



Pyrenees
Shire Council

Minutes

Ordinary Meeting of Council

6:00 pm Tuesday 17 January 2023
Council Chambers
Beaufort Council Offices,
5 Lawrence Street, Beaufort

Wadawurrung Country

Members of the public may view the meeting virtually via the livestream

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1. WELCOME

Mayor Cr Ron Eason welcomed all to the meeting.

PRESENT

Mayor: Cr Ron Eason

Councillors: Tanya Kehoe, David Clark, Robert Vance, Damian Ferrari

Chief Executive Officer: Jim Nolan

Director Asset and Development Services: Douglas Gowans

Director of Corporate and Community Services: Kathy Bramwell

EA to CEO and Councillors: Chantelle Sandlant (minutes)

Senior Communications Officer: Noel McKeegan

Communications Officer: Rebecca Stewart

2. STREAMING PREAMBLE

Mayor Cr Ron Eason read the livestream preamble.

3. OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we ask you to give your blessing to this Council, direct and prosper its deliberations to the advancement of your glory, and the true welfare of the people of the Pyrenees Shire.

Amen

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the people past and present of the Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Eastern Maar and Wotjobaluk tribes, whose land forms the Pyrenees Shire.

We pay our respect to the customs, traditions and stewardship of the land by the elders and people of these tribes, on whose land we meet today.

5. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

6. NOTICE OF DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

7. CONFIRMATION OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Cr Robert Vance / Cr Tanya Kehoe

That the Minutes of the:

- Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 13 December 2022; and
- Closed Meeting of Council held 13 December 2022,

as previously circulated to Councillors, be confirmed.

CARRIED

8. BUSINESS ARISING

There was no business arising from the previous meeting.

9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Trevor Davey of Lexton

Advised that he placed three issues were placed in the CARs system and received a very fast response time and wanted Council to be aware.

Reminded Council that this Saturday is Chinese New Year.

10. ITEMS FOR NOTING

10.1. CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

10.1.1. CUSTOMER ACTION REQUESTS UPDATE - DECEMBER 2022

Presenter: Kathy Bramwell - Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Kathy Bramwell – Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 16/08/04

PURPOSE

This report gives the Council an update on requests made through the Customer Action Request System (CARS) for December 2022.

BACKGROUND

The Council has operated an electronic Customer Action Request System (CARS) for many years enabling residents to lodge service requests. Requests can be lodged in person, via telephone, via Council's website or by using a smart phone "Snap Send Solve" application.

Service requests are received for operational issues regarding maintenance, roads maintenance, pools, local laws, building maintenance and compliance matters.

Work continued identifying complaints that may be entered as a customer action request and processing them in accordance with the Council's complaints management framework, and to ensure appropriate and timely responses to our community.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION – CUSTOMER ACTION REQUESTS UPDATE FOR NOVEMBER 2022

431 CARs (Customer Action Requests) were logged in December, 35 less than the previous month. Of these, 229 related to telephone messages.

421 requests were closed during the month, of which 305 were telephone messages, demonstrating the ongoing effort officers are making to maintain focus on addressing requests. This leaves 411 outstanding (an increase of 10 from last month) of which 46 are telephone messages. The total number of CARs outstanding, including telephone calls, is above the Council's target of 300 per month.

Improvements to officers' ability to answer telephone calls and enquiries remotely enabled staff working at the resource centres over the holiday period to continue answering calls and logging customer action requests. An additional 20 requests were logged during that period.

Of the non-telephone call requests received, the following represents those received and still outstanding at the of the last month by Ward:

	Avoca Ward	Beaufort Ward	DeCameron Ward	Ercildoune Ward	Mt Emu Ward
Number of requests received in December 2022 (previous month)	32 (51)	73 (114)	26 (35)	32 (39)	39 (30)
Requests received in December	20 (57%)	48 (66%)	17 (65%)	14 (44%)	18 (46%)

and closed in the same month (% of total received)					
Requests received in December outstanding	12	25	9	18	21
Outstanding requests from 2021	5	3	3	0	1
Total outstanding requests as at the end of December 2022 (previous month)	77 (80)	104 (100)	55 (56)	70 (65)	58 (40)

Analysis:

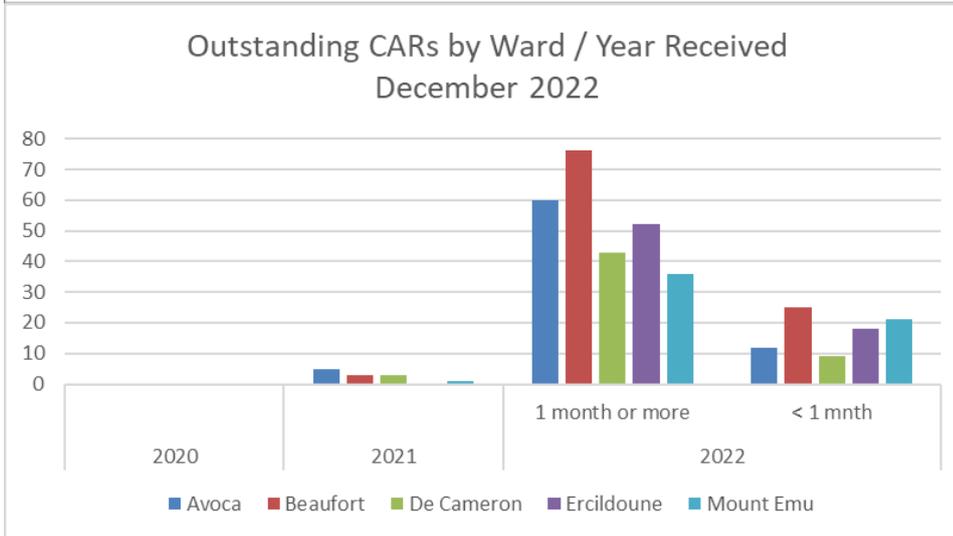
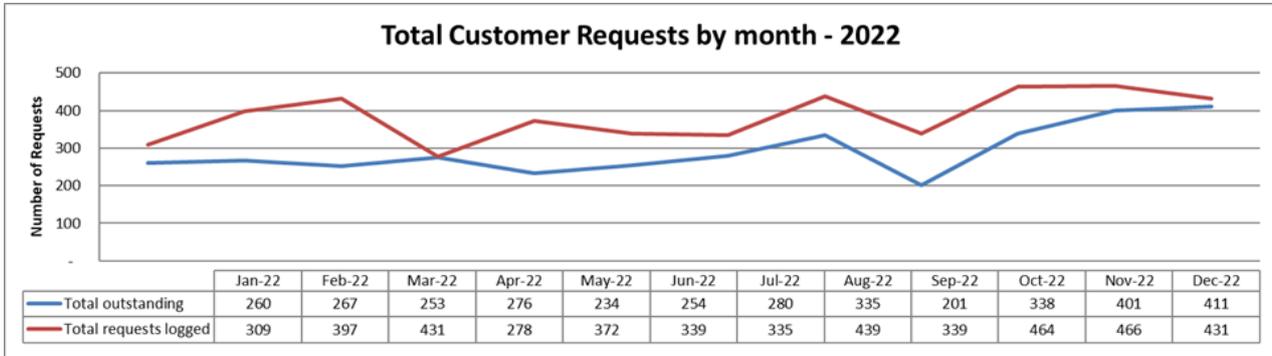
- Outstanding requested received in December largely related to flood/weather impacts (i.e., potholes, drainage or fallen trees) or preparation for the fire season:
 - Avoca: 12 requests received in December still outstanding – 7 relate to weather impacts and 3 to fire prevention.
 - Beaufort: 25 requests received in December still outstanding – 12 relate to weather impacts and 5 to fire prevention. In addition, 4 complaints were received over the holiday period regarding the Beaufort toilets in Havelock Street.
 - DeCameron: 9 requests received in December still outstanding – 7 relate to weather impacts and 2 to fire prevention.
 - Ercildoune: 18 requests received in December still outstanding – 12 relate to weather impacts and 1 to fire prevention.
 - Mt Emu: 21 requests received in December still outstanding – 12 relate to weather impacts and 7 to fire preparation.
- A few of the outstanding requests relating to fire preparation related to requests for time extensions due to a shortage of available contractors.
- The number of outstanding telephone calls reduced in December.
- Although the number of requests received and those outstanding have increased, officers remain committed to resolving as many as possible as soon as possible. In December, officers closed 421 requests; in November, officers closed 403 requests; in October officers closed 327 requests – compared to an average 337 closures per month during the entire year.
- The percentage of requests received and resolved in the same month continues to increase, following the low percentages seen in October (impacted by floods), again reflecting officer commitment to resolving issues at the earliest possible stage.
- Checks of requests made during December identified three reports that need to be followed up as complaints – all relating to the Havelock Street public toilets in Beaufort.

Responsiveness improvements: work to identify and implement process changes to effect a change in responsiveness is underway with the following implemented recently:

- Work is being led by the Manager Customer Experience to support staff in updating and closing CARs within the system.
- Collection of customer interaction data started in late December, analysis of which will identify areas where improvements can be made to increase resolution percentages at the first point of call, and reduce the number of calls requiring to be onforwarded to other departments.

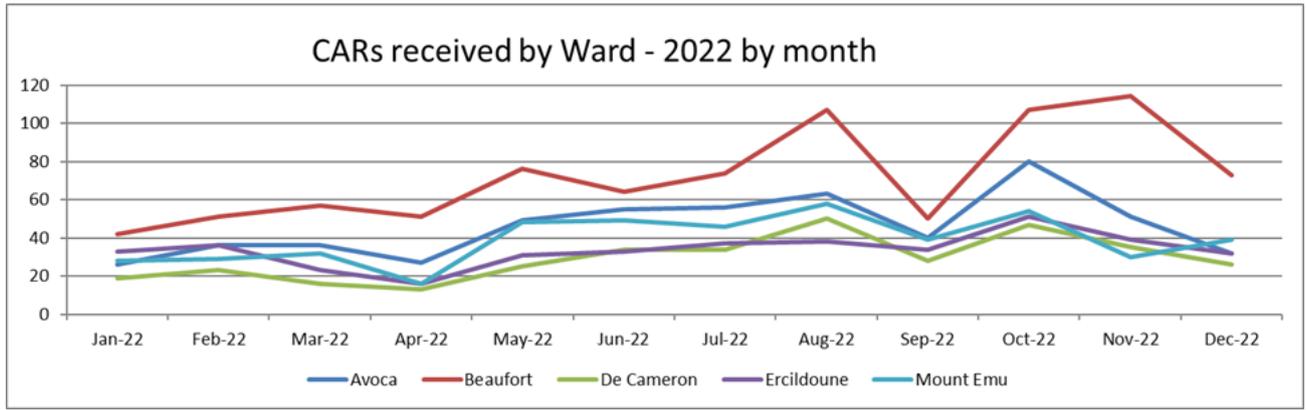
The following charts show the request numbers received by Ward / month and totals received for the past 12 months.

Outstanding requests by age													
Year	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	% Change
2019	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
2020	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	
2021	148	124	115	82	25	24	21	20	16	15	12	12	0%
2022	109	140	135	191	208	229	258	314	184	322	389	399	3%
Total outstanding	260	267	253	276	234	254	280	335	201	338	401	411	2%
Total requests logged	309	397	431	278	372	339	335	439	339	464	466	431	-8%

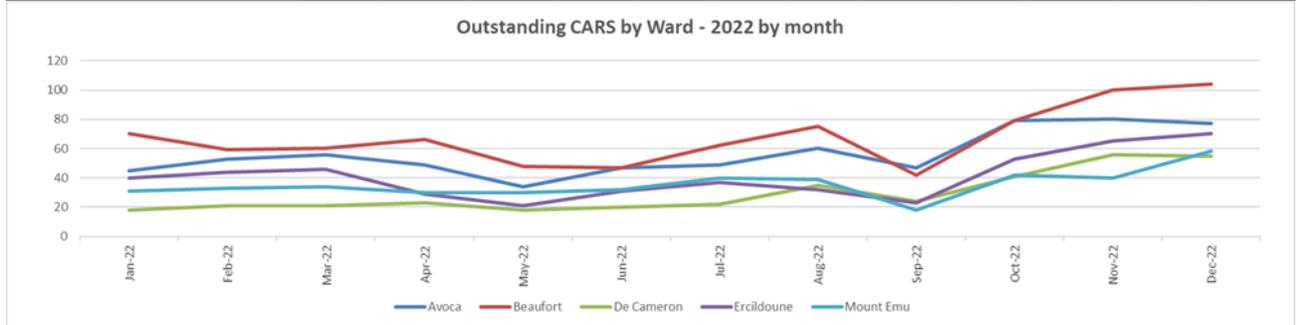


The following charts display outstanding cars by Ward / year received and the trend lines of outstanding CARs numbers of the last 12 months (requests received by Ward).

