



# Whitehorse City Council

## AGENDA

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### **Special Council Meeting**

on

**Monday 28 April 2025 at 6:30 PM**

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



**Members:**      Cr Andrew Davenport                      Mayor  
                     Cr Prue Cutts                                      Deputy Mayor  
                     Cr Peter Allan  
                     Cr Blair Barker  
                     Cr Daniel Griffiths  
                     Cr Jarrod Gunn  
                     Cr Kirsten Langford  
                     Cr Jason Martin  
                     Cr Kieran Simpson  
                     Cr Ben Stennett  
                     Cr Hayley Weller

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## AGENDA

### 1 Welcome and Apologies

#### 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 Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

### 3 Notices of Motion

**3.1 Notice of Motion No 8 - Cr Kieran Simpson****Release of Confidential Reports**

That Council:

1. Notes that pursuant to Section 125 (2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, information that is defined as Confidential under the Act can only be publicly released by resolution of Council;
2. Requests the CEO:
  - i. Take active steps to 'declassify' confidential reports with a view to make these publicly available;
  - ii. Bring a report to Council every six months for Council to resolve to make public any resolutions that were previously confidential as either
    - a) recommended by the CEO.
    - b) recommended by a Councillor to the CEO.
  - iii. Publish previously designated confidential reports in a central location on the council website.

**3.2 Notice of Motion No 9 - Cr Peter Allan****Advocating for Australia Post Offices to Be Reinstated**

That Council advocates to the Federal Government, especially the Minister for Communications, Minister for Finance and local Federal Members of Parliament and Senators for the return of Australia Post Office facilities in central Box Hill and elsewhere within the City of Whitehorse where needed.

**3.3 Notice of Motion No 10 - Cr Jarrod Gunn****Shared User Path, Nunawading**

That Council:

1. Supports an additional connection between the Shared User Path at the laneway between Harvey Norman and Home HQ; and between the shared user path at Richard St Mitcham.
2. Write a letter to the DTP and the local member of parliament supporting these additional connections.
3. Seeks a report from officers on:
  - a. Modifications to be made to the laneway between Harvey Norman and Home HQ to allow the roadway to be controlled by Council;
  - b. The process to complete designs for the interface between the laneway and Richard St to the shared user path
  - c. Changes required to Council resolution dated 29 January 2013 to support these additional connections to the shared user path.

## 4 Council Reports

### 4.1 Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 (abridged), Proposed Budget 2025/26 and Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029

#### Department

Finance

Director Corporate Services

Attachment

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#### SUMMARY

*The Local Government Act 2020* ('the Act') requires Council to take an integrated approach to planning and reporting under a principles-based approach. The principles-based legislation is designed to support Council with an adaptive response based on the local needs of the community; social, economic, environmental and cultural context; and the capacity of Council.

Integrated planning and reporting play a critical role in ensuring the goals and aspirations outlined in the Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision and the four-year Council Plan are reflected in our planning.

The Proposed 2025/26 Budget has been prepared in accordance with requirements of the *Local Government Act 1989* and the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Budget outlines the financial and non-financial resources that Council requires to achieve the strategic objectives described in the Council Plan 2025-2029.

Community engagement on the 2025/26 Budget was conducted as part of Shaping Whitehorse, the community engagement process undertaken to inform the 2025-2029 key strategic planning documents including the Community Vision, Integrated Council Plan (including the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan), Financial Plan, Asset Plan and Budget.

A summary of the key activities funded within the 2025/26 Budget, that align with the themes identified via the Shaping Whitehorse community engagement process, is contained within the 2025/26 Budget.

*The Local Government Act 2020* under Section 93 also requires Council to adopt a Revenue and Rating Plan by the next 30 June after a general election for a period of at least the next 4 financial years. The purpose of the Plan is to determine the most appropriate and affordable revenue and rating approach, which in conjunction with other income sources, will adequately finance the objectives in the Council Plan.

