



Agenda

Scheduled Council Meeting

Monday 17 October 2022 at 6:30 pm

You are advised that a Meeting of Council has been called by the Chief Executive Officer on Monday 17 October 2022 at 6:30 pm for the transaction of the following business.

This meeting will be held in the Council Chamber at Civic Centre, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang 3752 and will be [livestreamed via Council’s website](https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/).

**C Lloyd**

**Chief Executive Officer**

Administrators

Lydia Wilson Chair of Council

Peita Duncan Administrator

Chris Eddy Administrator

On 19 June 2020 the Acting Minister for Local Government appointed the Panel of Administrators for the City of Whittlesea and appointed Ms Lydia Wilson as Chair of the Panel. The Panel of Administrators comprises of Ms Lydia Wilson, Ms Peita Duncan and Mr Chris Eddy who will undertake the duties of the Council of the City of Whittlesea until the October 2024 Local Government Election.

Senior Officers

Craig Lloyd Chief Executive Officer

Kate McCaughey Director Community Wellbeing

Justin O’Meara Director Planning & Development

Sarah Renner Director Customer & Corporate Services

Debbie Wood Director Infrastructure & Environment

Frank Joyce Executive Manager Governance & Strategy

Janine Morgan Executive Manager Public Affairs

Order of Business

The Chief Executive Officer submits the following business:

[1 Opening 6](#_Toc116570186)

[1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions 6](#_Toc116570187)

[1.2 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement 6](#_Toc116570188)

[1.3 Attendance 6](#_Toc116570189)

[2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest 7](#_Toc116570190)

[3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s 7](#_Toc116570191)

[4 Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters 8](#_Toc116570192)

[4.1 Public Question Time 8](#_Toc116570193)

[4.2 Petitions 8](#_Toc116570194)

[4.2.1 Petition - Request for construction of footpath, Whittlesea-Yea Road, Whittlesea 8](#_Toc116570195)

[4.3 Joint Letters 8](#_Toc116570196)

[5 Officers' Reports 9](#_Toc116570197)

[5.1 Connected Communities 9](#_Toc116570198)

[5.1.1 Epping Animal Welfare Facility Renaming 9](#_Toc116570199)

[5.2 Liveable Neighborhoods 13](#_Toc116570200)

[5.2.1 Draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 13](#_Toc116570201)

[5.2.2 Cat Confinement and Desexing Community Transition Plan 22](#_Toc116570202)

[5.3 Strong Local Economy 26](#_Toc116570203)

[5.3.1 Draft Epping Central Structure Plan - Endorsement for Community Consultation 26](#_Toc116570204)

[5.4 Sustainable Environment 44](#_Toc116570205)

[5.5 High Performing Organisation 44](#_Toc116570206)

[5.5.1 Unconfirmed Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee Meetings 44](#_Toc116570207)

[5.5.2 2021-2022 Annual Report 46](#_Toc116570208)

[5.5.3 Joint Letter - Removal of Angophora Trees - University Hill, Bundoora 52](#_Toc116570209)

[6 Notices of Motion 58](#_Toc116570210)

[7 Urgent Business 58](#_Toc116570211)

[8 Reports from Council Representatives and CEO Update 58](#_Toc116570212)

[9 Confidential Business 58](#_Toc116570213)

[9.1 Confidential Connected Communities 58](#_Toc116570214)

[9.2 Confidential Liveable Neighbourhoods 58](#_Toc116570215)

[9.3 Confidential Strong Local Economy 58](#_Toc116570216)

[9.4 Confidential Sustainable Environment 58](#_Toc116570217)

[9.5 Confidential High Performing Organisation 58](#_Toc116570218)

[9.6 Confidential Notices of Motion 58](#_Toc116570219)

[12 Closure 58](#_Toc116570220)

**Note:**

At the Chair of Council’s discretion, the meeting may be closed to the public in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The provision which is likely to be relied upon to enable closure is set out in each item. These reports are not available for public distribution.

**Question Time:**

During the meeting, the Chief Executive Officer will answer questions from residents and ratepayers. Questions are required to be submitted in writing prior to the advertised commencement time of a Scheduled Council Meeting.

Priority will be given to questions or statements that relate to Agenda items and those submitted prior to 12pm on the day of the Council Meeting. Any questions submitted after 12pm on the day may be read if there is sufficient time and otherwise, will be carried-over to the next Council Meeting.

A Question Time form can be downloaded from Council’s website and copies of the form are available at the meeting. Refer: <https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/>

Council will hold public question time for up to 30 minutes at each Scheduled Council Meeting to allow members of the public to present the questions they have submitted to Council.

Council is committed to ensuring that all residents and ratepayers of the municipality may contribute to Council’s democratic process and therefore, if you have special requirements, please telephone the Governance Team prior to any Council Meeting on (03) 9217 2294.

**1 Opening**

**1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions**

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will open the meeting and introduce the Administrators and Chief Executive Officer:

Administrator, Ms Peita Duncan; and

Chief Executive Officer, Mr Craig Lloyd.

The Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd will introduce members of the Executive Leadership Team:

Director Community Wellbeing, Ms Kate McCaughey;

Director Planning and Development, Mr Justin O’Meara;   
Director Corporate & Customer Services, Ms Sarah Renner;   
Director Infrastructure and Environment, Ms Debbie Wood;

Executive Manager Governance and Strategy, Mr Frank Joyce; and

Executive Manager Public Affairs, Ms Janine Morgan.

Following the Introductions, the Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd will then read the Diversity Statement:

*At the City of Whittlesea we are proud of our diversity and the many cultures, faiths and beliefs that make up our community. We strive to be an inclusive welcoming City that fosters active participation, wellbeing and connection to each other and this land. We commit as a Council to making informed decisions to benefit the people of the City of Whittlesea now and into the future, to support our community’s vision of A Place For All.*

**1.2 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement**

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will read the following Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement:

“On behalf of the City of Whittlesea I recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

I would also like to personally acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging.”