CARS by Ward received by month Rolling - 2022												
Ward	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
Avoca	26	36	36	27	49	55	56	63	40	80	51	32
Beaufort	42	51	57	51	76	64	74	107	50	107	114	73
De Cameron	19	23	16	13	25	34	34	50	28	47	35	26
Ercildoune	33	36	23	16	31	33	37	38	34	51	39	32
Mount Emu	28	29	32	16	48	49	46	58	39	54	30	39
Total by month	148	175	164	123	229	235	247	316	191	339	269	202



Outstanding CARs by Ward - 2022/23												
Ward	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
Avoca	45	53	56	49	34	47	49	60	47	79	80	77
Beaufort	70	59	60	66	48	47	62	75	42	79	100	104
De Cameron	18	21	21	23	18	20	22	35	24	41	56	55
Ercildoune	40	44	46	29	21	31	37	32	23	53	65	70
Mount Emu	31	33	34	30	30	32	40	39	18	42	40	58
Total by month	204	210	217	197	151	177	210	241	154	294	341	364



The following table provides greater detail of the areas where outstanding requests remain, showing the functional areas and numbers of requests still outstanding as at the end of the last month.

Open Requests Type			
	Nov-22	Dec-22	Change
Roads & Rd Maint.	172	193	21
Streetlights	1	1	0
Drainage	70	67	-3
Footpaths / Kerb&Channel	17	15	-2
Park & Reserves	6	6	0
Roadside Veg	38	42	4
Environmental Health	0	1	1
Planning	0	0	0
Bld maint	10	7	-3
Local Laws	2	2	0
Cats	0	0	0
Dogs	1	4	3
Livestock	0	0	0
Parking	0	0	0
Fire Hazard	1	10	9
Bld Compliance	1	0	-1
Waste Management	0	0	0
Local Government Act	1	1	0
Rates	15	4	-11
Natural Disasters	2	1	-1
Pools	2	1	-1
Council cleaning	4	7	3
Litter	2	2	0
Design & Assets	1	1	0
GIS	0	0	0
Community Wellbeing	0	0	0
Rural Addressing	0	0	0
Road Naming	0	0	0
Telephone messages	55	46	-9
Total	401	411	10

ISSUE / DISCUSSION – IT TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Each month a progress update will be provided to Council on the IT Rural Councils Transformation, a collaborative project with Central Goldfields Shire Council as the Lead to develop and implement updated systems to manage financial and revenue management, plus a new customer relationship management system.

Deliverable	Evidence	Due / Status
Governance Structure	Governance structure established and regular project meetings / communication commenced.	Complete
IT Systems Architecture Plan	Development of the Architecture & Project Implementation Plan and provision to the Department.	Due Dec 2022 Complete and approved by Department
External Resource Engagement	Subject to successful up-front funding variation agreement – appointment of external resources: Project Manager and Business Analyst through appointment of consultant expertise.	Due Feb 2023 In progress Consultant appointment underway by C/Goldfields
Full funding allocation	\$50,000 allocated in November 2022. \$450,000 allocation subject to appointment of external resources.	\$50k complete Balance due end Jan 2023
Develop Project Brief	Develop project brief and 'product definition.	Due May 2023
Tender	Specifications and Tender document developed	Due Jun 2023

	and provided to Department.	
Tender procurement	Issue tender to market for systems procurement and award contract.	Due Oct 2023
Finalise project plan	Agreed project plan and implementation commencement.	Due Nov 2023
Systems implemented	CSRM and Finance systems implemented at two councils.	Due Jun 2024
Final report	Outcomes report approved by Department	Due Jun 2025

Officers collaborated with Deloitte, appointed by Local Government Victoria, to develop a Shared Services Strategy – a joint deliverable by all councils successful in this round of transformation funding, to provide a framework that can be used as a guidance tool in the future by councils wanting to enter shared service arrangements. This Strategy is now complete and circulated to councils.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION – NATURAL DISASTER EVENT OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2022

The rainfall / flooding event reported in October and November slowed in December. Although reduced, long range weather forecasts indicate it may continue until February 2023 and the emergency event had not yet been declared closed at the time of writing.

The damage caused was widespread – to private and public infrastructure, agriculture properties and crops, animal losses, businesses, and private residences, and to Council-managed roads and culverts. Significant impact to Council's normal activities with priority given to addressing event response and impacting immediate response to non-urgent customer action requests.

A dedicated flood recovery team is being recruited, including a dedicated officer to coordinate critical infrastructure restoration.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Priority 1 - People

1a. Prepare for emergencies and ensure community safety.

Priority 4 - Economy

4b. Invest in road infrastructure to improve connectivity for commerce and community.

Enabling Principles

- a. Motivate and inspire community involvement
- b. Provide transparency and accountability
- c. Use resources efficiently and effectively

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

This report did not require any community engagement or consultation, other than that provided via this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Response to the natural disaster / emergency events occurring in October and November 2022 continued to impact during December and was necessary to address the immediate significant risks to Council and its community. Community safety and wellbeing continues to be priorities and resources were deployed away

from BAU (Business as Usual) activity where appropriate to respond to the emergency event. Officers remain committed to resolving CARs received as early as possible but there remains a risk in coming months that community expectations will not be met due to constraints on Council resources, and the ongoing nature of the event – expected to continue into 2023.

There is significant financial risk to Council due to the widespread nature of the damage to critical infrastructure for which reimbursement may not be fully realised.

CONCLUSION

The customer action request system remains an integral part of Council’s reactive identification of issues that need attention. The recent flood events continued to impact in December 2022 resulting in a further month of increased requests being received and an inability for officers to keep outstanding request numbers within expected target levels.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes this report.

