications of the Guidelines on Council's long term financial sustainability.

The new Guidelines relating to waste service charges are the first of their kind and were provided to Council by the Minister for Local Government on 22 December 2023, to be effective from 1 March 2024. The Minister provided advice on 5 March 2024 acknowledging that some councils may require more time than the next budget cycle (2024/25) to comply with the Guidelines.

Council first implemented a Waste Service Charge in the 2023/24 financial year following community consultation and review by the Essential Services Commission. At the time there were no Guidelines and no indication that Guidelines were being considered.

Council's budget development process for 2024/25 commenced in September 2023 and the budget is to be adopted before the financial year commences on 1 July 2024. As recognised by the Minister's recent letter, it is not feasible to comply with the Guidelines without materially changing the budget. In 2024/25 it is proposed to continue with the Waste Service Charge model adopted in 2023/24 with the only change being to remove the costs associated with waste education with these costs reducing the operational budget surplus.

To fully comply with the Guidelines would have \$2.6 million negative impact on the budget surplus in the first year and ongoing the impact would increase as prices escalate. This would have a significant impact on Council's long term financial sustainability.

10.3 (cont)**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. Notes the impacts of the 'Local Government Service Rates and Charges Minister's Good Practice Guidelines for their use - December 2023' relating to waste service charges on Council's financial position; and
2. Advocates for changes to the 'Local Government Service Rates and Charges Minister's Good Practice Guidelines for their use - December 2023' that minimise the impacts on Council's financial position.

KEY MATTERS**Minister's Good Practice Guidelines**

Council was first informed of the Ministerial Guidelines relating to waste service charges when the rate cap was announced with a letter to the Mayor dated 22 December 2023. The Guidelines are titled, 'Local Government Service Rates and Charges Minister's Good Practice Guidelines for their use' - December 2023.

The Guidelines are effective from 1 March 2024, and in summary include:

- It is good practice for the Waste Service Charge to align with specific and tangible services to the occupant. For example, the kerbside collection of waste and/or recycling bins provided for exclusive use of the occupant.
- It is not good practice to include services that do not provide a direct benefit to the occupant. For example, public litter bins and street sweeping. These should be funded through rates.

Councils were not consulted in preparing the Guidelines and had no knowledge prior to their release.

On 5 March 2024, the Minister provided an update on the Guidelines acknowledging that some councils may require more time than the next budget cycle (2024/25) to comply with the Guidelines and expect that they will demonstrate a pathway for compliance in future budgets.

Whitehorse Waste Service Charge

Following community consultation and extensive assessment, Council introduced a separate Waste Service Charge in the 2023/24 financial year to provide a fair and transparent way to charge for the cost of waste and recycling services, consistent with providing incentives for reducing waste and increasing recycling. The Whitehorse Waste Service Charge was reviewed by the Essential Services Commission in 2023 as part of its introduction. All councils in Victoria have a version of a Waste Service Charge. Whitehorse was one of the last councils to implement a Charge.

The Whitehorse Waste Service Charge includes the following three components:

10.3 (cont)

- Kerbside Waste Service Charge - This charge recovers the full cost of providing Council's kerbside waste and recycling bin collection services including collection, disposal, and processing, and administering the services. This is charged to all properties eligible for Council's kerbside bin services.
- Public Waste Service Charge - This charge is for a wide range of waste services that Council provides that benefit all residents including public place litter and recycling bins, street sweeping, pre-booked hard waste collection services and administering the services. A Public Waste Service Charge is charged to all properties in Whitehorse even if the property does not have access to the kerbside service or hard waste service, on the basis that all ratepayers benefit from public waste services. This excludes non-rateable properties without kerbside Council bin services.
- Supplementary Bin Charges - This charge is for supplementary services including to upsize bins from the standard Kerbside Waste Service Charge service and for optional and additional bins.

Compliance with the Guidelines

It is considered that the Whitehorse Waste Service Charge largely complies with the Guidelines, in that the Charge:

- Is calculated and declared in a fair and transparent manner.
- Was subject to recent community engagement in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy.
- Is explained in Council's Revenue and Rating Plan.
- Is a service charge (as opposed to a Service Rate based on property value).
- Provides a clear nexus between the amount to be levied on an occupancy and the cost of the specific service being provided to the same occupancy.

The area of compliance that requires further investigation under the Guidelines as presented, is what is included in the Public Waste Service Charge component of the Waste Service Charge.

