



**MINUTES OF THE HINDMARSH SHIRE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS, WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH 2025, COMMENCING
AT 9:30AM.**

PRESENT:

Mr A Roberts (Chairperson), Mr S Coutts (Member), Mr R Gersch (Member), Ms B Parish (Member, Items 1 - 12), Cr R Barker (Councillor Delegate), Mr J Barry (Councillor Delegate), Ms Monica Revell (CEO), Ms P Croot (Director Corporate and Community Services), Mr R Upadhyaya (Director Infrastructure Services), Ms H Boyd (Manager Finance), Mrs Janelle Reichelt (Manager People and Performance), Mr P Harrison (Internal Auditor), Ms K Teasdale (Internal Auditor), Ms C Gravenall (External Auditor), Ms G Makone (External Auditor, Items 1 - 9).

1. Audit Committee Members & Internal Auditor Meeting

9:30am – 9:45am

Audit and Risk Committee Members, Internal Auditors and External Auditors met without Management present.

2. Welcome and Acknowledgement of the Indigenous Community

Welcome and Acknowledgement of the Indigenous community by the Chief Executive Officer.

Hindmarsh Shire Council acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Nations as Traditional Owners of Country.

We recognise the important ongoing role that Indigenous people have in our community and pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

3. Apologies

Nil apologies.

4. Declaration of Interests

Nil interests declared.

5. Internal & External Auditor Assurance

No obstructions disclosed.

6. Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting

Attachment Number: 6.1 ARC Meeting Minutes 18 September 2024

MOVED: A ROBERTS/S COUTTS

That the Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on Wednesday 18 September 2024 via Teams, as circulated to members, be taken as read and confirmed, and that future Minutes contain comments around discussion held by the Audit and Risk Committee.

CARRIED

Refer attachment 6.1

7. Election of Chairperson

The Chief Executive Officer called for nominations for Committee Chairperson.

Nominee: Ashley Roberts

Nominated by: R Gersch/S Coutts

Accepted: Ashley Roberts

MOVED: S COUTTS/B PARISH

That the Audit & Risk Committee appoints Ashley Roberts as the Chairperson of the Audit & Risk Committee until June 2025.

CARRIED

Ashley Roberts commenced chairing the meeting.

8. VAGO Audit Update

Responsible Officer: Director Corporate & Community Services
Attachment Number: 8.1 VAGO LG Status Report – February 2025
8.2 AG Report on Annual Financial Report - Victoria: 2023–2024

Verbal report to be given during the meeting by the attending VAGO representative on the 2025/2026 VAGO Audit strategy.

The Local Government Status Report and Auditor-General's Report on the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria: 2023–2024 (published November 2024) is provided for the Audit and Risk Committee's information.

Discussion Notes:

Cassandra Gravenall (Crowe) provided Audit Strategy update and discussion around focus areas:

- *Fair value assets*
- *Carrying value of capital works in progress*
- *Employee benefits*
- *Fraud and related party transactions*
- *Government grants*
- *Performance statement*
- *Two open items (one closed last year) to be closed at the end of the EOFY audit.*

Discussion around comparative reports on financial sustainability in the Local Government Sector, inherent/specific risks to Hindmarsh Shire Council and sector risks.

Discussion around opportunities for advocacy or value-adding from the Audit and Risk Committee.

MOVED: R GERSCH/S COUTTS

That the Audit & Risk Committee receives the VAGO audit update and request that management provide an update on the AASB amendment at the next Audit and Risk Committee meeting.

CARRIED

Refer attachment 8.1 - 8.2.

9. Audit & Risk Committee Charter

Responsible Officer: Director Corporate & Community Services

Attachment Number: 9.1 Audit & Risk Committee Charter V1

9.2 Audit & Risk Committee Charter V2

Introduction:

This report presents the Audit & Risk Committee Charter for endorsement prior to being presented to Council for adoption.

Discussion:

In accordance with s54(1-2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Charter must specify the functions and responsibilities of the Committee, as well as:

- a) monitor the compliance of Council policies and procedures with—
 - a. the overarching governance principles; and
 - b. 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.

A draft Charter was presented at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 18 September 2024, with the Committee resolving:

“That the Audit & Risk Committee request management review the draft Audit and Risk Committee Charter with a specific focus on financial management and re-present it to the first Audit and Risk Committee meeting in 2025.”

Key changes to the Charter as presented to this meeting include:

- Directly reflecting the Act in describing the Committee’s role;
- Clarifying the responsibilities of the Committee to better describe specific actions to be undertaken by the Committee, reflected in the Annual Work Plan;
- Clarifying the extent of the Committee’s authority and how this is enacted through accepted and legislated processes;
- Providing for silences in governance matters.