**1.3 Attendance**

**2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

**3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s**

**Recommendation**

**THAT the following Minutes of the preceding meeting as circulated, be confirmed:**

**Scheduled Meeting of Council held 19 September 2022.**

**4 Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters**

**4.1 Public Question Time**

**4.2 Petitions**

4.2.1 Petition - Request for construction of footpath, Whittlesea-Yea Road, Whittlesea

**4.2.1 Petition - Request for construction of footpath, Whittlesea-Yea Road, Whittlesea**

A petition has been received from 19 residents requesting Council extend the footpath on Whittlesea-Yea Road from Jennifer Court to Cordell Court, Whittlesea. 14 signatures are valid signatures in accordance with the Governance Rules.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council receive the petition from 14 residents, requesting construction of footpath along Whittlesea-Yea Road from Jennifer Court to Cordell Court, Whittlesea and Officers present a final report and recommendation at the 12 December 2022 Council Meeting.**

**4.3 Joint Letters**

Nil Joint Letters

**5 Officers' Reports**

**5.1 Connected Communities**

5.5.4 Epping Animal Welfare Facility Renaming

**5.1.1 Epping Animal Welfare Facility Renaming**

**Responsible Officer** Director Planning & Development

**Author** Debbie Blandford, Manager Compliance &   
Environmental Health

**In Attendance** Debbie Blandford, Manager Compliance &   
Environmental Health

**Attachments**

1. wat djerring Animal Facility Logo Mock Ups [**5.1.1** - 1 page]

**Purpose**

To seek Council approval to raise awareness and invite feedback from the community by inviting public submissions on a proposed new name for the Epping Animal Welfare Facility (the Facility) located at 20 Companion Place, Epping (previously Lot 3, 490 Cooper Street, Epping).

**Brief Overview**

Council is bringing the management of the Facility in-house from 16 October 2022 and will provide regional services for the Cities of Whittlesea, Merri-bek and Darebin. It is proposed that the Facility is relaunched with a new name following the change to in-house operations.

To acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which the Facility is located, the Wurundjeri Willum Clan, it is proposed to rename the Facility with the Aboriginal name ‘wat djerring Animal Facility’.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

1. **Invite public submissions on the proposed renaming of the Epping Animal Welfare Facility at 20 Companion Place, Epping to *wat djerring Animal Facility* for 30 days, in accordance with the *Naming Rules for Places in Victoria 2022.***
2. **Consider a report from officers summarising any submissions received during the public consultation period and a recommendation on the name of the Facility.**

**Key Information**

From 16 October 2022, the City of Whittlesea will be managing the Facility on behalf of the Cities of Whittlesea, Merri-bek and Darebin.

It is proposed that the Facility is launched with a new name following the change to   
in-house operations to move away from being suburb-specific and reflect that the Facility services a much broader region.

In early 2022, an application was submitted to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (‘Corporation’) seeking suggested Aboriginal names to be provided for use in the title of the Facility. The name the Corporation offered is *wat djerring*, meaning ‘we together’.

The name is pronounced “wot jerring” – the ‘dj’ sound is not known in the English language but is a combination of the two sounds. They are pronounced together, but there is more emphasis on the ‘j’. The name is displayed in lower case lettering, with no initial capitalisation.

It should be noted that this was the only name supplied for Council’s consideration by the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

At the time of seeking a new name for the Facility, an Aboriginal artist was engaged to develop concept logos to strengthen and consolidate branding which will sit alongside branding of the three councils.

The logo concepts were provided to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to ensure that the background, purpose and goals of the service and its connection to communities in Darebin, Merri-bek and Whittlesea were understood when considering potential names.

The name and meaning of *wat djerring* align with the logo concept and artist’s narrative for the logo. A sample of the logo design with the proposed name is attached at Attachment 1.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

Proposed names were sought from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Corporation. *wat djerring* was the only name offered.

Council’s Aboriginal Communities Department was consulted to advise of any local community issues or sensitivities and provided positive feedback to the logo concepts and proposed name.

The proposed name was considered by Council's internal Naming Committee, who endorsed the proposal for the Facility to be renamed *wat djerring Animal Facility* subject to public consultation.

If endorsed, public submissions will be invited on the proposed name, *wat djerring Animal Facility* for 30 days, in accordance with the *Naming Rules for Places in Victoria 2022.*

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Connected communities**

We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported

The proposed renaming of the Epping Animal Welfare Facility connects the Facility to the broader northern Melbourne region that it accommodates and acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which the Facility is located.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

No implications

**Social, Cultural and Health**

Renaming the Epping Animal Welfare Facility with an Aboriginal name will acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which the Facility is located.

**Economic**

No implications

**Financial Implications**

The cost of renaming and rebranding the Facility is included in the operating budget.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Not linked to the risks within the Strategic Risk Register*

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

If endorsed, the community will have an opportunity to provide their feedback on the proposed name via the Engage Whittlesea platform.

**Critical Dates**

Although Council will manage the Facility from 16 October 2022, a new name will not be finalised within this timeframe and the current name will remain in place until a decision is made on the name and an official launch takes place.

It is proposed that the Facility is relaunched in early 2023 following finalisation of the new name and associated branding.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

As the Facility transitions to Council management, it is a good opportunity to relaunch the Facility with a new name and branding that better reflects its role as a regional provider of animal welfare services.

Considering an Aboriginal name for the Facility acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which the Facility is located, the Wurundjeri Willum Clan, and matches the proposed logo for the Facility.