As part of Council's integrated approach to planning, the following key strategic documents have been prepared and will be made available for community feedback, prior to adoption in June 2025:

- Proposed Budget 2025/26
- Proposed Revenue & Rating Plan 2025-2029

## 4.1 (cont)

The Integrated Council Plan (abridged) 2025-2029 and associated 2025/26 action plans will also be available for viewing to close the loop with the community.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

## 1) Notes

- a) the proposed Integrated Council Plan (abridged) 2025-2029 has been developed for the purposes of Section 90(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- b) the Proposed Budget 2025/26 has been developed for the purposes of Sections 94 and 96 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- c) the Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 has been developed for the purposes of Section 93 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## 2) Endorses the Proposed 2025/26 Budget and Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 for community feedback from 29 April 2025 to 13 May 2025 in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

## 3) Endorses that the proposed Integrated Council Plan (abridged) 2025-2029 and associated 2025/26 action plans be made available to the public through the same community feedback period listed in item 2 above to close the loop from Council's Shaping Whitehorse Community Engagement.

4) Considers for adoption the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029, Budget 2025/26 and Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 at the Council Meeting on Monday 23 June 2025 in accordance with Sections 90, 93, 94 and 96 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.**KEY MATTERS****Proposed 2025/26 Budget**

The Budget 2025/26 is mandated by legislation and regulation and the document has been developed with reference to the Local Government Model Budget format, which is prepared by Local Government Victoria each year. Hence Whitehorse City Council's Budget meets all legislative requirements.

The Budget 2025/26 has been prepared with reference to Council's Financial Plan, which is aimed at creating a sustainable fiscal environment to enable Council to continue to provide the community with high quality services and infrastructure into the medium and long term.

#### 4.1 (cont)

Council's rate rise for 2025/26 will be consistent with the Victorian Government rate cap at 3.0% in line with advice from the Essential Services Commission.

The proposed Budget uses preliminary valuations (Capital Improved Value - CIV) provided by the Victorian Valuer-General. Council may receive minor adjustments to the preliminary valuations and these changes may occur prior to final budget adoption. Any minor adjustments (if necessary) will be reflected to the final rate in the dollar upon adoption.

#### **Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029**

The Revenue and Rating Plan is an important part of Council's integrated planning framework, all of which is created to achieve our vision in the Community Plan. The purpose of the Plan is to determine the most appropriate and affordable revenue and rating approach, which in conjunction with other income sources, will adequately finance the objectives in the Council Plan.

In particular, the Plan will set out the decisions Council has made in relation to rating options available to it under the Local Government Act 2020 to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of rates across property owners. It will also set out the principles for fee and charge setting and include other revenue items to ensure Council's commitment to responsible financial management is achieved, while at the same time continuing to provide high quality, accessible services to the community.

#### **Proposed Integrated Council Plan (abridged) 2025-2029 and 2025/26 action plans**

The Council Plan is an integral part of Council's integrated planning framework, created every four years in line with the new Council term. For the 2025-2029 term, Council will be integrating the Council Plan with the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) to form the Integrated Council Plan. The 2025/26 annual action plans for both the Council Plan and the MPHWP will also be provided as part of this process, where the major initiatives listed align with the 2025/26 Budget.

The proposed Integrated Council Plan (abridged) 2025-2029 and 2025/26 action plans will be made available to the public as part of the upcoming community feedback period 29 April to 13 May 2025, to provide context and completeness to the process. Council has already fulfilled the legislative requirements of deliberative engagement under the Act and is seeking to close the loop with the community on the outcomes of Shaping Whitehorse.

### **DISCUSSION, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS**

#### **BACKGROUND**

##### **2025/26 Proposed Budget**

The 2025/26 Proposed Budget (plus three subsequent financial years) (2025/26 Budget) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Sections 94 and 96 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and is in line with the Victorian Government's rate cap for 2025/26.