The financial management responsibilities of the Committee are outlined in the Act, and the Committee is charged with reviewing both the annual and intermittent accounts, but also the draft budget and long-term financial plan.

As a result of the motion in September 2024, the draft Charter has been further amended with changes noted in Attachment 9.2.

Link to Council Plan:

Long-term financial sustainability.

Financial Implications:

This decision has no financial implications.

Risk Management Implications:

An effective Audit & Risk Committee will assist with Council's risk management through independent advice and assurance on internal corporate governance, risk management, internal control and compliance.

Conflict of Interest:

Under section 130(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

Author & Officer Responsible: Petra Croot, Director Corporate & Community Services

In providing this advice as the Author & Officer Responsible, I have no interests to disclose.

MOVED: B PARISH/S COUTTS

That the Audit & Risk Committee endorses the Audit and Risk Committee Charter V2 to be presented to Council for adoption.

CARRIED

Refer attachments 9.1 – 9.2

10. Audit & Risk Committee Annual Work Plan
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Responsible Officer:	Director Corporate & Community Services
Attachment Number:	10.1 Audit & Risk Committee Annual Work Plan V1 10.2 Audit & Risk Committee Annual Work Plan V2

Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to present the Audit & Risk Committee Annual Work Plan for review and adoption. Two options are presented, subject to the decision on item 9.

Discussion:

Section 54(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020* provides that the Audit & Risk Committee must adopt an annual work plan.

The original plan was adopted in June 2020 and was developed based on the Audit & Risk Committee Charter committee functions; this has been reviewed annually.

As the Committee did not adopt the revised Charter in September 2024, two versions of the Work Plan have been produced – one that aligns with the current Charter and one that aligns with the new Charter as recommended for adoption.

Link to Council Plan:

Strong governance practices.
Long-term financial sustainability.

Financial Implications:

This decision has no financial implications.

Risk Management Implications:

An effective Audit & Risk Committee will assist with Council's risk management through independent advice and assurance on internal corporate governance, risk management, internal control and compliance.

Conflict of Interest:

Under section 130(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

Author & Officer Responsible: Petra Croot, Director Corporate & Community Services

In providing this advice as the Author & Officer Responsible, I have no interests to disclose.

MOVED: S COUTTS/B PARISH

That the Audit & Risk Committee adopt the Annual Work Plan V2 for 2025/2026.

CARRIED

Refer attachments 10.1 – 10.2

11. Hindmarsh Shire Council Quarterly Finance Report

Responsible Officer: Manager Finance

Attachment Number: 11.1 Quarterly Finance Report Ending 31 December 2024

Introduction:

The Financial Report for the first half of the 2024/2025 financial year has been prepared, including explanations of variances where applicable. The report also contains the Local Government Performance Report to 31 December 2024.

As at 31 December 2024, Council's surplus is \$8.318m against a budget of \$5.229m. This variance is due to receipt of the Financial Assistance Grant in full in July 2024, whereas the budget reflects quarterly payments. As at 31 December Council had \$14.219m cash. The high cash balance is due to several capital projects being carried forward from 2023/2024 for completion in 2024/2025, as well as the early payment of the Financial Assistance Grant. Council's expenditure on capital works was \$3.358m against a budget of \$3.025m.

Some key indicators from the Performance Dashboard include consistent over-budget revenue at the Dimboola Riverside Holiday Park, and strong attendance at the Nhill, Jeparit and Rainbow holiday parks. The Performance Report reflects strong results in pool attendance, food safety assessments, and animal management service costs.

Discussion:

Council manages significant finances on behalf of the community and must manage these finances responsibly, effectively, and transparently to ensure the delivery of important services and facilities. As well as reporting quarterly on the delivery of the

Council plan, quarterly financial reports are also prepared and provided to Council, forming a key component of Council's planning and reporting framework.

The content of financial reporting to Council summarises Council's financial health and shows how financial performance is tracking against the budget, highlighting any risks faced and providing information on any other relevant issues from that quarter.

The Financial Report (**Attachment 11.1**) includes:

- **Dashboard with both financial and non-financial indicators**

This information provides information in graph format for Council on a range of areas within Council including:

- rates outstanding and rates arrears.
- debtors and infringements outstanding.
- local laws information including after-hours calls, after-hours call outs, animals through pound and fines issued.
- a capital works update.
- planning permits applications and permits issued.
- staff accrued leave.
- Customer Service data including telephone calls and customers at each centre.
- Caravan park revenue and visitors for each of the four parks.