**5.2 Liveable Neighborhoods**

5.2.1 Draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework

**5.2.1 Draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework**

**Responsible Officer** Director Infrastructure & Environment

**Author** Jason Cahill, Senior Urban Designer

**In Attendance** Arashdeep Singh, Manager Urban Design & Transport  
Jason Cahill, Senior Urban Designer  
Tim D'Agostino, Senior Urban Designer

**Attachments**

1. Thomastown- Lalor Draft Place Framework [**5.2.1.1** - 34 pages]

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to inform Council that a draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework has been prepared to guide the future of Thomastown and Lalor. It is recommended that Council endorse the draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework for community consultation, to be conducted from 1-30 November 2022.

**Brief Overview**

The draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework (the draft Framework), seeks to outline a vision, themes, key focus areas and place shaping opportunities to locally translate Whittlesea 2040’s goals to Thomastown and Lalor. This will guide and support future priority projects, activities and drive change in Thomastown and Lalor.

The draft Framework responds to the Challenges and Opportunities Report: Thomastown and Lalor Urban Design Framework (June 2021), endorsed by Council on 21 June 2021. It is informed by background analysis and two rounds of community consultation undertaken between 2019 and 2021.

It is important to note the document name changed from “Urban Design Framework” to “Place Framework” to better align with the purpose of the document and Council’s place-based approach, policy and strategies.

The draft Framework is intended to be released for community consultation in November 2022. The findings from this will be used to inform the development of a final Place Framework that reflects community aspirations for the local area.

It is intended that the final Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework will be presented to Council for endorsement by June 2023 and be used to inform the development of future Council actions.

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council endorse the draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework (Attachment One) for community consultation from 1-30 November 2022.**

**Key Information**

Thomastown and Lalor are centrally located along High Street, a strategic corridor located between the Epping Metropolitan Activity Centre and the future Suburban Rail Loop.

The draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework has been developed to establish a local, place responsive vision that connects to community aspirations, and will be used to provide a clear direction for place shaping and investment priorities. The draft Place Framework:

* Translates the Whittlesea 2040 vision specifically to Thomastown and Lalor by identifying local challenges and opportunities
* Fills the gap in strategic direction for these established areas
* Ensures Council planning and delivery considers the unique qualities of Thomastown and Lalor to enhance the area over time
* Ensures that Thomastown and Lalor are a cohesive and connected community that encompasses all places, including residential, town centre and industrial areas.
* References State Government policy that has identified the suburbs as locations for urban renewal.

**Background of Framework**

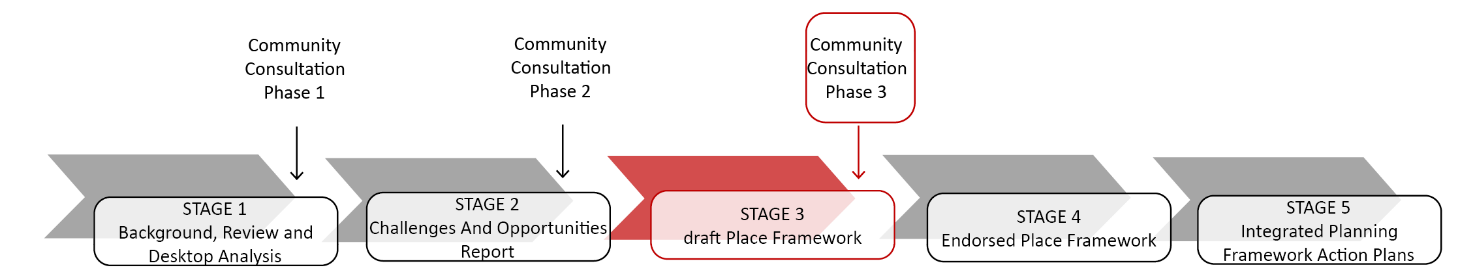


Figure 1: Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework Project Plan

The Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework project began in 2019 and includes five stages. Stage 1 comprised the Background, Review and Desktop Analysis of existing plans and strategies of the area. Community consultation was also undertaken during stage one to uncover what the community love about Thomastown and Lalor and what the challenges and opportunities of the area are.

The findings from Stage 1 informed the development of the Challenges and Opportunities Report - Thomastown and Lalor Urban Design Framework in Stage 2. This was finalised in June 2021 and was released for community consultation from June to July 2021. Internal and external stakeholders, including community groups were engaged during this process.

The feedback received from the Stage 2 consultation has informed the draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework. This third stage of the project will include the final round of community consultation.

**Draft Framework Overview**

The draft Framework aligns to the Whittlesea 2040 goals, through five key themes:

1. Sustainable Environment: Greener spaces
2. Liveable Neighbourhoods: Connected places
3. Connected Community: Shared local culture
4. Strong Local Economy: Vibrant centres and industries
5. High Performing Organisation: Enhanced character

Each theme identifies key focus areas, outcomes and place shaping opportunities informed by the analysis and stakeholder feedback conducted in the earlier stages of the project. Note that the six themes identified in the Challenges and Opportunities Report have been refined to five themes in this draft Framework.

The draft Framework:

* illustrates sites and locations that have clear opportunities for improvement,
* provides place specific guidelines to improve Thomastown and Lalor and incrementally deliver the local vision over time, and
* incorporates a high-level Place Making Opportunities Table which identifies key partners and Council goal alignment that will evolve over time.

Council's Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy and subsequent Action Plan (currently in development) will drive a majority of the outcomes in the Place Framework.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

The draft Framework has been prepared following extensive community consultation in Stages 1 and 2 of the project.

Stage 1 activities included the establishment of a key stakeholder group (Thomastown Precinct Activation Group – TPAG), participation at community events (Walking Thomastown), online surveys, stakeholder meetings, local community group engagement, online question and answers, and an online social mapping page.

The feedback received was thematically grouped into key loves, challenges and opportunities for Thomastown and Lalor, a summary of which is outlined below.