11. COUNCILLOR ACTIVITY REPORTS**11.1. COUNCILLOR ACTIVITY REPORTS - DECEMBER 2022**

Cr Damian Ferrari – Beaufort Ward		
05/12/22	Overview – New in-home aged care program	Virtual
06/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
06/12/22	Councillor Cuppa & Chat	Snake Valley
08/12/22	Councillor Christmas Dinner	Lexton
13/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
13/12/22	Council Meeting	Beaufort
14/12/22	Beaufort Primary School Concert and Graduation	Beaufort
19/12/22	Beaufort Primary School Graduation Dinner	Beaufort

Cr David Clark – Ercildoune Ward		
05/12/22	Overview – New in-home aged care program	Virtual
06/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
06/12/22	Councillor Cuppa & Chat	Snake Valley
08/12/22	Councillor Christmas Dinner	Lexton
08/12/22	HLEN Meeting	Virtual
13/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
13/12/22	Council Meeting	Beaufort

Cr Robert Vance – De Cameron Ward		
01/12/22	Timber Towns Meeting	Virtual
05/12/22	Overview – New in-home aged care program	Virtual
06/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
06/12/22	Councillor Cuppa & Chat	Snake Valley
08/12/22	Councillor Christmas Dinner	Lexton
12/12/22	Rural Councils Victoria Planning Day	South Gippsland
13/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
13/12/22	Council Meeting	Beaufort
14/12/22	Natte Yallock Primary School Graduation	Natte Bealiba
15/12/22	Moonambel Primary School Graduation	Moonambel

Cr Ron Eason – Avoca Ward		
02/12/22	CHCV Mayors & CEOs Meeting & AGM	CHECK
05/12/22	Overview – New in-home aged care program	Virtual
06/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
06/12/22	Councillor Cuppa & Chat	Snake Valley
08/12/22	Councillor Christmas Dinner	Lexton
13/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
13/12/22	Council Meeting	Beaufort
15/12/22	Avoca Primary School Graduation	Maryborough
16/12/22	Amphitheatre Primary School Graduation	Avoca

Cr Tanya Kehoe – Mount Emu Ward		
05/12/22	Overview – New in-home aged care program	Virtual
06/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
06/12/22	Councillor Cuppa & Chat	Snake Valley
13/12/22	Councillor Briefing Session	Beaufort
13/12/22	Council Meeting	Beaufort
16/12/22	Woody Yaloak (Snake Valley Campus) Primary School Graduation	Snake Valley

12. ASSEMBLY OF COUNCILLORS**12.1. ASSEMBLY OF COUNCILLORS - DECEMBER 2022**

MEETING INFORMATION				
Meeting Name	Councillor Briefing Session			
Meeting Date	Tuesday 6 December 2022 commenced at 1.00pm and closed at 4.25pm			
Meeting Location	Council Chamber, Beaufort			
Items Discussed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Councillor Question time 2. Future of Aged Care Discussion 3. Community Grants 4. Australia Day Award Nominations 5. Australia Day Ambassador 6. 2023 Council Briefings / Meetings / Cuppas 7. Agenda Review 			
ATTENDEES				
Councillors	Mayor Cr Ron Eason Cr Damian Ferrari Cr Tanya Kehoe		Cr David Clark Cr Robert Vance	
Apologies	Nil.			
Staff	Jim Nolan (Chief Executive Officer) Douglas Gowans (Director Assets and Development Services) Kathy Bramwell (Director Corporate and Community Services) Martin Walmsley (Manager Community Wellbeing & Development) item 2 Glenn Kallio (Manager Finance) – item 2 Jerry van Delft (Project Management Facilitator) – item 3 Adam Boyle (Community Wellbeing & Grants Co-Ordinator) – item 3			
Visitors	Nil			
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES				
Item No:	Councillor making disclosure	Particulars of disclosure	Councillor left meeting	Councillor returned
3 (part b)	Cr David Clark	Shop Façade Grants	3.07pm	3.13pm
3 (part b)	Cr Ron Eason	Shop Façade Grants	3.07pm	3.13pm

MEETING INFORMATION				
Meeting Name	Councillor Briefing Session			
Meeting Date	Tuesday 13 December 2022 commenced at 1.00pm and closed at 5.45pm			
Meeting Location	Council Chamber, Beaufort			
Items Discussed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follow up from Council Planning Day 2. Visitor Economy Partnership 3. Flood Update 4. AEMO 5. Australia Day Ambassador & Award Nominations 6. Agenda Review 			
ATTENDEES				
Councillors	Mayor Cr Ron Eason Cr Damian Ferrari (arrived at 1.25pm) Cr Tanya Kehoe		Cr David Clark Cr Robert Vance	
Apologies	Nil.			
Staff	Jim Nolan (Chief Executive Officer) Douglas Gowans (Director Assets and Development Services) Kathy Bramwell (Director Corporate and Community Services) Jane Bowker (Flood Recovery Coordinator) – item 3 Martin Walmsley (Manager Community Wellbeing & Development) - item 3 Katie Gleisner (Manager Planning & Development Services) – item 4			
Visitors	AEMO Representatives – Nicola, Sarah, Colin, Erin, Louisa – item 4			
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES				
Item No:	Councillor making disclosure	Particulars of disclosure	Councillor left meeting	Councillor returned
4	Cr David Clark	Landowner	2.45pm	4.15pm
6	Cr David Clark	Agenda Review - Shop Façade Grants	Matter not discussed	
6	Cr Ron Eason	Agenda Review - Shop Façade Grants	Matter not discussed	

Cr David Clark / Cr Damian Ferrari

That the items for noting in Sections 10, 11 and 12, be received.

CARRIED

13. ITEMS FOR DECISION

13.1. ASSET AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

13.1.1. PETITION - AVOCA RIVER FREE CAMPING

Presenter: Douglas Gowans - Director Asset and Development Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Douglas Gowans – Director Assets and Development

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 62/22/02

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with details of a petition in support of free camping on the Avoca River Flat area from North Street to the Lions Park inclusive.

BACKGROUND

The Mayor has been presented with a petition addressed to Pyrenees Shire Council from residents and visitors to Pyrenees Shire supporting continued free camping on the Avoca River Flat. The Mayor intends to table the petition at the Council Meeting.

The petition received containing approximately 500 signatures stating as follows:

“We the undersigned support continued free camping on the Avoca River Flat area from North Street to the Lions Park inclusive.”

At the time of preparing this report, not all the pages of the petition had been received. Once all pages are received, then an actual number of signatures contained will be advised.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

Before making any decision in respect of the matter, Council should have regard to the Pyrenees Shire Council Governance Rules 2022, Section 4.8.3 which states that:

- a) No motion may be made on any petition, joint letter, memorial or other like application until the next Council meeting after that at which it has been presented (except where it meets sub-Rule 4.9(b)) except for:
 - I. That the petition be received, and
 - II. That the petition be referred to the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Director for consideration and response, or
 - III. That the petition be referred to the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Director for a report to a future Council meeting.