The Whitehorse Waste Service Charge was developed in accordance with the Local Government Act. The legislation provides for councils to raise rates and charges for 'waste, recycling or resource recovery services' as having the same definition as in the Circular Economy Act. Under that definition, litter bin collection and street sweeping can be included in a Waste Service Charge. Both of these are included in the Public Waste Service Charge component of the Waste Service Charge in 2023/24.

The release of the Guidelines was the first indication from the State Government that public litter bins and street sweeping should not be included in a Waste Service Charge.

10.3 (cont)

For reference, in 2022/23 Council collected 3,390 tonnes of waste from street sweeping, and 257 tonnes of waste and recycling from public litter bins. The waste was disposed of in landfill and recyclables were sent for processing. This is a significant part of Council's waste and recycling services that have the same cost pressures as kerbside waste and recycling services.

At Whitehorse, the Waste Service Charge is structured so that the provision of services is levied to those properties that receive the benefit. The cost of the services that have a public benefit are levied to all properties, and the cost of the kerbside bin services are only levied to properties that are eligible to receive these services.

By the time the Guidelines were published on 22 December 2023, preparations for the draft budget for the 2024/25 financial year were well advanced. If Council was to change the method of calculating the Waste Service Charge, then it is considered that this should be done in consultation with the community. Releasing the Guidelines in December 2023 for implementation in the 2024/25 financial year did not allow sufficient time for Council to consider the impact of the Guidelines and consult with the community.

Prior to making a change to the method of calculating the Waste Service Charge, more information is required on how to charge for waste and recycling services that have public benefit.

It is considered that the way the Waste Service Charges and supplementary bin charges are calculated in Whitehorse is fair and transparent.

The Guidelines have a financial impact on all councils and have been implemented without any consultation or assessment on the outcomes associated with their implementation. It is recommended that further discussions regarding the impacts of the Guidelines be sought and that Council advocates for improvements in the Guidelines to recognise the broad public benefit of some waste and recycling services associated with landfilling and/or recycling processing.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Waste Service Charge relates to the following strategies in the Council Plan 2021-2025:

- 5.3.1: Identify, promote and implement viable recycling and resource recovery opportunities.
- 8.2.2: Ensure responsible financial and resource management to maintain Council's long term financial sustainability within a rate capping environment.

Policy

The key Council strategic document relating to waste reduction and recycling is the Waste Management Strategy – Rubbish to Resource! 2018-2028.

10.3 (cont)

The Revenue and Rating Plan 2023-2027 outlines how Council will raise revenue to fund services and programs. In addition, Council has a Waste Service Charge Policy to guide decision-making on how Council charges for waste and recycling services through a Waste Service Charge.

BACKGROUND**Waste Service Charge impact on revenue**

The decision to implement a Waste Service Charge commencing in the 2023/24 financial year was made at the Council Meeting on 12 September 2022. The report for the Meeting provided detailed background to support the decision.

The model that was adopted is a flat fee where all properties are charged the same for the same service and is not dependent on the value of the property.

It was a requirement that in the first year of implementing a Waste Service Charge there was to be no increase in the total amount of revenue raised by Council in excess of the Fair Go Rates System rate cap. That is, the total average general rates collected plus the Waste Service Charge needed to be within the rate cap and revenue neutral. This was done in 2023/24 and approved by the Essential Services Commission.

In subsequent years (2024/25 and beyond for Whitehorse), any increase in average general rates is subject to the rate cap established under the fair Go Rates System, and any increase in the Waste Service Charge is reflective of the cost of providing these services.

By adopting a Waste Service Charge model in 2023/24, the average general rates after separation of waste charges can only ever go up by the rate cap, unless Council applies for a rate cap variation.

DISCUSSION AND OPTIONS***Recommended option***

For 2024/25, it is proposed to continue with the Waste Service Charge principles adopted in 2023/24 that were established prior to the release of the Guidelines. This is based on the facts that the recently adopted Waste Service Charge:

- is only in its second year;
- has recently been developed with community consultation and it is not practical to engage with the community prior to 2024/25 about a major change;
- is transparent in its application;
- was approved by the Essential Services Commission; and
- has a clear nexus between the costs recovered under the charge and the waste services that incur those costs.

In the Waste Service Charge in 2023/24 there was an amount included in the Public Waste Service Charge component for 'waste education'. In response to the Guidelines, it is proposed not to include this in 2024/25. The

10.3 (cont)

amount is around \$100,000 and will be funded by a reduction in operational surplus.