- **Executive Summary & Ratio Summary**

Along with the ratio summary, the Executive Summary section presents a high-level summary of YTD budget and actuals with a traffic light system to indicate any high-risk variances.

- **Income Statement**

As at 31 December Council surplus is \$8.318m against a budget of \$5.229m. The surplus is predominately due to the Financial Assistance Grant for 2024/2025 that was budgeted to be received quarterly being paid in full in July 2024.

- **Balance Sheet**

The information within the Balance Sheet includes current assets, non-current assets, current liabilities and non-current liabilities. Commentary is included for most items on the balance sheet.

- **Cash Flow Statement**

The information within the cash flow statement reflects the actual cash received and payments made for items. The cash flow statement will vary from the income statement due to timing of receipts and payments. The cash flow statement also includes payments for capital works but does not include depreciation.

As at 31 December Council had \$14.219m cash. The high cash balance is due to a number of capital projects being carried forward from 2023/2024 for completion in 2024/2025 and the early payment of the Financial Assistance Grant.

- **Capital Works Statement**

The information within the capital works statement includes projects of a capital nature that improve an asset. The capital works statement is broken into categories including buildings, plant and equipment, infrastructure, which is represented by new assets, renewal of assets, expansion of assets, and upgrades to assets.

As at 31 December Council expenditure on capital works was \$3.358m against a budget of \$3.025m. The variance is largely due to phasing of budgeted road projects as well as work undertaken on carried forward projects.

- **Key Result Area Summary**

The information within the Key Result Area Summary provides an overview of actual expenditure against budget for all service areas.

- **Detailed Capital Works Scheduling**

The information within the detailed capitals work scheduling provides Councillors with scheduled dates of commencement of capital works projects contained within the annual budget.

- **Local Government Performance Reporting Framework**

The information within the Local Government Report is a legislated report that gives Council an overview of progress in core functions within the Council in comparison to previous financial years. This report includes data on Waste Management, Governance, Food Safety, Roads and Statutory Planning. Library and Aquatic Facilities statistics provides insight into the use of these Council services.

Link to Council Plan:

Long-term financial sustainability
Ensure responsible risk-management principles
Strong governance practices

Risk Management Implications:

Reporting quarterly on Council's financial position ensures the accountability and transparency of Council's financial performance and enables Council to have high-level oversight of the same. Regular reporting allows for early identification of any high-risk items and early intervention should remedial action be required.

Relevant Legislation:

Local Government Act 2020

Conflict of Interest:

Under Section 130(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest, including the type of interest.

Officer Responsible – Heather Boyd, Manager Finance

In providing this advice as the Officer Responsible, I have no disclosable interests in this report.

Author – Petra Croot, Director Corporate and Community Services

In providing this advice as the Author, I have no disclosable interests in this report.

MOVED: B PARISH/R GERSCH

That the Audit & Risk Committee receives the quarterly finance report for the period ending 31 December 2024.

CARRIED

Refer attachment 11.1

12. Internal Audit Update

Responsible Officer: Director Corporate & Community Services
Attachment Number: 12.1 Internal Audit Findings Action List
12.2 Internal Audit Status Report
12.3 Internal Audit Update Report
12.4 Accounts Payable and Procurement Audit Report

Verbal report to be given during the meeting by RSD Audit on the recent internal audit publications, internal audit plan, internal audit status, the recently completed internal audit on accounts payable and procurement and the timeline for completion of the depot management audit.

Internal Audit Action List

At the meeting held on 18 September 2024, the Audit and Risk Committee requested that actions proposed for removal from the ongoing action list must be provided to the Committee for review.

Internal Audit Actions for Committee review:

Ref.	Audit & Recommendation	Justification for Removal
1.3	Contract Management 1) We recommend Council implement a process to ensure a risk assessment is undertaken for each contract and documentation for this risk assessment is retained in EDRMS. 2) From this, Council needs to establish Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that are to be monitored throughout the life of the contract.	Business as Usual for both items. PMO requests that development of Risk / OHS documentation (assessment template / KPIs) be completed by suitably qualified / experienced Risk / OHS personnel. MPMO / CPO to then distribute to project owners for completion prior to (assessment) and during (KPIs) works.
1.4	Council will ensure that all contractors are inducted prior to commencing work. Council's Contractor Induction Manual will be recirculated to all officers involved in contractor management to ensure that contractors are inducted appropriately.	Council Contractor OHS Induction documentation updated by Manager People and Performance December 2023 and circulated to all staff. Project Owner / Manager responsible for induction of contractors specific to their project.
2.3	OHS We recommend Council consider the benefits of implementing a learning management system, both specific to OHS training requirements as well as Council wide.	Not implemented but recommended for removal as continues to be an action item in Council's Workforce Plan but comes at a significant cost. Learning, induction and re-induction is managed through internal processes and registers.
3.2	Risk Management Internal Audit We recommend Council ensure reporting out of the RiskCloud system includes the assigned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reports presented for SMT and the Audit and Risk Committee denote the Risk Owner.