It is normal practice then for Council to seek a report to be prepared by the relevant officer for a subsequent meeting addressing the merits of the issues contained in the petition.

At the December 2022 Council Meeting, Council received a petition relating to camping and the Avoca River Flat area, and Council sought that the matter be investigated, and a report brought to a future Council Meeting.

Given that both petitions received have overlapping issues, it would be appropriate for Council to consider both in a single report.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Priority 1 - People

1a. Prepare for emergencies and ensure community safety.

Enabling Principles

b. Provide transparency and accountability

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications will be addressed within any future report for decision.

Cr Robert Vance / Cr David Clark

That Council:

1. Receives the petition;
2. Requests a report to be presented to a future meeting of Council on the matter contained in the petition.

CARRIED

13.2. CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

13.2.1. RATE CAP 2023/24

Presenter: Kathy Bramwell - Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Kathy Bramwell – Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 52/04/20

PURPOSE

This report is to advise the Council on the Rate Cap set and to seek the Council's determination as to whether an increase should be sought on the rate cap for the 2023/24 financial year.

BACKGROUND

The Victorian Government introduced rate capping in the 2015/16 financial year under the Fair Go Rates system. In previous years, the rate cap was set at a maximum of 2.5%, with the rate cap for the current 2022/23 financial year set at 1.75%.

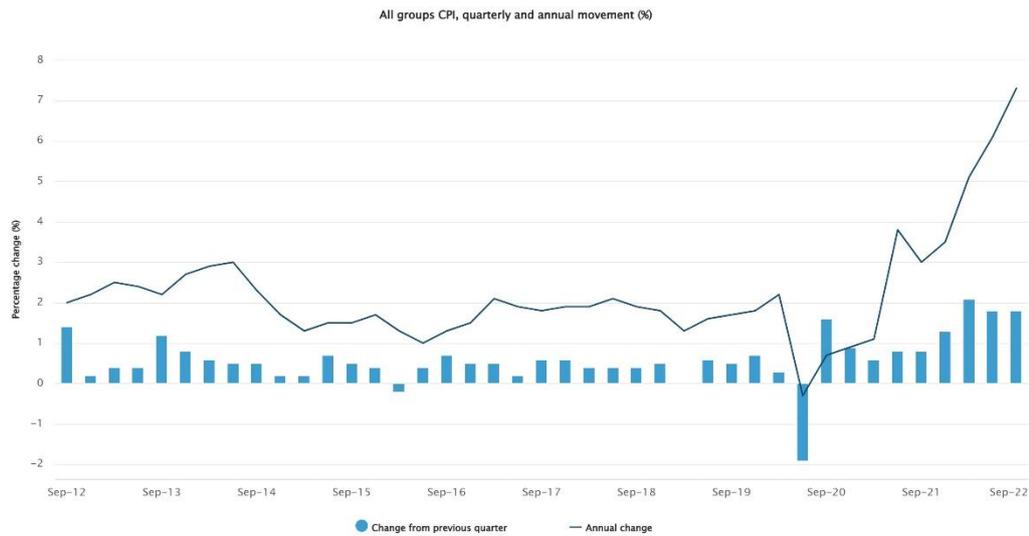
Where appropriate, councils may apply for higher rate cap consideration subject to meeting certain criteria. The Pyrenees Shire Council successfully applied for increases in the rate cap in 2015/16, 2016/17, and 2017/18:

- 2015/16 - additional 1.33% making a total rate cap of 3.83%
- 2016/17 - additional 1.5% making a total rate cap of 3.5%
- 2017/18 - additional 1.25% making a total rate cap of 3.5%

Financial sustainability was the key driver for Council seeking a higher rate above the rate cap imposed for these years and all the additional revenue raised was quarantined for road renewal works.

CPI (Consumer Price Index) is Australia's key guide to inflationary pressures, measuring household inflation and statistics about price changes for categories of household expenditure.

The CPI rose by 1.8% in the quarter leading to September 2022, rising by 7.3% over the 12 months to September 2022 – the highest annual movement since 1990. Particularly relevant to Council are the strong price rises in construction and fuel which directly impact expenditure. Trimmed mean annual inflation (excluding large price rises and falls) increased to 6.1%. A graph showing the increases is provided below.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Consumer Price Index, Australia September Quarter 2022

Inflationary forecasts are provided below:

Australia Prices	Last	Q1/23	Q2/23	Q3/23	Q4/23	2020
Inflation Rate	7.3	7	6.2	4.8	3.5	2.5
Inflation Rate MoM	1.8	1	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.6
Consumer Price Index CPI	128	130	133	134	135	138
Core Consumer Prices	127	129	129	129	131	135
Core Inflation Rate	6.1	4.8	3.8	3.5	2.6	1.8

Ref: [Australia Consumer Price Index \(CPI\) - Forecast \(tradingeconomics.com\)](#)

The Essential Services Commission publishes guidance for councils seeking to make a higher rate cap application¹ which must be made by 31 March of each year. The application must include:

- The proposed higher cap for each specified financial year,
- The reasons why the council is seeking the higher cap,
- How the views of ratepayers and the community have been considered in proposing the higher cap,
- How the higher cap is an efficient use of council resources and represents value for money,
- Whether other funding options have been considered and why those options are not adequate,
- That the assumptions and proposals in the application are consistent with the council’s long-term strategy and financial management policies.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

Rate Cap

A rate cap of 3.5% has been set for all Victorian councils applicable for the 2023/24 financial year.

Although 3.5% represents the highest cap set since the introduction of the Fair Go Rates system in 2015, at 57% of the current inflation rate this will continue to limit Council’s capacity to increase revenue and reinforces its dependence on external grants to achieve target asset renewal rates and a continued lack of capacity to increase staff numbers beyond maintaining existing levels.

¹ [Guidance for councils applying for a higher cap | Essential Services Commission](#)

The current Enterprise Agreement expires on 30 June 2023 with renewal negotiations expected to commence soon and likely to see pressure on Council to award a level of salary increases that eases the inflationary impacts on its workforce and achieves real wages growth.

It is expected that the inflation rate is likely to peak at around 7.75% in the December 2022 quarter (formal release date of 25 January 2023) and gradually fall over 2023/24.² However, the forecast for Q4 (December) 2023 is 3.5% inflation which remains at the rate cap level, leaving Council having to absorb costs above the rate cap of 1.75% during the first half of 2023 and 3.5% during the second half of the calendar year.