#### 4.1 (cont)

The 2025/26 Budget is a four-year plan that outlines the financial and non-financial resources that Council requires to achieve the strategic objectives described in the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029. It has been prepared with reference to Council's Financial Plan, which is aimed at creating a sustainable fiscal environment to enable Council to continue to provide the community with high quality services and infrastructure into the medium and long term. The Financial Plan is currently being finalised to meet legislative requirements by 31 October 2025.

The 2025/26 Budget includes detailed budgeted financial statements (income statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement, capital works) and accompanying notes, detailed listing of the capital works program, other matters required under the Local Government Act 1989 & 2020 and regulations relating to Rates and Charges, and the Schedule of Fees and Charges.

#### **Discussion and Options**

The 2025/26 Budget demonstrates our ongoing commitment to responsible financial and resource management, while meeting the evolving needs and aspirations of our community. It was developed in a challenging economic environment with cost of living and inflationary pressures impacting Council as well as our community.

The operational surplus for 2025/26 is predicted to be \$20.05 million. The result is based on revenue of \$253 million and expenses of \$233 million.

When non-cash items such as depreciation, amortisation and doubtful debts are excluded, underlying expenditure growth for 2025/26 is projected to be 3.80% (underlying revenue 6.20%) compared to the 2024/25 Adopted Budget. In comparison to the Full Year Forecast for 2024/25, as presented in the 2025/26 Budget, the underlying expenditure growth is 2.96% (underlying revenue 3.62%), slightly below the rate cap of 3.0% for 2025/26.

This result reflects a combination of factors including revenue growth items such as The Round, along alongside cost pressures exceeding the rate cap. Key drivers of these increase costs include the Victorian Government waste levy increase of 27.9%, WorkCover premium, compulsory superannuation increases and Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) banding movement adjustments.

While there are ongoing financial pressures and rising cost drivers, Council has actively sought to manage resources responsibly and identify operational efficiencies, including through its continuous improvement program.

Further detail is provided in the 2025/26 Budget document Section 6 Analysis of Income Statement.

A further \$53 million is proposed to be spent on capital works, including \$2.6 million on projects carried forward and funded from 2024/25.

The operational budget outlines the services and initiatives that Council plans to deliver in 2025/26 and the funding and resources required. It also includes continued investment in Council's transformation program.

#### 4.1 (cont)

A projected rate increase of 3.0% per cent in line with the Victorian Government's Fair Go Rates System will help fund the extensive Capital Works Program and ensures ongoing delivery of Council's high-quality services and programs.

### **KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BUDGET**

The key components of the 2025/26 Budget are highlighted in the following.

#### **Operational Budget**

The operational budget provides \$187 million for the delivery of services to the community including:

- \$26.35 million Kerbside and Public Waste Services;
- \$16.79 million Parks and Natural Environment (maintenance of sports fields, parks and gardens);
- \$15.34 million Leisure and Recreation Services;
- \$12.73 million Health and Family Services;
- \$12.14 million City Services (maintenance of footpaths, drains and roads, sustainability and depot operations);
- \$11.34 million Whitehorse Recycling and Waste Centre (waste transfer station);
- \$10.33 million Community Safety (community laws, parking, school crossings and emergency management);
- \$9.71 million City Planning and Development;
- \$8.78 million Arts and Cultural Services;
- \$6.21 million Libraries;
- \$5.97 million Engineering;
- \$5.38 million Project Delivery and Assets;
- \$2.21 million Community Engagement and Development;
- \$1.24 million Investment and Economic Development;
- \$1.07 million Positive Ageing;
- \$0.51 million Major Projects; and
- \$0.30 million Advocacy

#### **Capital Works Program**

The \$53 million Capital Works Program includes:

- \$20.78 million for land, buildings and building improvements;
- \$7.06 million for plant and equipment;
- \$7.50 million for roads, bridges and off-street car parks;
- \$6.48 million for recreational, leisure and community facilities;



#### 4.1 (cont)

- \$5.17 million for footpaths and cycleways;
- \$3.74 million for parks, open space and streetscapes; and
- \$2.39 million for drainage improvements.