	<p>risk owner (or responsible staff member). Council should also develop guidance for different levels of responsibility depending on the assigned risk rating of individual risks. This guidance should be included in the Risk Management Framework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk levels/rating and associated responses are articulated in the Risk Management Framework.
5.4	<p>Cybersecurity Internal Audit We recommend that a regular review of the event logs is undertaken.</p>	<p>Logs are being retained and manually checked. As part of the share IT helpdesk project tools will be included to monitor the logs. Council receives notifications regarding any identified cybersecurity activity.</p>
7.9	<p>Scoping of Capital Works We recommend Council consider the benefits of recognising work in progress throughout the year, rather than only at year end. We do note due to current system limitations, this may not be viable, however should be still considered moving forward. Subject to the availability for this to be automated in the new ERP – this would then be done on a more regular basis (quarterly).</p>	<p>Council has engaged an Asset Accountant who will ensure that both the Assetic and financial systems are balanced, and information is available more readily. This presents a BAU change and therefore this item is recommended for removal as considered appropriately addressed by management.</p>
8.2	<p>Records Management Internal Audit We recommend Council establish a structure for reporting against records management activities (dependent on system limitations).</p>	<p>Reports have been produced on a quarterly basis and circulated to Senior Managers with respect to members of their team. Quarterly records reporting, including procedural documentation, is included in annual calendar of Records Working Group activities.</p>
8.4	<p>We recommend Council ensure records management responsibilities are clearly stated in all staff position descriptions. At an appropriate management level at Council, performance reviews should include a requirement to ensure their staff are compliant with records management requirements.</p>	<p>Changes are implemented on all new PDs and on all current PDs during the position's annual review process. This action is substantially complete with remaining PD reviews part of BAU. Records management now included as a performance indicator on relevant Performance and Development reviews.</p>
8.5	<p>We recommend Council consider the development of how-to-guides or something similar to provide further resources to council officer.</p>	<p>How to guides created and circulated and included and ongoing action item for Records meetings and planning.</p>
8.6	<p>We recommend Council consider implementing a maturity review of its current records management systems, utilising the iM2 tool or similar. Council should also implement a review process for user access to ensure they are appropriate and in line with expectations.</p>	<p>Structure and folder security has been reviewed, including overall review of Global User Groups and focus on key/high risk folders reviewed. Reviews to be scheduled in an ongoing basis so considered BAU.</p>
8.7	<p>We recommend upon migration to the MagiQ Cloud based system; Council establish a standard folder structure across the organisation.</p>	<p>We have upgraded to the Cloud based system and have made substantive process on structure implementation. There are minor updates required but considered implemented.</p>
8.9	<p>We recommend Council complete the work necessary to create a list of vital records. This list should be maintained in line with and inform business continuity and disaster recovery plans.</p>	<p>Vital Records Register has been developed by SMT in collaboration with all staff. This is a living document and will continue to be reviewed and updated as needed.</p>

8.10	Council will undertake risk assessments of all records storage facilities every five years as recommended.	Reviews of records storage facilities have been conducted, with review schedule included in Records Working Group planning documentation as well as relevant policies. An action plan has been developed based on the risk assessments undertaken. Schedule written into Records Management strategic planning documentation.
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Table A – Internal Audit Actions for Removal

Items relating to the Accounts Payable and Procurement Audit will be added after discussion at this meeting.

Discussion Notes:

- *Updated Internal Audit Plan will be presented at the next meeting.*
- *Audit documents should reflect that management had rectified issues themselves before they were identified by RSD.*
- *Draft AI Public Sector Policy to be circulated by A Roberts.*
- *DCCS to ensure risk ratings are provided, as well as due dates, for Internal Audit Action Items.*
- *Discussion around management of cybersecurity reports and incidents and confirmation that significant incidents will be reported to the Committee.*

MOVED: S COUTTS/R GERSCH

That the Audit & Risk Committee

- 1. Receives the internal audit recent publications and audit status report;**
- 2. Notes the progress on internal audit findings and approves the removal of the items listed in Table A, subject to risk ratings being presented as part of the table for future items.**
- 3. Receives the update on the recently completed internal audit on Accounts Payable and Procurement.**

CARRIED

Refer attachments 12.1 – 12.4

13. Risk Management Report

Responsible Officer: Manager People and Performance
Attachment Number: 13.1 Strategic Risk Report

Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to inform the Audit and Risk Committee of Council's current strategic risk register, influencing factors and challenges currently being faced.