Community voices from Stage 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Key loves** | **Key challenges** | **Key opportunities** |
| Diverse community | Lack of connecting bike paths | Green space parks and bushy spaces |
| Everything you need is close by | Support for local business | A town that is vibrant, bustling, modern and connected |
| Love the Library and TRACC | Lack of attractions - especially for youth. | Community spaces both indoor and outdoor |

Stage 2 centred on the findings of the Challenges and Opportunities Report. Engagement activities during this stage included an online presence on the Engage Whittlesea website where the community were able to comment on the six themes and use an online map to provide feedback for specific areas. Feedback was also sought from various internal and external stakeholder groups, including the Thomastown Precinct Activation Group.

Summary of key findings from Stage 1 and 2 community consultation:

* Edgars Creek is an important asset and should be more visible.
* The need to celebrate Thomastown and Lalor as the gateway to the municipality.
* More greenery in the suburbs is needed - along waterways, the streets, and within open space.
* Improved connections between key destinations such as Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre and shopping strips.
* Acknowledgement of the significant Aboriginal heritage that predates the suburbs.
* More services, spaces and activities to engage youth are needed.
* Need for Thomastown and Lalor to be vibrant and bustling.
* Retaining and valuing the Thomastown and Lalor character.

**Stage 3 – proposed community consultation**

It is proposed that the draft Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework is open for community consultation from 1 – 30 November 2022.

The planned engagement activities include:

* Direct mail to residents
* Direct mail to critical business landowners for industrial and urban renewal areas
* Community pop-ups at high traffic areas, including shops and train station
* Community information sessions at the local libraries
* Digital engagement
* Key stakeholder briefing with the TPAG
* Targeted communications via Council’s social media and other communication channels.

Engagement activities have been designed to be broadly accessible by the community, with sessions held at various times of the day and information available in various languages to support people within Thomastown and Lalor to have their say.

Following the close of the engagement period, a consultation summary will be prepared. This will inform the final draft of the Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework, which is intended to be presented to Council for final endorsement by June 2023.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

**Liveable Neighbourhoods**

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are

convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

**High performing organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

**Strong Local Economy**

Our municipality attracts investment to provide more local jobs to match population growth.

The draft Framework aligns with all five of the Whittlesea 2040 goals. The project is listed as a Community Plan 2021-2025 initiative within the High Performing Organisation goal - #53 Establish a place-based approach to Council planning, service and infrastructure delivery that is responsive to the distinct needs and aspirations of local communities.

The draft Framework has strong alignment to future Council Strategies and Action Plans.

Key Council department involvement include; Urban Design and Transport, Assets and Facilities, Sustainable Environment, Aboriginal Unit, Community & Place, Active an& Creative Communities, Strategic Projects, Assets & Facilities, Strategic Futures, Investment and Attraction and Business Support.

**State and Local Strategic Context**

The draft Framework has been prepared within the context established by State Planning Policy including *Plan Melbourne* 2017-2050, Melbourne’s *Growth Corridor Plans*, *Melbourne Industrial and Commercial Land Use Plan 2017-2050*, draft *Northern Land Use Framework Plan and* the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme*.

Thomastown and Lalor include State Significant Industrial Land as per the *Melbourne Industrial and Commercial Land Use Plan 2017-2050*. This land is identified in the *Metropolitan Planning Strategy* and nominates these areas are to be protected from incompatible land uses to allow for continual growth in freight, logistics and manufacturing investment.

In addition to these documents, four Council strategies (listed below), have specific and related actions for Thomastown and Lalor that are proposed to be implemented and were considered in the draft Framework development:

* The *Open Space Strategy* (2016) identified gaps in open space provision across Thomastown and Lalor.
* The *Whittlesea Water for all – our water strategy* (2020-2030) includes actions to improve sections of waterway within Thomastown and Lalor.
* The *Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy* (year) includes an action to include increased greening (with emphasis on tree retention and planting) in all Urban Design Frameworks.
* The *Housing Diversity Strategy* 2013-2033 identifies areas in Thomastown and Lalor for housing change. The draft Place Framework highlights opportunities to be considered when the strategy is next reviewed.

The draft Framework has also considered the following strategic documents:

* *Whittlesea 2040: a place for all*
* *Community Plan 2021-2025*
* *Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026 and Action Plan 2022-2023*
* *Draft Sustainable Environment Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025*
* *Climate Change Plan Draft 2022-2032*
* *Integrated Transport Strategy 2014*
* *Northern Regional Trails Strategy 2022*
* *City of Whittlesea Bicycle Plan 2016-2020*
* *Thomastown Industrial Area Plan 2018-2038*

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

The draft Framework highlights priorities for Thomastown and Lalor to incorporate increased tree canopy cover, consider climate change impacts and re-establish biodiversity.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

The draft Framework identifies place shaping opportunities to improve social, cultural and health outcomes in Thomastown and Lalor.

**Economic**

The draft Framework identifies place shaping opportunities to improve economic outcomes in Thomastown and Lalor. The final Place Framework will be informed by the 20-Minute Neighbourhoods assessment of Neighbourhood Activity Centres.

**Financial Implications**

Cost associated with community consultation and finalisation of the draft Framework have been included in the current and previous budgets.

The draft Framework identifies place shaping opportunities to deliver the vision for the area. The opportunities are intended to inform future Integrated Planning Framework Strategy Action Plans which may lead to financial implications for Council in the future. It is expected that the Framework’s identified opportunities will be subject to the requirements of the Action Plan development process.

Where there is a need for extra resourcing, this will be considered as part of the annual budget process, and where possible via external government grant funding and exploration of potential partnership opportunities with government agencies and key stakeholders.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Service Delivery - Inability to plan for and provide critical community services and infrastructure impacting on community wellbeing*

The draft Place Framework identifies place shaping opportunities to prioritise infrastructure projects that will have a positive impact on community wellbeing, the economy and environment. The Framework will also better inform a wide variety of service and infrastructure planning to consider the local place qualities of Thomastown and Lalor.