In addition to inflation, there are other factors impacting on Council's long-term financial sustainability that demonstrate the need for additional revenue in order to maintain current service levels.

- Victoria is currently experiencing very low unemployment rates. The recruitment and retention of a sufficiently skilled and qualified workforce is essential for Council to deliver services. Low unemployment has the effect of reducing Council's negotiating capability on individual salaries where workers choose to shop for higher paid jobs.
- The construction sector has seen significant growth in costs in part due to labour shortages, higher plant servicing costs and reduced access to materials. Council has seen in excess of 30 percent increase in tender prices on several construction projects in the last two years. In addition, no tenders have been received for some projects (such as the Avoca depot amenities construction project).
- Council road assets continue to be significantly impacted by natural disaster events, and while the restoration is primarily reimbursed with state and commonwealth funding, there is usually a significant gap to be met by Council.
- Increased obligations on Council from other layers of government requiring investment in time and resources (often referred to as cost shifting). The introduction of the Gender Equality Act, changes to the Building Control provisions relating to swimming pools, and the psychological safety provisions soon to be legislated in the Occupational Health and Safety Act are among the recent changes.
- Small rural councils have little ability to raise revenue (other than through rates and from government grants) and have a large asset base to manage.

Application for higher rate cap

Councils may apply to the Essential Services Commission for a higher rate cap, with a notification of intent requested by 31 January and the application required by 31 March of the year prior to the relevant financial year.

Council must take the Essential Services Commission (ESC) guidance on higher cap applications into account when determining whether to apply for a rate cap increase for 2023/24. In the past, an important consideration for the Council has also been the financial impact on the community and the ability of ratepayers to pay.

Relevant factors regarding any decision to apply for a higher rate cap include:

- The difference between the rate cap percentage and the forecast inflation rate further widening the financial sustainability gap for Council during 2023:
 - January-June 2023 – rate cap is 1.75%, forecast inflation rate between 7.3%-7.0%
 - July-December 2023 – rate cap is 3.5%, forecast inflation rate between 6.2%-3.5%
 - January-June 2024 – rate cap is 3.5%, forecast is uncertain

² [Australia's inflation rate to peak at 7.75% in December quarter, economic update predicts | Australian economy | The Guardian](#)

- Salaries is Council's largest expenditure item. A new Enterprise Agreement is scheduled to be negotiated and commence from 1 July 2023 for 3 or 4 years. Parties on behalf of employees are likely to want to realise real wages growth, and this is unlikely to be achieved if increases are kept below the rate cap.
- There is potential for the rate cap to reduce to more normal levels from 2024/25 onwards if inflation levels reduce as forecast.
- Affordability of ratepayers to pay increased rates combined with risk of default/impacted ability to achieve timely reimbursement under new legislation.
- Informed views of the community and ratepayers. It would be necessary for Council to undertake a sufficiently rigorous engagement process to understand the community views and to demonstrate that there was a level of acceptance from the community about the need for a higher cap amount.
- Consideration of alternative options available to raise revenue such as the use of debt for new works or projects.
- Demonstration of efficient use of council resources that represents value for money. While Council is on a continuous journey process and undertakes internal service reviews and audits each year to improve what we do, there is a risk that this may not be sufficiently rigorous enough to satisfy the ESC on this application requirement.
- The additional administrative cost associated with the application and ongoing acquittal and reporting obligations.

Council officers have deliberated on the above factors with the following conclusions and recommendations for the Council:

1. Notwithstanding the very real widening of the financial sustainability gap for Council over the next 12 months, it is not likely that the community view would support a rating level in 2023/24 of higher than the 3.5% rate cap set because:
 - a. Our community and ratepayers are also subject to the strictures and impacts from the higher inflation rates forecast for 2023, reducing their affordability to pay, and
 - b. As the rate cap for 2023/24 is the highest since the Fair Go Rates system was introduced in 2015, the community would consider this enough to enable Council to continue good fiscal management.
2. If the forecast inflation rate slowing materialises towards the latter half of 2023 and continues in 2024: some financial benefit from the higher rate cap may be seen by Council in 2024.
3. If the inflation rate slows significantly towards the end of 2023, it is likely that the rate cap for 2024/25 will revert to more normal levels for which Council should be better prepared to consider future rate cap increase applications. To this end, it is proposed that the 2024/25 budget preparation engagement strategy includes frank community conversations around long-term financial sustainability and potential service impacts.

If Council chooses not to proceed with an application for a rate cap variation, it is recommended that Council increases its advocacy effort with government to ensure other means of funding to address the sustainability challenges outlined in this report.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Enabling Principles

- b. Provide transparency and accountability
- c. Use resources efficiently and effectively

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

It is proposed that the 2024/25 budget preparation engagement strategy includes frank community conversations around Council's long-term sustainability, impacts on future service delivery, and potential future rate cap increases.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

The Council's long-term financial sustainability has been identified as a risk for the Pyrenees Shire Council and is clearly demonstrated in the long-term financial plan. 2023 sees additional risks arising through enterprise bargaining negotiations likely to seek real wages growth over the life of the next Enterprise Agreement which remains difficult when rate caps continue to be set lower than annual inflation rates.

CONCLUSION

The annual rate cap for 2023/24 has been announced at 3.5%. Although the highest since rate capping began in 2015, this remains below inflation levels and annual expenditure increases forecast for the financial year, adding to the Council's long-term financial sustainability risk. It is recommended not to apply for an increased rate cap for 2023/24, but to commence community engagement regarding future potential increases as part of budget preparation in 2023.

Cr David Clark / Cr Damian Ferrari

That Council:

1. Notes the 3.5% rate cap declared for the 2023/24 financial year,
2. Having considered relevant reasons for raising additional revenue to meet the service and asset needs of the community, the requirements set by the Essential Services Commission, and other issues raised in this report, do not make application to the Essential Services Commission for a higher rate cap for the 2023/24 financial year, and
3. Undertakes community engagement as part of the 2024/25 budget preparation process to seek the views of the community on long-term financial sustainability, impacts of the rate cap on service delivery, and potential financial modelling and solutions for the future including:
 - a. potential for future rating increases above the applicable rate cap, and
 - b. what sustainable service levels might be most acceptable to our community
4. Seeks an urgent meeting with the Local Government Minister to further highlight the significant sustainability challenges outlined in this report.