Discussion

The attached document outlines Council's Strategic Risks and current and proposed treatments. This report also provides a brief discussion around assessment of several of Council's Strategic Risks - Financial Sustainability, Asset Management and Governance.

Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability as a strategic risk is enhanced with the current financial environment. Rate capping for the 2025/2026 financial year has been set by the Essential Services Commission at the rate of 3%. This equates to approximately \$230,000 in increased revenue. Estimated price increases in insurance of approximately \$140,000 (prior to building revaluation report being received), WorkCover of approximately \$110,000 and the regulated increase in superannuation guarantee charge from 11.5% to 12% from 1 July 2025, together with inflationary pressures on road materials will make the challenge of a balanced budget even more difficult.

Cost escalation continues to be a considerable issue, with the timing gap between grant application (and associated quotations and costings) and grant outcome making financing grant-funded projects challenging, with greater amounts required to be set aside as contingencies.

Council has contributed to both the State and Federal Government's inquiries into the Financial Sustainability of Local Government to advocate for funding and service models that mean Council can deliver appropriate, quality and community-driven services. The Long-Term Financial Plan will be developed in conjunction with the budget and will account for the long-term sustainability of Council operations.

Governance

Council elections were held in October 2024 with Councillors taking the Oath or Affirmation of Office at the Statutory Meeting on 13 November 2024. Mandatory induction training as per the prescribed topic list was completed on 10 December 2024, including the mayor and deputy mayor's training. A schedule has been developed for the ongoing annual professional development that is required under the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2024.

Asset Management

Council is awaiting final figures for building revaluations that were completed in the second half of 2024. Maintaining, insuring and accounting for the replacement of considerable assets (including several that are unused) is a significant risk to Council's financial sustainability, public liability exposure and resource allocation. A report on these valuations will be prepared once the data provided has been reviewed and transitioned into Council's asset management systems.

Risk management literacy is an organisation-wide commitment, and we will be looking for appropriate training to embed this in the coming year. Risk management remains a standard agenda item for Senior Management Team meetings to ensure it is at the forefront of all decisions made.

The Risk Register will continue to be updated and reviewed regularly with department officers and management.

Link to Council Plan:

Ensure responsible risk management principles: Further develop and implement Council's Risk Management Framework and ensure all key risks have been measured and adequately controlled.

Financial Implications:

Nil.

Risk Management Implications:

Management of risks will minimise Council's exposure to adverse financial impacts, improve effectiveness and generate efficiencies.

Conflict of Interest:

Under section 130(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest, including the type of interest.

Author & Officer Responsible: Janelle Reichelt, Manager People and Performance
In providing this advice as the Author & Officer Responsible, I have no interests to disclose.

MOVED: R GERSCH/S COUTTS

That the Audit & Risk Committee receives the Risk Management update.

CARRIED

Refer attachment 13.1

14. Rural Council Transformation Program

Responsible Officer: Manager Finance

Verbal report to be given during the meeting by Heather Boyd, Manager Finance, on the status of the Rural Council Transformation Program.

It is also the Officer's recommendation that further updates on the RCTP are provided on an as-needed basis, when there is a major process change, significant reassessment of risk or material change within the scope

MOVED: J BARRY/S COUTTS

That the Audit & Risk Committee receives the verbal update on the Rural Council's Transformation Program.

CARRIED

15. Reimbursements & Interstate Travel Register

Responsible Officer: Director Corporate & Community Services
Attachment Number: 15.1 CEO Credit Card Listing

Introduction:

This report provides the Audit & Risk Committee with the CEO Credit Card listing, a list of reimbursements made to the CEO and Councillors, and notification of the interstate and overseas travel undertaken by staff and Councillors for the period 1 September 2024 to 28 February 2025.

Discussion:

A listing is provided for review by the Audit & Risk Committee of payments made to the CEO and Councillors (excluding Councillor Allowances).

Councillor	Reimbursement (\$)	Purpose
R Barker	\$223.52	Travel Expense Claim
R Barker	\$133.76	Travel Expense Claim

There was no overseas or interstate travel in this period.

Link to Council Plan:

Strong governance practices

Financial Implications:

Council budgets for Councillor allowances and expenses. Expenses over relevant thresholds are decided by resolution of Council in accordance with the adopted budget.

Conflict of Interest:

Under section 130(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

Author: Janelle Reichelt, Manager People and Performance

In providing this advice as the Author, I have no disclosable interests in this report.

Officer Responsible: Petra Croot, Director Corporate & Community Services

In providing this advice as the Officer Responsible, I have no disclosable interests in this report.