Key highlights of the 2025/26 Capital Works Program include \$8.00 million for the commencement of construction for Box Hill City Oval major redevelopment, \$6.32 million in pavilion upgrades, and \$3.40 million for the Box Hill City Oval sports field ground renewal.

### **FEES AND CHARGES**

Fees and charges have been reviewed with consideration of several influencing factors including full costs, market comparison and an emphasis on accessibility, equity and social justice considerations. The 2025/26 Fees and Charges will achieve a budgeted income of 9.1% higher than the 2024/25 forecast, primarily due to:

- Increased user fee income at Leisure Facilities, reflecting a combination of increased fees and demand across the facilities and growth related to new class offerings.
- Increased tipping fees at the Recycling and Waste Centre compared to the 2024/25 forecast, with fee rates reflecting the higher cost of waste disposal driven by an increase in the waste (landfill) levy in 2025-26 from the current rate of \$132.76 per tonne to \$169.79 per tonne.
- Continued growth in utilisation at The Round, as the facility enters year three of operation;

A number of fees and charges are set by other levels of government regulation (statutory) and are not subject to discretionary change by Council. Statutory fees will be changed by Council when advised of a change by the relevant authorities. These are clearly identified in the schedule of fees and charges.

### **KEY PRESSURES AND CHALLENGES**

In preparing the Budget 2025/26, a number of external and internal influences have been taken into consideration because they are likely to impact significantly on the services delivered by Council in the Budget period. These include:

#### **External influences**

- The average rates will increase by 3.00% in 2025/26, in line with the cap set by the Victorian State Government – Fair Go Rates System.
- Inflation remains high in the short term however is forecast to ease by 2025/26. This is due to a reduction in global price pressures and a stabilisation of domestic economic conditions, helping bring inflation back toward more normal levels. However, construction materials, fuel and other costs continue to increase significantly faster than the rate cap, further compounding the financial challenges faced by

## 4.1 (cont)

Council. These factors make it challenging to maintain the quality of services and infrastructure that our community relies on.

- The recent global market volatility driven by rising U.S. tariffs and broader trade tensions continues to create economic uncertainty. These international uncertainties can have local impacts and potentially add to already rising costs for materials and services and project costs. The instability in the market may impact investment returns and fluctuations in superannuation liabilities that are sensitive to market performance. Council is actively monitoring global economic trends and financial market developments. However, the recent volatility makes it increasingly difficult to predict the broader economic environment.
- Two Victorian Government Big Build Projects taking place in Whitehorse – the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) and North East Link (NEL) – represent both challenges and opportunities. The SRL, including planned stations in Burwood and Box Hill, along with the NEL, once up and running, would create employment, business and community hubs that benefit a swathe of Melbourne's east region.

However, these developments come with certain risks. These projects will largely be delivered beyond direct control of Council. However wide- ranging impacts need to be considered and managed by Council, with the most significant being provision of open space within the city, and population densification.

- The cost of providing waste and recycling services continues to rise due to increases in the Victorian Government's waste levy and the growing amount of waste and recyclables collected in the community. In 2025/26, the waste levy will rise from \$132.76 to \$169.79 per tonne - a 27.9% increase. Despite this, the overall waste service charge for kerbside and public waste will increase by only 0.9% in 2025/26. This modest increase reflects a higher allocation to waste service costs in the 2024/25 budget than was ultimately required. The difference has been incorporated into the 2025/26 charge, helping to ease the impact on ratepayers.
- From 1 July 2025, the State Government proposes to replace the Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) with the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF). As with the FSPL, the ESVF would be collected by Council on behalf of the State Government under the *Fire Services Property Levy Act 2012*. At the time of writing this document, the changes have not passed legislation, and Council continues to monitor its progress. If implemented, the variable rate for general residential properties in 2025/26 is expected to nearly double - from 8.7 cents to 17.3 cents per \$1,000 of capital improved value. It is important to note that Council is not raising any additional revenue from the levy; it is merely acting as a collection agency on behalf of the State Government and is shown separate on rate notices.
- Supplementary rates are additional rates received after the budget is adopted each year, for the part of the year when a property value

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4.1 (cont)

increases in value (e.g., due to improvements made or change in land class), or new residents become assessable. Supplementary rates income is based on historical and forecast data and is set at anticipated levels.