CARRIED

13.2.2. PROPOSED ROAD NAMING: HOLDING LANE, GLENPATRICK AND DAVIS COURT, SNAKE VALLEY

Presenter: Kathy Bramwell - Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As presenter of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

Report Author: Diane Daniell – Rural Addressing and Road Naming Officer

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 2768 & 1573

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to adopt unique names for two roads which are currently unnamed and need to be added to the Pyrenees Shire Public Road Register.

BACKGROUND

Naming rules for places in Victoria are governed by the Registrar of Geographic Names and must be undertaken in accordance with the Naming Rules for Places in Victoria – Statutory requirements for naming roads, features and localities.

Under these rules, any public or private road, feature or locality within Victoria can be named, renamed or have its boundary changed. Council is the responsible naming authority within the Pyrenees Shire.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

The following unnamed roads are currently being used as shared driveways. This means that several properties have addresses allocated from the nearest named road on Councils Road Network at the same point which gives a general location for access but is not ideal.

Council planning officers identified that, as further development occurs along the currently unnamed roads, creating unique road names and addresses is critical for public safety and the delivery of goods and services to those properties.

Additionally, to add these roads to the Municipal Public Road Register, each road needs a unique name to clearly identify which roads requires maintenance or improvement, to reduce the risk of Council or contractors working on the wrong road and to provide a high standard of customer service by being able to clearly identify which road customers have concerns with.

To provide proper addresses for the properties requires Council to determine that the roads are required for public access, and add these roads to its Public Road Register, which in turn requires the roads to have unique identifying names.

To identify appropriate names, a short list of historic landholder names was identified from a mid-1900s Parish Plan which is one of the sources Council uses to identify new road names. These have been checked against the principles noted in the Naming Rules for places in Victoria 2022, which quickly reduced the possible names available, especially the requirement for a name to be unique within at least 30km.

In both cases all the immediate landholders were advised in writing that Council was proposing a name for their road and requested any objections to respond within a statutory 30-day timeframe. Landholders were also advised that, if their property entrance was along the currently unnamed road, their address would change once a road name was allocated.

In both cases, Council has received no formal objections or responses and only one verbal contact re Holding Lane to clarify the context of the letter.

Once Council adopts the names, they will be submitted to the Registrar of Geographic Names using the only Victorian Edit Service for formal consideration and approval. Once that approval is provided, Council can then formally place signage, change addresses, and use the new road names.

Road 1 – Proposed Name: Holding Lane, Glenpatrick

Current access for properties 1035, 1035A and 1035B Elmhurst-Glenpatrick Road being CA 18, 17A and 17 Section 5 Parish of Glenpatrick.

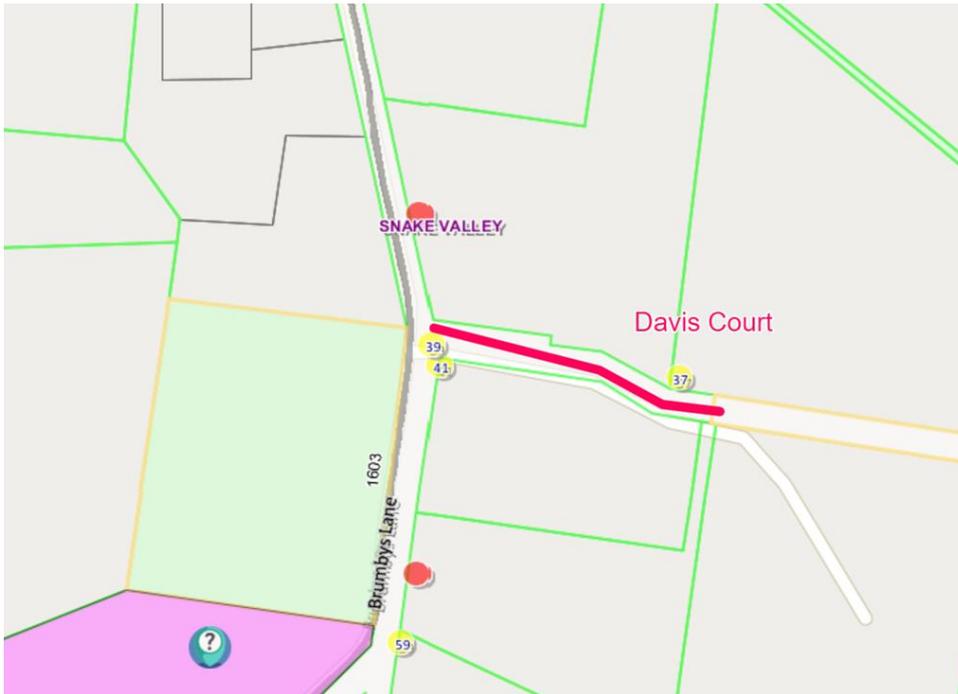
Four existing properties notified resulting in one phone conversation clarifying the details of the letter. No objections were received.



Road 2 – Proposed Name: Davis Court, Snake Valley

Current access for properties 37, 39 and 41 Brumbys Lane, Snake Valley being CA 26, 33 of Section 15 Parish of Carngham and Lot 1 of PS738609.

Five existing properties were notified with no correspondence or objections received.



COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Priority 1 - People

1a. Prepare for emergencies and ensure community safety.

Priority 2 - Place

2c. Promote responsible development.

Priority 4 - Economy

4c. Encourage and invest in assets and infrastructure for commerce and community.

Enabling Principles

b. Provide transparency and accountability

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Existing properties along the unnamed roads were notified of the proposed road naming with no objections received and one telephone conversation regarding clarification of the proposal context.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Risks exist if road naming principles are not adhered to:

- Increased possibility of emergency service vehicles not locating a property, and
- Increased difficulty in clearly identifying a road asset.

There will be additional costs to Council after adoption by Geographic Names:

- Administration to change property addresses, requiring letters to landholders, editing Council systems, editing Vicmap Address, and
- Purchase and installation of two (2) street blades on poles at T intersections of currently unnamed roads and existing names roads.

The adoption of the roads on Council's Roads Register will require the roads to be maintained in accordance with Council's Road Management Plan. It should be noted that Holding Lane includes a significant creek crossing structure.