In 2024/25, it is proposed that the Public Waste Service Charge component be approximately \$6.0 million, which is made up of:

- \$3.40 million – booked hard waste collections
- \$1.96 million – street sweeping
- \$0.64 million – public litter

The Public Waste Service Charge is divided among approximately 80,000 properties, making the component of the proposed Charge for 2024/25 approximately \$75 per applicable property.

Before making any changes to the model of the Waste Service Charge, further information is requested from the State Government including:

- Why is it not good practice to include street sweeping and public litter in a Waste Service Charge when they are subject to the same cost pressures as the kerbside waste and recycling services (primarily related to fuel costs landfill disposal costs). It is understood that most councils have historically included these services in their respective Waste Service Charge.
- In a rate cap environment, how can operational surplus reductions be accommodated without significant impact to Council's long term financial sustainability and services provided to the community.

Option – Only charge a Waste Service Charge to properties with Council kerbside bin services

The Guidelines have a focus on kerbside bin collection services. An option that would require further exploration under the Guidelines as they have been published is to only charge a Waste Service Charge to properties that have Council kerbside bin services. This would mean that any waste and recycling services with public benefit would need be funded from the operational surplus, removing the Public Waste Service Charge component of the Waste Service Charge. This would have the following impact on services currently in the Public Waste Service Charge:

- Booked hard waste collections – estimated cost in 2024/25 is \$3.4 million - the cost of this service was included in the Public Waste Service Charge component in 2023/24 considering the service has public benefit. There is a direct benefit for the properties that are eligible for the service and an indirect benefit for all properties through a reduction in illegally dumped rubbish.

The hard waste service is available to residential properties and is also provided to a number of high-density developments where arrangements with the Owners Corporation have been agreed. The properties that are ineligible for the service include high density residential properties with no suitable collection point, and

10.3 (cont)

commercial, industrial and community properties (community properties do not pay the Waste Service Charge or rates of any kind).

Approximately 90% of properties that pay the Public Waste Service Charge are eligible for the hard waste service.

The cost of this service could be transferred to the Kerbside Waste Service Charge component of the Waste Service Charge considering it is a kerbside service. 95% of properties that are charged the Kerbside Waste Service Charge are eligible for the service. There are approximately 14,480 properties that do not pay the Kerbside Waste Service Charge that are also eligible for the service, and this includes residential properties with private waste arrangements and do not have Council kerbside bin services.

Although it is not recommended, the cost of the booked hard waste collection service could be moved from the Public Waste Service Charge to the Kerbside Waste Service Charge component of the Waste Service Charge. This would have no impact on Council's long term financial plan but would increase the Kerbside Waste Service Charge as the cost of the hard waste service is distributed across a lesser number of properties.

- Street sweeping and public litter – combined cost proposed for the 2024/25 Budget of \$2.6 million – the costs of these services are currently included in the Public Waste Service Charge component considering the services have public benefit.

The Guidelines state that it is not good practice to include these services in a Waste Service Charge. Although it is not recommended, the cost of these services could be transferred and funded from a reduction in operational surplus.

SUPPORTING REPORT DETAILS**Legislative and Risk Implications**

The Minister has confirmed that the Guidelines are not mandatory and are not enforceable. Their purpose is to articulate the expectations of the Minister and if there is not compliance in 2024/25, then councils should demonstrate a pathway for compliance in future budgets.

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.

10.3 (cont)**Community Engagement**

There was extensive community consultation undertaken to inform the Waste Service Charge that was adopted by Council commencing in the 2023/24 financial year.

The Guidelines require that a Waste Service Charge be subject to community engagement in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

Financial and Resource Implications

A Waste Service Charge was implemented to provide a fair and transparent way to charge for the cost of waste and recycling services, consistent with providing incentives for reducing waste and increasing recycling. It is fair in that properties are only charged for services that they benefit from, and transparent as the costs are itemised on the Rates Notice.

In addition, a Waste Service Charge is allowable under the Local Government Act and was introduced to maintain Council's long term financial sustainability within a rate capping environment. The costs for waste and recycling services have typically increased by more than the rate cap and are subject to costs outside the control of Council including the State Government Landfill Levy and other requirements imposed by the State Government on provision of services.