**Strategic Risk** *Life Cycle Asset Management - Failure to effectively plan for the construction, on-going maintenance and renewal of Council’s assets*

The draft Place Framework provides a coordinated approach to asset management by providing an overarching strategic direction and vision for the area. The Framework identifies key improvements that should be prioritised to maximise community use and satisfaction and Council investment.

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

The draft Place Framework builds on previous community engagement in 2021, and provides the community an opportunity to help shape the vision and priorities for their local area. Through this the community will have an improved understanding of Council’s strategic direction and how it applies to Thomastown and Lalor.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

If endorsed by Council for consultation, residents, business and other targeted stakeholders will be informed of the draft Framework and encouraged to provide their feedback via a range of Council communication channels. This includes an online portal, direct mail and broader communication such as social media and the local papers.

**Critical Dates**

Community consultation is proposed from 1-30 November 2022.

The draft Framework is a Community Plan Initiative and is intended to be finalised and endorsed by Council by June 2023.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The draft Place Framework (Attachment One) provides a place-responsive vision, themes, outcomes and place shaping recommendations to locally translate Whittlesea 2040’s vision of ‘a place for all’ to Thomastown and Lalor.

Endorsing the draft Place Framework for community engagement will capture community aspirations for Thomastown and Lalor and then reflected in the final Framework, which is anticipated to be presented to Council for endorsement by June 2023.

5.2.2 Cat Confinement and Desexing Community Transition Plan

**5.2.2 Cat Confinement and Desexing Community Transition Plan**

**Responsible Officer** Director Planning & Development

**Author** Ben Durant, Unit Manager Animal Management

**In Attendance** Debbie Blandford, Manager Compliance & Environmental Health

**Attachments**

1. Cat Community Transition Plan [**5.2.2.1** - 11 pages]

**Purpose**

For Council to consider the communications and engagement plan to help the community with the transition to cat confinement regulations and mandatory desexing for newly registered cats that will come into effect from 1 August 2023.

**Brief Overview**

At its meeting on 18 July 2022, Council endorsed the introduction of a cat curfew (“cat confinement”) and mandatory cat desexing for newly registered cats from 1 August 2023. Council also resolved that a transition plan to help the community to adapt to these changes be presented to Council for endorsement. This report presents the proposed Community Transition Plan.

**Recommendation**

**That Council endorse implementation of the Community Transition Plan to assist cat owners to transition to a cat curfew and mandatory cat desexing for newly registered cats that comes into effect from 1 August 2023.**

**Key Information**

At its meeting on 18 July 2022, Council endorsed the introduction of cat confinement and mandatory cat desexing regulations for newly registered cats from 1 August 2023.

Council recognises that this is a significant change for cats and their owners and subsequently, has resolved to develop a Community Transition Plan (the ‘Plan’) to help transition the community to the new regulations that come into effect from 1 August 2023. The Plan can be found at Attachment 1.

The Plan includes a wide variety of communication and engagement tools to raise community awareness and offer support as the transition date approaches. This includes:

* Video content being produced demonstrating solutions for containing cats
* Partnering with local community groups to host do-it-yourself cat enclosure workshops and disseminate information to cat owners
* Using in-person engagement opportunities such as a Pet Expo and pop-up stalls to provide cat owners with practical containment ideas and giveaways such as cat toys.
* Ensuring our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community is informed by attending community meetings, hosting pop-up stalls with staff language aides and ensuring printed material is translated into the most spoken languages in the City of Whittlesea
* Keeping owners of registered cats up to date on the upcoming changes via direct mail and email
* Information being distributed through media releases, newspaper and radio advertising, Local Scoop and online via the Council website, Engage Whittlesea platform and social media.

These activities will be implemented in the lead up to the new laws coming into effect on the 1 August 2023. There is also support and information activities that will continue post 1 August 2023.

**Introducing New Cat Laws in Other Local Government Areas**

Other Victorian councils have recently introduced cat confinement regulations and advice has been sought to understand how these councils helped their communities transition to the new laws.

The advice of these councils was to provide the community with sufficient time to prepare their homes and their cats for the new curfews. One Council decided to extend their transition plan from four months to 10 months to allow their community to better prepare.

Other councils used a range of communications channels and tools to promote their new cat confinement regulations, including media releases, paid advertising, website updates and community information sessions to provide advice, education and support.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

Extensive community consultation was undertaken on how Council should manage domestic animals (dogs and cats) and specifically cats throughout 2021 to inform the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 and then again in March to May 2022.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Liveable neighbourhoods**

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

Implementing a Community Transition Plan will build capacity and support our community to transition to the new cat confinement and mandatory desexing regulations.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

No implications

**Social, Cultural and Health**

No implications

**Economic**

No implications

**Financial Implications**

Implementing this Plan will be funded through the existing operating budget.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

Transitioning the community to the new regulations effectively is important to assist cat owners to be compliant and achieve the outcomes sought from introducing these initiatives.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

The communication proposed to implement the cat confinement and mandatory cat desexing regulations is comprehensive and includes a range of in-person engagement activities, print, broadcast and online media and advertising, and translation into various languages spoken within the City of Whittlesea. Details of the planned communication can be found in the attachment.

**Critical Dates**

* 18 July 2022 – Council resolved to introduce a cat curfew and mandatory desexing for new cat registrations from 1 August 2023
* August 2022 to July 2023 – proposed Community Transition Plan is implemented (details attached)
* 1 August 2023 – cat confinement and mandatory desexing for new cat registrations commences
* Ongoing – support and information provided to cat owners.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

Implementing a Community Transition Plan is important to ensure cat owners and the broader community understand the new requirements for keeping cats contained and mandatory desexing.

Implementing the Plan over several months before the changes occur will allow time for community members to prepare for the changes.

Given our diverse community demographics, communication will be undertaken through a range of different channels in several languages and will be supported by practical do-it-yourself advice to assist community members to transition to the new requirements.