- Council's ability to generate earnings on cash and investments is expected to reduce compared to 2024/25, with an average interest rate on investments of 4.1% assumed for the upcoming financial year.
- The 2025/26 Budget reflects an estimated increase in WorkCover premium. Changes in the insurance market, including fluctuations in premiums, availability of coverage, and insurer profitability, are placing upward pressure on WorkCover costs.
- Cost shifting by other levels of government. Cost shifting occurs where local government provides a service to the community on behalf of the Victorian or Federal Governments. Over time, the funds received by Council do not increase in line with real cost increases, resulting in a further reliance on internally generated revenue to meet service delivery expectations. Examples of services that are subject to cost shifting include school crossing supervision and library services.
- Changing demographics as a result of an ageing and increasingly culturally diverse population has resulted in the need for Council to develop facilities that are accessible and adaptable to intergenerational, diverse and multicultural community users.
- Community expectations that Council will respond to environmental sustainability by planning for the effects of climate change, education and awareness of the benefits of trees and natural bushland and supporting the community in protecting and enhancing our natural assets and open spaces.
- Impact from market competition, particularly in relation to other childcare centres and leisure facilities in the local region.

**Internal influences**

- Employee costs are largely driven by Council's Enterprise Agreement which expires July 2025. A new consolidated agreement is currently in progress and under negotiation. The 2025/26 Budget allows for an increase in line with the 2025/26 rate cap.
- The compulsory Superannuation Guarantee Scheme (SGC) will increase from 11.50% to 12.00%.
- Council has an ongoing obligation to fund any investment shortfalls in the Defined Benefits Scheme. The last call on local government was in the 2012/2013 financial year. The amount and timing of any liability is dependent on the global investment market. At present, the actuarial ratios are currently at levels that additional calls are not required. Council officers continue to monitor regularly.
- Council's transformation process in 2025/26 builds on previous years of effort. It includes continued focus on review, planning and

#### 4.1 (cont)

continuous improvement in service delivery, the continuation of Council's Technology Transformation Program (with an enhanced focus on customer experience improvements through technology changes), improvement in the utilisation and management of Council's property portfolio, and a continued commercial focus within the procurement of goods and services and contract management.

### **REVENUE AND RATING PLAN 2025-2029**

#### **Background**

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) states that councils must adopt a Revenue and Rating Plan by the next 30 June after a general election for a period of at least the next 4 financial years. Council adopted the first Revenue and Rating Plan under the Act 2020 in June 2021 and a revised Plan for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2027 to reflect the separation of waste charges from general rates. This plan reflects a review and update in accordance with legislative requirements and covers the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2029.

The purpose of the Plan is to determine the most appropriate and affordable revenue and rating approach, which in conjunction with other income sources, will adequately finance the objectives in the Council Plan.

In particular, the Plan will set out the decisions Council has made in relation to rating options available to it under the *Local Government Act 2020* to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of rates across property owners. It will also set out the principles for fee and charge setting and include other revenue items to ensure Council's commitment to responsible financial management is achieved, while at the same time continuing to provide high quality, accessible services to the community.