The Minister's Guidelines potentially is seeking the relevant councils to fund waste service costs from operational surpluses, with many council's facing significant financial pressures and underlying deficits already in their long term financial plans. Considering the general rates can only go up by the rate cap, this can only be done by either:

- Reducing Council's surplus which has a significant impact on long term financial sustainability; or
- Applying for a rate cap variation, which may or may not be approved by the Minister.

If the costs for street sweeping and public litter were not part of a Waste Service Charge this would either reduce operational surpluses by \$2.6 million, or Council would have to consider a variation to the rate cap that may or may not be approved by the Minister. This would have a significant impact on Council's long term financial sustainability.

Excluding services that have a public benefit from a Waste Service Charge would have a detrimental impact on Council's capacity to raise revenue and deliver services to the community.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Innovation and continuous improvement were considered through the investigation of a Waste Service Charge.

10.3 (cont)**Collaboration**

There has been collaboration with other councils, including through the associations of Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and Local Government Finance Professional (FinPro).

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.

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

Conclusion

It is recommended that Council notes this report and advocates for changes to the Guidelines that lessen the impacts on Council's long term financial sustainability.

ATTACHMENT

- 1 Minister's Guidelines For Service Rates and Charges - December 2023

10.4 City Planning and Development - Strategic Planning Update

Department City Planning and Development
Manager Engineering and Investment

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council on key strategic planning projects, planning scheme amendments and relevant State projects. The last update to Council was in September 2023.

The report outlines the status of planning scheme amendments and other projects undertaken by the Strategic Planning Unit. It details amendments that have been initiated by Council to improve or update the planning ordinance and those amendments that are proponent-led.

Key State government projects that have required considerable involvement by the Strategic Planning Unit are also discussed.

This report recommends that Council acknowledges the update on the activities of the Strategic Planning Unit over the last six months.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes the updates and acknowledge the key projects and amendments to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme undertaken by the Strategic Planning Unit.
2. Notes that the work is consistent with the Council Plan and undertaken as required by and in accordance with Section 12 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

KEY MATTERS

This report outlines the progress made since the last Strategic Planning Update to Council on 11 September 2023.

The following Amendments are covered in this update:

- Amendment C220: Residential Corridors Built Form Study
- Amendment C230: 490-500 Burwood Highway, Vermont South
- Amendment C241: Municipal-wide Development Contributions Plan
- Amendment C245: Ministerial Amendment - Box Hill Central North (Vicinity Centres)

10.4 (cont)

The following Projects are covered in this update:

- Suburban Rail Loop
- Plan for Victoria
- Tally Ho Major Activity Centre Structure Plan
- Nunawading/ MegaMile and Mitcham Activity Centres Structure Plan Review
- Heritage Framework Plan implementation
- Heritage Assistance Fund
- Built Environment Showcase

BACKGROUND

Council's Strategic Planning Unit undertakes a range of projects that respond to the strategic planning needs of the municipality, including:

- changes and updates to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme
- undertaking strategic planning projects to inform planning policies and strategic directions in the planning scheme
- proactively planning for future improvements, land use and development opportunities
- protection of places of heritage, cultural and environmental significance
- advocating to state government on planning matters and major projects.

The Council is updated on key projects within the Strategic Planning Unit approximately every six months.

Discussion

The following is a summary of the status of key amendments and projects undertaken by the Strategic Planning Unit.

| Amendment | Brief Description | Current Status |
|---|--|--|
| C220 - Residential Corridors Built Form Study | The <i>Residential Corridors Built Form Study 2019</i> recommended new development guidelines for the key road corridors in the municipality being Burwood Highway and Whitehorse Road, where the Residential Growth Zone (RGZ) interfaces with land in the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ) and the General Residential Zone (GRZ). | The Amendment was approved on 22 February 2024 and came into effect on 1 March 2024 when notice of the approval was published in the Victoria Government. The amendment approved by the Minister for Planning sets preferred building heights and setbacks. |

10.4 (cont)