**5.3 Strong Local Economy**

5.3.1 Draft Epping Central Structure Plan - Endorsement for Community Consultation

**5.3.1 Draft Epping Central Structure Plan - Endorsement for Community Consultation**

**Responsible Officer** Director Planning & Development

**Author** Fiona Ryan, Senior Strategic Planner  
 Liam Wilkinson, Unit Manager Strategic Planning

**In Attendance** Fiona Ryan, Senior Strategic Planner

**Attachments**

1. Local Context Plan [**5.3.1.1** - 1 page]
2. Epping Central Structure Plan Area [**5.3.1.2** - 1 page]
3. Epping Central Draft Structure Plan [**5.3.1.3** - 80 pages]
4. Summary of Community Engagement Activities - Stage 2 [**5.3.1.4** - 1 page]
5. Future Directions Paper - Summary of Feedback [**5.3.1.5** - 4 pages]

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to inform Council that a ‘refreshed’ Epping Central Structure Plan (the Structure Plan) has now been prepared. It is recommended that Council endorse the draft Epping Central Structure Plan for the purposes of community consultation and engagement, which is to be conducted between 24 October to 4 December 2022.

**Brief Overview**

The Epping Central Structure Plan review project seeks to review and update the existing Epping Central Structure Plan 2011 to better align with current policy and respond to emerging issues and opportunities. Key aims of the project are to increase local employment, provide more diverse housing and create a more vibrant activity centre consistent with Whittlesea 2040.

Epping Central is a designated Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) and a key location for employment, housing and higher order health, retail and education services within the City of Whittlesea (refer to Attachment 1 for location and Attachment 2 for area).

The project is identified as an action in Council's Community Plan for 2020/21 and 2022/23. This multi-year project is being completed in four stages.

The Epping Central Structure Plan review project commenced in late 2018 with Stage 1 comprising the background review of existing plans and previous engagement together with the development of Background Issues and Analysis Reports on a range of matters including urban design, economics, gender equity and community needs. Stage 2 resulted in the development of a ‘Future Directions Paper’ which presented potential directions for the activity centre and for each of its specific precincts, to help achieve a cohesive vision, underpinned by strong urban design and planning principles. Community consultation on the Future Directions Paper was conducted between 15 June 2020 and 17 October 2020.

Since then, officers have been preparing a refreshed Structure Plan document (refer to Attachment 3). The updated document has been informed by the outcomes of the first two stages including the community consultation. The Structure Plan provides a strategic planning land use and policy framework for the future growth and development of the activity centre in accordance with the vision for the Centre.

It is proposed to place the draft Epping Central Structure Plan on public exhibition for a period of six (6) weeks between 24 October and 4 December 2022. It is envisaged that consideration of the finalised Epping Central Structure Plan together with the feedback received will be considered by Council in March/April 2023.

The Structure Plan will ultimately be given effect in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme as part of the final stage of the project, through a subsequent planning scheme amendment process. This will include a review of the existing planning controls relating to the Structure Plan area including Schedule 1 to the Activity Centre Zone – Epping Central Metropolitan Activity Centre (ACZ1).

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

1. **Endorse the draft Epping Central Structure Plan at Attachment 3, for the purposes of community and stakeholder engagement between 24 October and 4 December 2022.**
2. **Note that the outcomes of the community and stakeholder engagement will be reported back to Council as part of the proposed finalisation of the plan by mid 2023.**

**Key Information**

**Background**

Epping Central is the City of Whittlesea’s largest Activity Centre. It is a key location for employment, housing and higher order health, retail and education services including the Northern Hospital, Pacific Epping Shopping Centre and Melbourne Polytechnic (refer to Attachment 1 for local context).

Epping Central is strategically placed between the City of Whittlesea’s southern established suburbs of Thomastown, Lalor, Bundoora, and Mill Park, and the growth areas corridor to the north comprising the suburbs of Epping North, Wollert and Donnybrook.

Epping Central is identified as a MAC by the State Government’s Metroplitan Planning Strategy, *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. MAC’s are designated as an important focus for business, housing and a broad range of services and facilities that are well serviced by public transport. They also provide communities with good access to a range of major retail, community, government, entertainment, cultural and transport services.

Epping Central is recognised for its role in supporting Melbourne’s continued urban growth and development. The Northern Hospital is identified as a Health Precinct in *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050,* and it is anticipated that as part of future planning for State significant health precincts that the specialised functions will be reinforced and future opportunities provided for ancillary health and education services, retail, commercial and accommodation uses.

The preparation of Structure Plans for Activity Centres is a key priority of the previous and current metropolitan planning strategies for managing growth and change in metropolitan Melbourne. Plans for Metropolitan Activity Centres need to accommodate significant growth and infrastructure, while increasing amenity and connectivity for a regional catchment.

The *Epping Central Structure Plan* was adopted in 2011, following a comprehensive Structure Plan preparation process conducted over five years including extensive background analysis and community consultation. The Structure Plan sets out the land use and development vision for Epping Central (comprising approximately 350 hectares of land).

The Structure Plan was given effect through the preparation and subsequent adoption of Amendment C130 to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (gazetted 19 March 2015), which among other things introduced the Activity Centre Zone and associated Schedule 1 – Epping Central Metropolitan Activity Centre (ACZ1) together with the application of the Parking Overlay, Development Contributions Overlay, Environmental Audit Overlay and Special Building Overlay.

A review of the Structure Plan has commenced as part of Council’s commitment to review all Strategic Plans on a regular basis to ensure they remain up to date, consistent with current policy and responsive to emerging trends and issues.