#### **Discussion and Options**

It is recommended the following rating principles remain in place:

- A general rate is applied to all properties and continue with a uniform rate
- Continues not to apply a differential rating structure
- Not levying a municipal charge
- Continue to apply the Waste Service Charge based on cost recovery of the waste function
- Not offering any Council concessions
- Not offering any incentives for prompt payment.
- Continue to apply special rate and special charge provisions of the LGA for Special Charge Scheme for Infrastructure Projects, Special Rate and Special Charge Schemes in Commercial Centres in accordance with Policy.

## 4.1 (cont)

- Council will declare rate equivalent amounts calculated by having regard to the services provided to eligible Cultural and Recreational Lands properties and the benefit to the community derived from them, at the times and in the manner prescribed by the CRLA. Currently there are 32 properties.

**Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Report Details**

<b>Strategic Alignment</b>	<p>This report aligns to the proposed Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029: Strategic Direction 5: Governance.</p> <p>The Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029 is an important part of Council's integrated planning framework, all of which is created to achieve our vision in the Community Plan. Strategies outlined in this plan align with the objectives contained in the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 and feeds into the Budget and Financial Plan documents, as well as other strategic planning documents under our Council's strategic planning framework.</p>
<b>Financial and Resource Implications</b>	<p>The 2025/26 Budget incorporates the Operating Budget, Capital Works Program, and details the financial and non-financial resources required to deliver on Year 1 of the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029.</p>
<b>Legislative and Risk Implications</b>	<p>The 2025/26 Budget (plus three subsequent financial years) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Sections 94 and 96 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> and Local Government Planning and Reporting Regulations 2020.</p> <p>The <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> under Section 93 requires Council to adopt a Revenue and Rating Plan (the Plan) by 30 June 2025 after a general election for a period of at least the next 4 financial years.</p> <p>There are no legal or risk implications arising from the recommendation contained in this report.</p>

## 4.1 (cont)

<p><b>Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights Considerations</b></p>	<p>In developing this report to Council, the subject matter has been considered in accordance with the requirements of the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i>.</p> <p>It is considered that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.</p> <p>Fees and Charges have been reviewed in line with Council's Gender Equity responsibilities and where necessary, a Gender Impact Assessment has been undertaken by relevant officers during development.</p>
<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p>	<p>Community engagement on the 2025/26 Budget was conducted as part of "Shaping Whitehorse", the consultation process undertaken to inform the 2025-2029 key strategic planning documents. These documents affect everybody in Whitehorse and guide the day-to-day and long-term decisions of Council.</p> <p>Shaping Whitehorse involved both broad and deliberative community engagement and was an important legislative input in the review and development of Council's strategic documents, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision</li> <li>• Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029, including the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan</li> <li>• Budget 2025/26</li> <li>• Asset Plan</li> <li>• Financial Plan</li> </ul> <p>Shaping Whitehorse commenced in March 2024, and comprised of multiple key stages designed to give the community and other stakeholders the opportunity to provide input to ensure local priorities and needs are heard and reflected through the strategic plans.</p> <p>Stage 1 of Shaping Whitehorse involved seven weeks of broad community engagement, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An online survey administered to the community via Your Say Whitehorse from Monday 18 March to Sunday 5 May 2024. Surveys were available in English, Simplified Chinese, Greek and Vietnamese.</li> </ul>