| Amendment | Brief Description | Current Status |
|---|---|--|
| C230 - 490-500 Burwood Highway, Vermont South. Former Australian Road and Research Board (ARRB) | <p>The amendment proposes to rezone the 2.6 hectare former ARRB site from Transport Zone 4 to RGZ and apply a site-specific Design and Development Overlay, the Significant Landscape Overlay, the Vegetation Protection Overlay and the Environmental Audit Overlay.</p> <p>The site has an existing Heritage Overlay recognising the ARRB building and its surrounds.</p> | <p>Council adopted the amendment on 10 July 2023 with most, but not all, of the changes recommended by the independent Panel. The Amendment was submitted in July 2023, approved by the Minister on 21 March 2024 and came into effect on 27 March 2024.</p> |
| C241 - Municipal wide Development Contributions Plan (DCP) | <p>The Whitehorse DCP applies to all land within the municipality. A total of 133 projects were identified in the DCP, of which, 95 are community infrastructure projects and 38 are development infrastructure projects.</p> <p>The DCP proposes to collect \$31,264,585 over a 20-year lifespan from 2022.</p> | <p>The Minister for Planning approved the amendment which came into effect on 21 December 2023.</p> <p>Tools to support the community and developers are available on Council's dedicated DCP web site. This includes a DCP levy calculator, charge areas map and frequently asked questions.</p> |
| C245 – Ministerial Amendment for Box Hill Central North (Vicinity Centres) | <p>Vicinity Centres applied to the Minister for Planning to undertake Amendment C245 to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme.</p> <p>The amendment primarily proposes to apply a Specific Controls Overlay (SCO) with an Incorporated Document into the Planning Scheme. The Incorporated Document is intended to allow development on the Box Hill Central North site as per a Masterplan which proposes high-density, mixed-use developments (seven multi-level buildings ranging between 19 and 49 levels) and new and enhanced public spaces.</p> | <p>The Minister appointed a Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) to consider the amendment and submissions.</p> <p>The SAC hearing was held 18-28 September and 27 October 2023.</p> <p>The SAC submitted its report to the Minister for Planning on 27 November 2023. The Minister has not yet released the report to the public. A decision about the Amendment by the Minister is pending.</p> |

10.4 (cont)**Other projects****Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) – East**

In December 2023, the Suburban Rail Loop Authority (SRLA) released draft Precinct Visions for the six new SRL East stations, including Box Hill and Burwood.

The Victorian Government estimate that the number of people living and working in each of the precincts will more than double by 2056. In Box Hill, the number of residents could increase from 29,000 to 77,000 people (167% increase) and the number of people working could increase from 23,500 to 48,500 people (106% increase).

In Burwood, the number of residents could increase from 22,000 to 44,500 people (102% increase) and employees could increase from 11,500 to 24,000 people (109% increase).

Extra homes, offices and community spaces will therefore be required. The preliminary ideas for how the SRLA propose to cater for this growth are outlined in the draft Precinct Vision documents.

At its meeting on 26 February 2024 Council endorsed a submission in response to the draft Precinct Visions. The submission was subsequently lodged with the SRLA. Council officers are engaged in ongoing discussions with the SRLA about various aspects of the precinct structure planning process, including transport, planning, open space, and community facilities.

Plan for Victoria

The State Government has commenced the preparation of a new planning strategy for the State, replacing *Plan Melbourne*. This plan is intended to build on the recently released Housing Statement and several major planning reforms. Amongst other matters, such as public transport, climate change, economic and job opportunities, community and liveability, the Plan aims to establish how the housing and land use needs of the state will be managed over the coming decades to accommodate population growth to 2050.

The State Government has begun engaging with the community, industry, and local government, including pop-up sessions to be held across the state. A pop-up session was held on Friday 5 April in Box Hill. In addition to contributing to a regional submission as part of the Eastern Region Group of Councils (ERG), Council officers will be preparing a separate Whitehorse submission which will be presented to Council for endorsement at a future Council meeting.

The community has opportunities to provide input to the new Plan for Victoria during 2024. More information about this State government project is available at: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/developing-a-new-plan-for-victoria> and

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/strategies-and-initiatives/developing-a-new-plan-for-victoria>

10.4 (cont)Tally Ho Activity Centre Structure Plan

Council commenced a project in late 2023 to prepare a Structure Plan for the Tally Ho Major Activity Centre to guide growth and change in the activity centre for the next 10 to 15 years. This involves reviewing the *Tally Ho Major Activity Centre Urban Design Framework 2007* and the *Tally Ho Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines 2015*, as well as considering the recommendations of the Tally Ho Commercial 1 Zone Review (July 2019).

Stage 1 of the project consisted of a background review of the demographics, employment trends and a site visit to understand the current state of the Activity Centre. Workshops were held with Council staff and landowners in the MAC. Stage 2 of the project was recently completed and included the preparation of an Issues and Opportunities Report. A drop in information session was held on 13 March 2024. Approximately 30 people attended the session to discuss the project with the consultant team and Council officers. Stage 3 has commenced and involves preparing the draft Structure Plan and future community engagement.