Since its adoption there have been a number of significant land use and transport infrastructure changes in the Epping Central precinct, which have not only strengthened its role as a MAC, but also provide new opportunities to build on these strengths and support future investment in the centre. These include:

* the expansion of the Northern Hospital,
* provision of the Epping Community Services Hub in High Street,
* planning for the development of the Epping Renewal Site together with approval for Stage 1 of the development incorporating a private hospital and a multi-storey affordable housing complex,
* development of the Costco Supermarket and Quest Serviced Apartments,
* expansion of the Pacific Epping Shopping Centre,
* development of a new Epping Train Station and extension of the train line to Mernda, and
* connection of Deveny Road between High Street and Edgars Road.

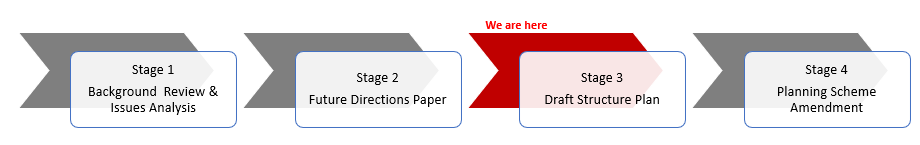
The review of the Epping Central Structure Plan also provides the opportunity to align the Structure Plan with the goals of Whittlesea 2040: A place for all.

**Epping Central Structure Plan Review**

The Epping Central Structure Plan was initially prepared in accordance with State government guidelines to provide a framework for the future development of Epping Central (refer to Attachment 2 Structure Plan area). The plan was originally adopted by Council in 2011. The Epping Central Structure Plan review project has the key aim of reviewing and updating the Structure Plan and associated planning controls.

The Epping Central Structure Plan review project is being undertaken across four stages, with each stage involving consultation with the community (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Epping Central Structure Plan Project Plan



Stages 1 and 2 of the project have now been completed.

Stage 1 comprised the Background Review and Issues Analysis and including:

* A review of existing strategic plans and previous community engagements undertaken through the preparation of other Council strategic plans including Whittlesea 2040.
* Preparation of a Background Issues Paper together with more detailed analysis reports on key issues including urban design, planning, economics, gender equity and community and infrastructure needs.

The key findings from this work noted that:

* The principles of the structure plan are sound and the vision for a higher density mixed use precinct is appropriate, however the market for higher density residential housing is still emerging.
* There are challenges in achieving the vision e.g. current market demand, existing conditions and amenity of the public realm as well as access to open space and community infrastructure, land ownership and development contributions.
* There is a need for greater urban design guidance and consistency across the centre’s precincts.
* There is a need to refocus the ‘heart’ of the centre around the existing anchors.

Stage 2 comprised the development of a Future Directions Paper and associated community consultation and engagement. The Future Directions Paper provided:

* A contextual overview of Epping Central, the Epping Central Structure Plan and proposed review project.
* An overview of the key findings from Stage 1 and previous community consultation.
* A summary of key projects and changes that have occurred in Epping Central since the plan was finalised in 2011 and those which are projected to occur in the next 20 years.
* A summary of the key issues identified in the background review.
* Lastly a series of Activity Centre wide and Precinct specific key directions were developed to address key strategic issues and to guide the development of the Epping Structure Plan for the purposes of consultation.

Community consultation and engagement on the Future Directions Paper was conducted between 15 June 2020 and 17 October 2020 (refer to the Community Consultation Section for further detail on the consultation undertaken). Members of the community from all age groups, genders, backgrounds and abilities provided feedback. Equal numbers of female and male community members contributed, and a quarter of all respondents lived in Epping. In summary over 3000 businesses and households in Epping were notified about the Future Directions Paper. There were 387 website visits and 137 contributions were received in response to the Future Directions Paper as part of the community consultation and engagement process.

The outcomes of that consultation have informed the development of an updated draft Epping Central Structure Plan. The preparation of a draft Structure Plan for the purposes of further community engagement forms Stage 3 of the project.

Preparation of a planning scheme amendment to give effect to the updated Structure Plan is identified as Stage 4 of the project and is subject to endorsement of the final Structure Plan by Council. It is anticipated that the amendment will incorporate a review and update of the Activity Centre Zone Schedule 1 and other relates policies and controls within the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

**Draft Epping Central Structure Plan**

As mentioned previously, the background review and issues analysis concluded that the overarching principles of the structure plan are sound. There are, however, some challenges to achieving the broader vision. Whilst some challenges, more particularly market demand, cannot be specifically addressed by the Structure Plan, the review project has provided the opportunity to update the Structure Plan to:

* update and refine the vision to provide a greater focus on the attributes and opportunities of Epping Central including the potential for increased health services and food innovation, improved public and sustainable transport,
* recognise the opportunities created by integrating the Epping Renewal Site Precinct into the broader activity centre,
* respond to significant land use and development changes within the area which has evolved the urban fabric and further strengthened its role as a MAC,
* incorporate additional urban design guidance to facilitate high quality built form outcomes that also provides an attractive interface to the public realm,
* address policy gaps within the planning framework,
* incorporate changes/opportunities resulting from other key Council policy and plans developed subsequent to the original Structure Plan,
* review opportunities to provide for a diverse range of housing within the Structure Plan area,
* review the boundaries of individual precincts to ensure that an integrated land use and development outcome is achieved that supports the vision for Epping Central and to minimise land use conflicts between different precincts; and
* review the Structure Plan boundary.

It is significant to note that the overarching principles of the draft Structure Plan are still considered sound and the review does not propose any significant changes to the planning policy framework or the primary vison for the activity centre as a high-density mixed-use precinct (incorporating both residential and employment activities).

In addition to reviewing the planning framework contained within the Structure Plan, consideration has been given to:

* Significant refinement of the Structure Plan document to make it clearer.
* Removal of repetition / matters already covered in the Planning Scheme e.g. Ecological Sustainable Development, signage.
* Significantly condensing the actions by limiting these to a small number of future strategic work opportunities (noting that further work may also be informed by other Council strategies).
* Revising mapping to take into consideration key land use and development changes and key actions arising from new plans/strategies.