CONCLUSION

Two unnamed roads have been identified that require naming for the purposes of public safety and appropriate Council asset management. Road 1 proposed name is Holding Lane, Glenpatrick. Road 2 proposed name is Davis Court, Snake Valley. All existing, impacted landholders were notified by letter with no objections received. Council is recommended to resolve supporting the road naming to enable submission to Geographic Names for approval and adoption.

Cr Tanya Kehoe / Cr Robert Vance

That Council:

1. Resolves to adopt 'Holding Lane' in Glenpatrick as the road name for the road accessing CA 18, 17A and 17 Section 5 Parish of Glenpatrick, and
2. Resolves to adopt 'Davis Court' in Snake Valley as the road name for the road accessing CA 26, 33 of Section 15 Parish of Carngham and Lot 1 of PS738609.
3. Considers that the roads are required for public access and adopts the roads for inclusion on Council's Roads Register.

CARRIED

13.2.3. FRONTLINE SERVICES - OFFICE & RESOURCE CENTRE CLOSURES

Kathy Bramwell – Director Corporate and Community Services

Declaration of Interest: As author of this report, I have no disclosable interest in this item.

File No: 16/08/02

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's endorsement for the Frontline Service Team to attend team meetings four times per year in 2023 and each year thereafter. To do this, we would require the closure of the Beaufort Council Office reception and Resource Centre as well as the Avoca Information Centre. The office front counter and centres would then re-open at 1.00 pm.

BACKGROUND

It is Council's common practice to hold staff meetings within teams to build rapport and create unified and cohesive teams where everyone can receive necessary information and to have input into relevant matters.

Frontline Services faces unique difficulties in holding team meetings due to the range of working locations and the need to maintain the ability for our community and visitors to attend open facilities. To allow all Frontline Services staff to attend a meeting together in normal working hours requires our public counters to close.

ISSUE / DISCUSSION

In 2022, Council approved the closure of the public counters for four hours, four times during the year.

To continue the practice of holding staff meetings within the Frontline Services Team, it is requested that Council endorse the ongoing practice of closing to the public for four hours, four times per year in 2023 and each year thereafter.

This would involve the closure of the Beaufort Council Office reception and the Beaufort and Avoca Resource Centres for four hours each morning of the meeting day, the counters would then re-open at 1.00pm. When the front counters are closed, the switchboard service remains open for telephone enquiries and is staffed by staff from other areas.

The first meeting in 2023 is scheduled for the morning of Thursday, 16th February 2023.

Councillors and the community will be notified in advance of future closure dates once training dates are determined.

COUNCIL PLAN / LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Priority 1 - People

1d. Promote health, wellbeing, engagement and connection.

Enabling Principles

a. Motivate and inspire community involvement

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

FINANCIAL / RISK IMPLICATIONS

Risk implications exist with the closure of front counters leading to community dissatisfaction. It is proposed to minimise this dissatisfaction by full transparency on the reasons for the proposed closures and details of the proposed dates well in advance of closure.

CONCLUSION

These meetings will be held quarterly to ensure that all frontline service staff are empowered to participate in the decision-making impacting their area of work.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Approves the closure of the reception area of the Beaufort Council offices, the Beaufort Resource Centre, and the Avoca Information Centre four times during 2023, for a period of four hours each time, with the areas re-opening at 1.00 pm each time.

Cr Tanya Kehoe / Cr Damian Ferrari

That Council:

1. Approves the closure of the reception area of the Beaufort Council offices, the Beaufort Resource Centre, and the Avoca Information Centre four times during 2023 and each year thereafter, for a period of four hours each time, with the areas re-opening at 1.00 pm each time.

CARRIED

14. COUNCILLOR REPORTS AND GENERAL BUSINESS

Cr Tanya Kehoe

- It has been a quiet time in some respect with people having time off.
- It has been busy in farming with farmers trying to salvage any crops they can. Many farmers have been able to cut hay.
- Attended some beautiful community celebrations over the Christmas period.
- Attended Christmas Carols at Snake Valley Uniting Church, the Snake Valley CFA delivered lolly bags to the children.
- Presented the Grade 6 Pen Award to young Tom at Snake Valley, it is a beautiful little school. Proud of all of the schools in our area, we are blessed with wonderful teachers and students.

Cr Robert Vance

- Attended Councils Planning day prior to Christmas
- Attended a Planning Day at Leongatha for Rural Councils Victoria.
- Presented Grade 6 Pen Awards at Natte Yallock and Moonambel, the hall was packed on both occasions.
- Have reported to the Director of Assets and Development Services that the bore at Wattle Creek has no water.

Cr Damian Ferrari

- Happy New Year to all and hope that 2023 is prosperous.
- Attended Beaufort Primary School Concert which was well attended.
- Attended Beaufort Primary School Graduation dinner for students moving onto Secondary College, they are fine young children, and it was a really great evening.
- Prepared our usual Christmas Lunch at the RSL Hall on Christmas day, there were around 30 patrons, this lunch is a follow on for a legacy left by Cr O'Connor. It is great to see it continuing and well patronised. There were approximately 10 volunteers who gave up their time on Christmas day to assist and I cannot thank them enough. Also, thanks to the RSL for the great facility. Special thanks to the businesses and individuals who donated goods for the day, without those donations the lunch would not be able to go ahead.
- Pyrenees Hideout festival is coming up at the Goldfields Recreation Reserve in Beaufort, there is a fabulous line up and entertainers, it is a family event with activities for children and food stalls, really looking forward to it, it will be a fantastic event.

Cr David Clark

- Thank you to the outdoor staff for a number of roadworks in area, the works completed are very much appreciated and we are very close to getting flood works underway.
- Hazard reduction was a bit late starting this year due to the weather conditions, we try to do our best in relation to Council slashing, a lot of the smaller rural roads have also been slashed by Council.
- Recommend popping over to Springs Hotel at Waubra for dinner.
- Attended Waubra Primary School Grade 6 Pen Presentation, presented to Mackenzie Hepburn-Swadling who is excited to be going to high school.

Cr Ron Eason

- Attended Primary School Pen presentations. The presentations really show that we are out there in the community and hope to see the presentations continue into the future.
- Attended Central Highlands Victoria Mayors and CEO meeting.
- Attended a number of Christmas dinners, cuppas and chats.
- It has been quiet over the Christmas period but we are now back into it.

15. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Ordinary Meeting of Council 17 January 2023 closed at 6:38 pm.

Minutes of the Meeting confirmed _____

2022

Mayor Cr Ron Eason