Nunawading/MegaMile and Mitcham Activity Centres Structure Plan Review

Council is reviewing and updating the 2008 Structure plan for the Nunawading, MegaMile (East) and Mitcham activity centres. Consultants were appointed in 2020 to assist with updating the Structure Plan. The project is being undertaken in two phases.

Whilst there have been significant delays, Phase 1 of the project is in progress and close to completion. The next output from Phase 1 will be the submission of an Issues and Opportunities Paper for community consultation.

Heritage Framework Plan Implementation

As part of a two-year budget initiative, work has progressed during the last six months on several tasks identified in the *Heritage Framework Plan 2020*. In particular:

| Task | Status |
|--|---|
| 1. Update maps and statements of significance for existing heritage precincts | Draft submitted for review |
| 2. Update the Thematic Environmental History | Draft completed |
| 3. Desktop review of the Potential Heritage List (needed to establish the scope of the Heritage Study, below). | Completed |
| 4 & 5. Heritage Study of places on the Potential Heritage List | Consultant appointed December 2023. Consultant has undertaken preliminary work on the potential heritage list and commenced background research |
| 6. Update Heritage Design Guidelines | Scoping of project has commenced |

10.4 (cont)

The Heritage Advisor Annual Report later this year will include more discussion on these projects.

Heritage Assistance Fund

The Heritage Assistance Fund (HAF) provides grants up to \$2,000 from the funding pool of \$40,000 to eligible owners and occupiers of properties in the Heritage Overlay to assist with the ongoing maintenance of their heritage properties. The HAF assists with various heritage preservation works including external painting, repairs, and restorative works.

The 19th round of the HAF for the 2023/24 financial year opened on 1 August and closed on 10 September 2023. A total of 37 applications were received.

The applications were reviewed by the Heritage Steering Committee on 27 September 2023 and 22 applications were approved for funding by the Director City Development, totalling \$40,000. Successful applicants have until the end of the financial year to complete their nominated projects and claim the funds.

Built Environment Showcase

The Built Environment Showcase celebrates the value of good design, creative thinking, and sustainability in the built environment. Nominations can be made in the following categories: residential, heritage, institutional, commercial or landscape.

Nominations for showcase projects are currently open until 29 April 2024, with the Showcase event to be held on 21 May 2024 at the Nunawading Community Hub. More details about the Built Environment Showcase are available at:

<https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/waste-environment/sustainability/built-environment-showcase>

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Strategic planning projects, project outcomes and stakeholder consultations are consistent with the *Council Plan 2021-2025* (2021).

Specifically, the strategic planning projects support Strategic Direction 4: Our built environment, movement, and public places, of the Council Plan through the preparation of strategies and guidelines that set parameters for future use development in a manner that responds to the needs of the community.

Policy

The policy context for strategic planning activities arises primarily from the Whitehorse Planning Scheme and the Victoria Planning Provisions which contain the Planning Policy Framework (PPF). The PPF contains State, Regional (where relevant) and local policies. The Whitehorse Planning Scheme is in the process of being translated to the PPF format. In addition, Objectives of the Council Plan, Strategic Directions from State strategies like *Plan Melbourne*, recommendations from Planning Panel reports and regular review of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme are used to inform strategic planning projects, amendments to planning scheme and policy changes.

10.4 (cont)**SUPPORTING REPORT DETAILS****Legislative and Risk Implications**

The strategic planning activities align with the objectives of planning in Victoria as set out in the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act).

There are no legal or other 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

No community engagement was required for this report, however, highlights from the Strategic Planning projects are profiled approximately every six months in the Whitehorse News.

Community engagement is an integral part of all strategic planning projects and is undertaken as part of preparing projects discussed in this report and in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy. Public Exhibition of amendments to the planning scheme are undertaken as per the legislative requirements of the Act.

Financial and Resource Implications

There are no budget implications arising from this update. Projects discussed in this report are either funded in the recurrent budget, via new budget initiatives or have received external grants from agencies such as the Victorian Planning Authority in the case of the Tally Ho and Nunawading, Megamile and Mitcham Structure Plans.

The Development Contributions Plan anticipates collecting \$31,264,585 in levies from new development across Whitehorse over the next 20 years toward the provision of necessary infrastructure projects by Council estimated to cost \$211,555,000.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Work has been undertaken in anticipation of approval of Amendment C241 (Development Contributions) by the Minister. This involved a review of Council's systems and processes to enable the implementation of the DCP, the ongoing management of levies and project expenditure.