## 4.1 (cont)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 live pop-up sites across the municipality.</li> <li>• Workshops held with a range of community and special interest groups.</li> </ul> <p>The consultation provided the community with the opportunity to provide input into their priorities for the next four years. Over 1,400 people provided input to Stage 1 of Shaping Whitehorse, including 429 survey responses (369 online and hard copy), and 60 responses in languages other than English. Approximately 790 people also participated via the 10 live pop-up sites.</p> <p>The second stage of Shaping Whitehorse involved 'deliberative engagement' with the Shaping Whitehorse Community Panel, a group of 36 community members that represented the demographics of the wider Whitehorse community. Held during July and August 2024 the Panel's role was to review the Stage 1 community feedback, as well as other research and information, to develop recommendations to help inform Council's key plans for the next four years.</p> <p>Early engagement meant Council could identify important themes and make informed decisions throughout the 2025/26 budget planning and development process.</p> <p>Details of the key activities funded within the 2025/26 Budget, that align with the themes identified via the Shaping Whitehorse community engagement process, is contained within the 2025/26 Proposed Budget (Attachment 4).</p> <p>The final element of community engagement on the 2025/26 Budget will allow the community an opportunity to provide feedback on the 2025/26 Proposed Budget and Revenue &amp; Rating Plan 2025-2029. Community members are invited to provide feedback online via YourSay Whitehorse or by provide hardcopy feedback to the Civic Centre in Nunawading from 29 April to 13 May 2025. Copies of the 2025/26 Budget and Revenue and Rating Plan will be available online via YourSay Whitehorse as well as Council's Customer Service Centres and Libraries.</p>
<b>Innovation and Continuous Improvement</b>	<p>The Whitehorse community is changing and growing, which means Council needs to adapt and respond. In response, Council is transforming to</p>

## 4.1 (cont)

	<p>ensure it continues to meet the needs and expectations of its community.</p> <p>The Transformation Program in 2025/26 builds on previous years of effort to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• balance investment decision-making with long-term financial sustainability;</li><li>• systematically review all of Council's services over time;</li><li>• expand our Continuous Improvement Program and approach to deliver sustained financial and customer benefits;</li><li>• invest in technology and systems to improve customer experience; and</li><li>• build and sustain a great organisational culture that puts community at the heart of what we do.</li></ul> <p>The priorities for 2025/26 included within this Budget are summarised below.</p> <p><b>Improving Council's property management and utilisation</b></p> <p>Council is continuing to improve the utilisation and management of its property portfolio. This work will involve consulting the community to develop a long-term roadmap and implementing the changes required to achieve the roadmap.</p> <p><b>Delivering financial benefits to Council</b></p> <p>Council's Continuous Improvement Program is designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deliver quantifiable benefits with a focus on financial benefits</li><li>• Support and train staff to make improvements in their day-to-day work</li><li>• Drive a culture of improvement to ensure that Council is always striving for better – more efficient, effective and aligned with customer expectations.</li></ul> <p><b>Improving technology and customer experiences</b></p> <p>All Council services rely on technology to enable them. Technology changes rapidly and Council</p>
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## 4.1 (cont)

	<p>needs to make improvements to support service delivery and customer experiences. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making Council's online services easier to use.</li> <li>• replacing old technology systems that are no longer supported or outdated.</li> <li>• making changes to improve how we handle data, so we can turn it into useful insights.</li> <li>• keeping our cybersecurity strong and finding ways to make it even better; and</li> <li>• lowering the risks and costs for keeping our technology running smoothly.</li> </ul> <p><b>Reviewing services</b></p> <p>Good governance means Council must review how it delivers its services to ensure that they are appropriate, effective and efficient. Council has a program of reviews that analyse the current services for improvement opportunities.</p> <p><b>Program Governance, Change Management and Reporting</b></p> <p>The Transformation Program is making changes to how Council operates which requires customers and staff to change. The Enterprise Change Management practice is putting in place the skills, knowledge and structures in the organisation needed to make these changes stick. It is important to make sure projects achieve change that is sustained. This program has reporting requirements to Councillors, Executive Team and the Audit &amp; Risk Committee. This is to ensure the program delivers and benefits are achieved.</p>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<p>The 2025/26 Budget, which includes the development of operating and capital budgets for the 2025/26 financial year, has been developed over a series of briefings with Councillors and each Council department.</p>
<b>Conflict of Interest</b>	<p>Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.</p>

4.1 (cont)

**ATTACHMENT**

- 1 Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 DRAFT
- 2 Council Plan Action Plan 2025-26 DRAFT
- 3 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Action Plan (MPHWP) 25-26  
DRAFT
- 4 2025/26 Proposed Budget
- 5 Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-2029

**5      Close Meeting**