MOVED: S COUTTS/J BARRY

That the Audit & Risk Committee

- 1. receives the reimbursement listing for the CEO and Councillors for the period 01 September 2024 to 28 February 2025;***
- 2. notes that there was no overseas or interstate travel in the period between 01 September 2024 to 28 February 2025; and***
- 3. receives the CEO Credit Card Statement for the period between 01 September 2024 to 28 February 2025.***

CARRIED

Refer attachment 15.1

16. Governance Compliance Report

Responsible Officer: Manager People and Performance
Attachment Number: 16.1 Draft Complaints Handling Policy
 16.2 Procurement Policy Exemption Requests

Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to inform Audit Committee of the review of the Complaints Handling Policy, the annual policy, strategy and plan review and development schedule, legislative changes that have been implemented with the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2024* (the Amendment Act) enacted 24 October 2024, along with any procurement exemption requests and disclosable gifts to Councillors or Council employees.

Discussion

Annual Policy Review Plan

Outlined below is the proposed schedule of policy, strategy and plan development and review for 2025:

Key			
Policy/Procedure	Strategy	Plan	Other

Document	Due Date	Proposed Council Meeting Date/s	Comments
Councillor Expense Entitlements Policy	1 July 2025	Briefing and Adoption – March (minor legislated change) COMPLETE	The Policy must account for the training and professional development provisions of the <i>Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Act 2024</i> as they relate to allowances and reimbursements.
Financial Hardship Policy	Recommended	TBD	Subject to Ministerial Guidelines relating to the Payment of Rates and Charges 2023.
Governance Rules and Election Period Policy	Recommended	December 2025	Model Governance Rules scheduled for release in December 2025.
Complaints Handling Policy	Self-review	Operational.	Previously adopted as an operational Policy. Supporting Council Plan commitment to improve Complaints Handling practices.
Procurement Policy	Self-review	TBD	Due for scheduled review.
Gifts and Hospitality Policy	Self-review	Briefing – March Consultation – April Adoption - May	Due for scheduled review.
Human Rights Policy	Self-review	TBD	Due for scheduled review.

Access, Equity and Priority Policy		TBD	New policy recommended through Cultural Inclusion Review.
Volunteer Policy	Self-review	TBD	Due for scheduled review.
Revenue and Rating Plan	30 June 2025	As per Budget	Council must prepare and 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 Plan and Vision	31 October 2025	TBD	The Council Plan reflects the strategic priorities and direction of the elected Council and sets the agenda for the next four years.
Financial Plan	31 October 2025	Briefing – August Endorsement – September* Adoption - October	The Financial Plan links directly to the achievement of the Community Vision and the Council Plan within the Integrated Strategic Planning & Reporting framework. This framework guides the Council in identifying community needs and aspirations over the long term (Community Vision), medium term (Council Plan) and short term (Budget) and then holding itself accountable (Annual Report).
Asset Management Plan	31 October 2025	Briefing – April Endorsement – First May* Adoption – June	Must include strategies to ensure the sustainable management of the assets, outlining costs for renewing, upgrading and extending assets and linked with the long-term financial forecast.
Road Management Plan	Recommended	Briefing – April Endorsement – First May* Adoption – June	The Road Management Plan sets out the circumstances, the manner and the standards to which the road authority will perform its inspection, maintenance and repair responsibilities.
Domestic Animals Management Plan	4 December 2025	Briefing – July Endorsement – August* Adoption - September	The plan must set out a method for evaluating whether the animal management services provided by council are adequate to give effect to requirements of the Act and the Domestic Animal Regulations 2015.
Reconciliation Action Plan	NIL	TBD	Draft completed in 2024 prior to Election of new Council.
Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (within Council Plan)	31 October 2025	TBD	Section 26 of the Act requires each council to prepare a municipal public health and wellbeing plan every 4 years, within 12 months of a council general election.