Collaboration

Collaboration with internal teams across the organisation and external stakeholders is a key component of strategic planning projects. The extent of collaboration for each strategic planning project listed above varies depending on the nature of the project.

10.4 (cont)**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.

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

Conclusion

This report has provided a summary of the Strategic Planning Unit's work over the last 6 months. It provides the status of current planning scheme amendments as well as updates on other key strategic planning projects. The report identifies that the projects are aligned with the Council Plan and consistent with the Act and the Whitehorse Planning Scheme.

10.5 Audit and Risk Committee Bi-Annual Report

Department Governance and Integrity
Director Corporate Services

Attachment

SUMMARY

Whitehorse City Council has established an Audit and Risk Committee (Committee) pursuant to Section 53 of the Local Government Act 2020 (Act).

The Audit and Risk Committee Charter (Charter) and Section 54(5) of the Act, requires the Committee to:

- Prepare a biannual audit and risk report that describes the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee and includes its findings and recommendations; and
- Provide a copy of the biannual audit and risk report to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for tabling at the next Council meeting.

The biannual report is for the period October 2023 to March 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report for the period October 2023 to March 2024.

KEY MATTERS

- In relation to internal audit projects, there were nine findings raised across the two reports. There were no findings of high risk contained in the reports. Across all projects, the Committee is comfortable with the reporting received and actions being taken by management to address findings. Implementation status is monitored at every meeting.
- The Committee received organisational updates on the Technology and Transformation Program, the Service Review Program Pipeline and Program Status. The Committee's role has been focussed on the oversight of program governance and risk management.
- The Internal Auditor, HLB Mann Judd, presented the IPS Asset Management System (Suitability and User Needs) Internal Audit Report in November 2023 and Review of Tree Management Internal Audit Report in March 2024.
- As a whole, the Local Government sector continues to face financial pressures due to global and domestic economic and societal conditions; workforce / resource shortages; supply chain issues and the shifting of cost / regulatory burden to Local Government. The Committee continues to monitor this situation, with reference to recent publications and other commentary.

10.5 (cont)**STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

This report aligns to Strategic Direction 1 of the Council Plan: *An innovative Council that is well led and governed.*

POLICY

This report was undertaken in accordance with the following:

- Audit and Risk Committee Charter
- Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan
- Local Government Act 2020

BACKGROUND

The primary role of the Committee is to support Council in discharging its oversight responsibilities related to financial and performance reporting, risk management, fraud and corruption prevention systems and controls, maintenance of a sound internal control environment, assurance activities including internal and external audit, and Council's performance with regard to compliance with its policies and legislative and regulatory requirements.

The Committee is an advisory committee with no delegated authority or decision-making abilities.

In accordance with the Section 54(1) of the Act, Council must prepare and approve a Charter. The Charter must specify the functions and responsibilities of the Committee including the following:

- a) Monitor the compliance of Council policies and procedures with—
 - (i) The overarching governance principles; and
 - (ii) This Act and the regulations and any Ministerial directions;
- b) Monitor Council financial and performance reporting;
- c) Monitor and provide advice on risk management and fraud prevention systems and controls; and
- d) Oversee internal and external audit functions.

The Charter was last reviewed and endorsed by the Committee at the November 2022 meeting and approved by Council on 30 January 2023.

The Committee comprises of five members: three independent members and two Councillors, appointed by Council. As per the Charter, the Committee meets five times a year.

The agenda for all meetings was in accordance with the Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2023/24 (Work Plan), which was developed, discussed and approved by the Committee. The Work Plan is the primary tool used to track completion of responsibilities in the Charter.

SUPPORTING REPORT DETAILS**Legislative and Risk Implications**

Under Section 54(5) of the Act, the Committee must:

- Prepare a biannual audit and risk report that describes the activities of the ARC and includes its findings and recommendations; and

10.5 (cont)

- Provide a copy of the biannual audit and risk report to the CEO for tabling at the next Council meeting.

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

No community engagement was required for this report.

Financial and Resource Implications

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

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Internal and external audit raise matters, including areas for improvements, for management to address and action. The Committee monitors the implementation of management actions to address findings at subsequent Committee meetings until they are resolved.

Collaboration

All members of the Audit and Risk Committee were consulted in the preparation of this report.

Conflict of Interest

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

Conclusion

It is recommended that Council notes the Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Report as required under Section 54(5) of the Act.