Disability Action Plan (within Council Plan)	31 October 2025	TBD	A Disability Action Plan (DAP) is a framework that Council uses to address barriers to accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities.
Youth Strategy	EOCY 2025	Briefing – October Endorsement – November* Adoption - December	This Strategy seeks to develop and affirm existing opportunities for young people and work innovatively and collaboratively on issues that they continue to face.
Sport and Recreation Strategy	NIL	Briefing – First May Endorsement – Second May* Adoption - June	This strategy will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and the community guide future development, access and participation in local sport and sports infrastructure.
Playground Strategy	NIL	TBD	This strategy will aim to guide the provision, development and management of outdoor play spaces in public parks across Hindmarsh.
Advocacy Strategy	NIL	Briefing - January	Sets out Councils advocacy priorities for funding and policies from State and Federal government.
Local Laws	As per Resolution	TBD	Motion from previous Council to conduct review in new Council term.
Annual Budget	30 June 2025	Briefing – Feb to April Endorsement – Second May* Adoption - June	Council's annual budget is a plan for the council's expected income and expenditures for the next financial year.
Municipal Local Law (Common Seal)	-	Briefing - April Adoption – April	The MLL provides for the use of the Council seal and is due for routine review.
Instruments of Delegation	31 October 2025	Various Council to CEO 27 November 2024	All Council instruments of delegation must be reviewed by 31 October 2025. The Council to CEO delegation was reviewed in late 2024.
Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan	March 2025	A&R Committee – March 2025	An audit and risk committee work plan, or annual agenda, is a tool that helps an audit and risk committee plan the contents of each meeting throughout the year.
Planning Scheme Review	31 October 2026	TBD	A planning scheme review is a health check of the current planning scheme for a local government area, assessing its effectiveness and relevance against strategies, policy, and direction adopted over the previous period.
Audit and Risk Committee Charter	March/April 2025	A&R Committee – March 2025 Adoption – April	An audit and risk committee charter outlines the functions, roles, and responsibilities of an audit and risk committee. It also

			includes administrative arrangements for the committee.
Annual Report	31 October 2025	October	Council's Annual Report details the achievements and performance of Hindmarsh Shire Council during each financial year.

Complaints Handling Policy

First implemented in July 2018 and last reviewed in December 2021, the Complaints Handling Policy has undergone an internal review. The draft policy sets a clear systematic framework for assessing and responding to complaints lodged by members of the public in relation to Hindmarsh Shire Council decisions.

The Complaints Handling Policy was primarily reviewed against the Victorian Ombudsman's Good Practice Guide for complaint handling. While there are no substantial changes to the process, the following key amendments have been made:

- Ensuring that the information is 'customer friendly' and contacts, processes and responsibilities are clearly explained.
- Ensuring that processes are responsive to resourcing and cognisant of workplace health and safety obligations (including psychosocial hazard mitigation) to promote constructive, respectful and reasonable contact between complainants and Council officers.

The amended policy is being made available to the Audit and Risk Committee for review prior to formal adoption.

Policy Updates for Committee Information

At the Council meetings held on 27 November 2024, 18 December 2024, 5 February 2025, and 5 March 2025, Council resolved to adopt the following policies:

- **Council Interaction with Staff Policy**
This policy fulfills requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) section 46(3)(c) and ensures Councillors meet their responsibilities under Section 123 regarding the misuse of position, including directing or improperly influencing a member of Council staff. The update to this policy reflected current staff positions in the contact matrix as well as other minor administrative changes.
- **Internal Resolution Procedure**
With amendments to the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 and the *Local Government Act 2020* that came into effect in October 2024, Councillors must abide by the Model Councillor Code of Conduct and Council must adopt an internal resolution procedure for dealing with alleged breaches of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct by 1 July 2025 (Regulation 12A). The aim of the Internal Resolution Procedure is to address any alleged breaches of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct before they are escalated to formal processes like internal arbitration.

This policy details:

- How a matter that is an alleged breach of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct is to be dealt with;
 - The purpose of conciliation and how a Councillor can initiate a request to have a matter addressed through this process; and
 - Who can perform the role of conciliator.
- **Councillor Expense Entitlements Policy**
Following the changes to the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2024 (the Amendment Act) and the provisions within, which came into effect from 24 October 2024, officers have undertaken a review of the Councillor Expense Entitlements Policy. Changes have been made to reflect the additional legislative requirements of Council to undertake mandatory training both initially and as an ongoing annual commitment.
 - **Fee Waiver and Reduction Policy**
The Fee Waiver and Reduction Policy was adopted in June 2024 and establishes Council's position in relation to requests to partially or fully waive various types of fees and charges. The amendments to this policy aim to improve efficiency in administering the fee waiver and reduction requests by authorising Managers and Directors to approve requests in accordance with policy guidelines, as opposed to all requests, no matter how minor, requiring approval from the CEO.

These policies are available at <https://www.hindmarsh.vic.gov.au/Council/Council-Resources/Policies-and-Procedures>.

Procurement Exemption Requests

All Procurement Policy Exemption Requests from this period are attached for Committee information.

Link to Council Plan:

Strong Governance Practices: Ensure compliance with the *Local Government Act 2020*

Ensure Responsible Risk Management Principles

Financial Implications:

Nil.

Risk Management Implications:

The updated policies and plans will ensure that Council maintains its governance, transparency and community engagement obligations under the Act and other relevant regulations.