The next biannual report provided to Council will be for the period April to September 2024.

ATTACHMENT

- 1 Biannual Audit and Risk Report - October 2023 to March 2024 - Council

10.6 Records of Informal Meetings of Councillors

Department Governance and Integrity
Director Corporate Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Records of Informal Meetings of Councillors.

| Pre-Council Meeting Briefing – 25 March 2024 – 6.30-6.52pm | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Matter/s Discussed: | Councillors Present | Officers Present |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Presentations • Notices of Motion • Council Agenda Items – 25 March 2024 | Cr Massoud (Mayor) | S McMillan |
| | Cr Davenport (Deputy Mayor) | S Cann |
| | Cr Barker | J Green |
| | Cr Carr | L Letic |
| | Cr Cutts | S Sullivan |
| | Cr Lane | S White |
| | Cr Liu | V Ferlaino |
| | Cr McNeill | K Woods |
| | Cr Munroe | K Marriott |
| | Cr Skilbeck | J Hansen |
| | Cr Stennett | |
| Others Present: N/A | | |
| Disclosures of Conflict of Interest: Nil | | |
| Councillor /Officer attendance following disclosure: N/A | | |

10.6 (cont)

| Gambling Policy Review Councillor Workshop 27 March 2024 – 12.00-1.30pm | | |
|---|--|--|
| Matter/s Discussed: | Councillors Present | Officers Present |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gambling Policy Review engagement findings • Potential policy options and Council position in relation to gambling harm minimisation | Cr Massoud (Mayor) Cr Davenport (Deputy Mayor) (left 1.00pm) Cr Cutts Cr McNeill Cr Munroe | Ryan Hood Zoe Quinn Renee Andresson Lisa Letic Amy Cravino |
| Others Present N/A | | |
| Disclosures of Conflict of Interest: Nil | | |
| Councillor /Officer attendance following disclosure: N/A | | |

| Gambling Policy Review Councillor Workshop 4 April 2024 – 5.55pm-7.10pm | | |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Matter/s Discussed: | Councillors Present | Officers Present |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gambling Policy Review engagement findings • Potential policy options and Council position in relation to gambling harm minimisation • | Cr Barker Cr Skilbeck | Ryan Hood Zoe Quinn Jaime Edge |
| Others Present N/A | | |
| Disclosures of Conflict of Interest – Nil | | |
| Councillor /Officer attendance following disclosure N/A | | |

10.6 (cont)

| Councillor Briefing – 8 April 2024 – 6.30pm – 9.20pm | | |
|---|---|---|
| Matter/s Discussed: | Councillors Present | Officers Present |
| 1. 6.30pm – 7.00pm CEO Employment Matters Committee (Councillors, Simon McMillan and David Preiss in attendance) | Cr Massoud (Mayor) Cr Davenport (Deputy Mayor) Cr Barker (left 7.45pm) Cr Cutts | S McMillan L Letic S Sullivan S White I Kostopoulos |
| 2. Mirrabooka Pavilion Redevelopment Update Report | Cr Lane Cr McNeill Cr Munroe | V Ferlaino F Nolan K Woods |
| 3. Lease and Licence Policy | Cr Skilbeck Cr Stennett | N Brown T Jenvey |
| 4. Play and Social Recreation Action Plan - Draft Background Study Report | Apology Cr Carr Cr Liu | T Peak Z Watts P Lacala |
| 5. Draft Agenda 15 April 2024 | | N Lu W Han |
| Others Present: | | |
| 1. David Preiss, Independent Advisor to CEO Employment Matters Committee | | |
| Disclosures of Conflict of Interest Nil | | |
| Councillor /Officer attendance following disclosure - N/A | | |

11 Councillor Delegate and Conference / Seminar Reports**11.1 Reports by Delegates and Reports on Conferences / Seminars Attendance**

Department Governance and Integrity
Director Corporate Services

Verbal reports from Councillors appointed as delegates to community organisations/committees/groups and attendance at conferences and seminars related to Council Business.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the:

1. Reports from delegates, and;
2. Reports on conferences/seminars attendance.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC**12 Confidential Reports****RECOMMENDATION**

That in accordance with Section 61(1) and 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* Council closes the meeting to members of the public and adjourns for five minutes to consider the following item:

12.1 Property Matter

This report is designated as Confidential Information in accordance with Section 3(1)(a) Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released

This ground applies because the matter concerns a potential property transaction.

13 Close Meeting