Conflict of Interest:

Under section 130(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest, including the type of interest.

Author and Officer Responsible: Janelle Reichelt, Manager People and Performance

In providing this advice as the Author and Officer Responsible, I have no disclosable interests in this report.

MOVED: R BARKER/A ROBERTS

That the Audit & Risk Committee receives the Governance compliance update and endorses the updated Complaints Handling Policy.

CARRIED

Refer attachment 16.1 – 16.2

17. Audit & Risk Committee Performance

Responsible Officer: Manager People and Performance

Introduction:

The purpose of this report for the members of the Audit and Risk Committee to consider delaying the self-assessment until September 2025.

Discussion:

Under the section 54 of the *Local Government Act 2020* the Audit and Risk Committee must undertake an annual assessment of their performance with the assessment to be tabled at the next meeting of Council.

The self-assessment provides guidance to the Council on the effectiveness of the committee and ensures that the Committee members have the necessary experience to enable the committee to make informed recommendations to the Council. The document also informs the management of any changes that need to be made to reports tabled to the Committee to ensure they can make informed recommendations.

Self-assessments have been scheduled in March of each year, however, as this is a new Committee, it is suggested to schedule the 2025 self-assessment in August to review at the September meeting and continue this scheduling for the remainder of the Committee term.

Link to Council Plan:

Ensure responsible risk management principles.

Financial Implications:

This decision has no financial implications.

Risk Management Implications:

Section 54 Audit and Risk Committee Charter

- (4) An Audit and Risk Committee must—
 - (a) undertake an annual assessment of its performance against the Audit and Risk Committee Charter.

Undertaking this assessment ensures that Council and the Committee are meeting legislated governance requirements.

Conflict of Interest:

Under section 130(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

Author & Officer Responsible: Janelle Reichelt, Manager People and Performance
In providing this advice as the Author & Officer Responsible, I have no interests to disclose.

MOVED: S COUTTS/R BARKER

That the Audit and Risk Committee delay the annual self-assessment of the Committee until September 2025.

CARRIED

18. Health and Safety Report

Responsible Officer: Manager People and Performance

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit and Risk Committee with a high-level update on activities within Council's People and Performance team.

Discussion

Request from Committee –

- *Numbers/near misses and high-level management action.*
- *Conversation around safety at the next meeting.*
- *Concern around lack of Health and Safety Committee - this should be a priority and ensure it is active and effective.*

In December, Council called for nominations for new members of the Health, Safety and Consultative Committee and Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) for all designated work groups (DWG). The 3-year term of the current committee expired in January 2025. It is the desire of the People and Performance team to reinvigorate the committee for its next term, by empowering the committee to run several projects that align with the Employee Health and Wellbeing Program. These projects will aim to increase employee engagement and improve health and wellbeing. The Committee will meet every 6 weeks and comprises of management representatives and HSRs from 9 DWGs across the organisation.

In February 2025, Premier Allan announced that new Regulations will be introduced to strengthen how psychosocial hazards are managed in the workplace and will take effect on 1 December 2025. These Regulations have been under consideration for several years, and it is anticipated that a range of new reporting requirements will be introduced. Council's management team undertook training on psychosocial hazards in 2023, with key personnel also participating in going industry training

throughout 2024 and 2025. Internal communications to staff have also been produced to provide information around psychosocial hazards.

Notifiable Incidents under the OHS Act:

There were no notifiable incidents in the reporting period (September 2024 to February 2025).

Link to Council Plan:

Ensure responsible risk management principles.

A skilled Council and workforce capable of meeting community needs.

Financial Implications:

Nil.

Risk Management Implications:

Managing the health, safety and psychological wellbeing of employees responds to significant risks incidents, WorkCover claims and workplace wellbeing and productivity.

Conflict of Interest:

Under section 130(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest, including the type of interest.

Author: Angela Veitch, Coordinator People and Safety

In providing this advice as the Author, I have no interests to disclose.

Officer Responsible: Janelle Reichelt, Manager People and Performance

In providing this advice as the Officer Responsible, I have no interests to disclose.

Discussion Notes:

- Concerns over lack of active Health and Safety Committee
- Discussion regarding Committee role in OHS and connection to charter.
- Numbers of incidents and near misses to be provided within this report at future meetings.

MOVED: R GERSCH/J BARRY

That the Audit & Risk Committee receives the Health and Safety update and requests that incident numbers be reported on in the next meeting.

CARRIED

19. Late Reports

20. General Business

21. Next Meeting

Meeting closed at 11:27am.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 June 2025, via Microsoft Teams, commencing at 10am.