The following section highlights some of the key changes incorporated in the draft Structure Plan:

*Epping Central Vision*

As noted above, the vision has been expanded to build on the existing attributes including its regional significance as a health precinct, anchored by the Northern hospital. This expanding medical precinct, which includes a new private hospital and access to complementary, allied and community services, represents a significant opportunity to build on Epping Central’s role as a major medical hub in Melbourne’s northern suburbs.

There has been significant State Government investment in the recent expansion of the Northern Hospital, further demonstrating the Government’s commitment to Epping Central as a health hub. Opportunity exists on adjoining sites and in surrounding employment areas to further expand investment in health and community related services and infrastructure to support the health needs of this diverse community.

Epping Central’s proximity to the Melbourne Markets and proposed Melbourne Food Innovation and Expo Hub (MFIX) together with its proximity to the Hume Freeway, provides significant leverage to expand its role as a state significant food hub.

Further emphasis has been placed on supporting a range of retail, commercial and community experiences that will create a vibrant urban environment during the day and night, contributes to a safer environment and enhances the local economy.

Prioritising active travel and delivery of improved public transport, including planning for the future delivery of the Wollert Rail Corridor, will better connect people to community facilities, services, the local economy and each other.

The review of the Structure Plan has provided the opportunity to align the Structure Plan with the goals of Whittlesea 2040 to deliver on the following five key themes:

* Urban Living – Diverse, affordable and attractive housing
* Movement and Transport – Accessible, safe and sustainable transport
* Employment and Investment – Thriving and resilient local businesses and jobs
* Community Facilities and Services – Community facilities that build and strengthen communities
* Public Realm, Design and Natural Environment – Connected and valued streetscapes, open space and creek networks

*Key Themes*

A key outcome of the review has been to incorporate new ‘development principles and guidelines’ within each of the key themes to facilitate high-quality built form and urban design outcomes and which contributes to the preferred character of the area. More targeted guidelines have been prepared to direct development in key priority areas including the proposed Epping Central train station, the Wollert rail corridor and to Cooper and High Streets to facilitate an appropriate interface along these streetscapes.

As noted previously, no significant changes are proposed to the broad objectives and strategies contained within each of the five key themes (as detailed above), however there has been significant refinement of the Structure Plan with a view to removing repetition and matters already addressed within the planning scheme such as matters relating to ecologically sustainable development and signage. Specific changes addressed as part of the updated Structure Plan include:

* Review of the opportunities for the provision of higher-density and diverse housing to encourage development in particular precincts and strategic development sites in proximity to the Epping Station and close to other services and facilities;
* Inclusion of a new strategy that supports and promotes consolidation of land into larger parcels which provides the opportunity to undertake further work to determine appropriate threshold sizes to facilitate higher density development;
* New strategies relating to interim use and/or development to ensure the future development potential of sites is not compromised and to ensure that interim development does not undermine the vision for individual precincts;
* Identifying key pedestrian movement corridors and incorporating key urban design and development outcomes for these corridors;
* In response to preliminary discussions with QIC (Pacific Epping Shopping Centre), an alternative rail alignment and location for the station is shown on the plans to facilitate further discussions particularly with the Department of Transport (DoT) as part of the engagement process;
* Opportunities identified for new Urban Squares and open spaces including on Council owned land;
* Proposed neighbourhood park in Coulstock Street road reserve has been removed, noting that further investigation of the future of the western end is subject to further detailed review; and
* Identification of future community hub/s including nomination of potential services and locations. It is noted that these facilities will be subject to further detailed analysis and feasibility and may involve partnering with key private land holders to determine appropriate location(s) for these facilities.

*Precincts*

Various changes are proposed to both the status of individual precincts and to precinct boundaries as part of the draft Structure Plan. Key changes are outlined below.

* Epping Renewal Site (Precinct 7)

Of note is the inclusion of the former Epping waste disposal site known as ‘Epping Renewal’ within the Structure Plan boundary. The 50 hectare site located on the western edge of the Metropolitan Activity Centre provides a significant redevelopment opportunity for further residential, commercial, health and limited retail uses in proximity to the MAC. The first stage of the development, including provision of a private hospital and multi-storey housing development is currently under construction. Whilst the ‘Epping Renewal’ site will make a significant contribution to the provision of a diversity of housing and employment opportunities within Epping Central, the site has been designated as a contributory precinct, on the basis that significant work has previously been undertaken to apply site specific controls to guide the future use and development of the site, including rezoning of the land and more recently the preparation of a Development Plan for the site.

* Dalton Road Neighbourhood (Precinct 8) and Childs Road Employment (Precinct 9)

These precincts are to be retained within the Structure Plan boundary but have also been designated as contributory precincts on the basis that these areas are distanced from the activity centre core and separated by the rail corridor. In addition, these areas are expected to experience only low to moderate levels of change over the life of the plan, with parts of the Dalton Road Neighbourhood comprising a curvilinear road network (I.e. not grid based) comprising many court bowls which is not conducive to achieving the vision for the Epping Central precinct.

It is proposed that consideration be given to rezoning these two precincts from the Activity Centre Zone (ACZ1) to an appropriate residential or commercial zone respectively, which will ensure that development within these precincts has regard to the broader vision for Epping Central, whilst being considered at a more localised level.

* Regeneration (Precinct 5)

A realignment of the boundary of this precinct is proposed as part of the updated draft Structure Plan. Land on the western side of Miller Street (previously included in the Regeneration Precinct) has been incorporated within Precinct 6 Employment Precinct. Land fronting Duffey Street between Houston Street and Memorial Avenue has also been included within Precinct 5 (Previously Precinct 2: High Street North). Some additional parcels located east of Duffy Street between Wedge and Coulstock Streets have also been included in the Regeneration Precinct.

The preferred character of Precinct 5 is a high change, mixed use precinct that provides a strong transition between employment uses (including light industry) to the west and residential uses to the north and east. Precinct 5 has an employment focus, although residential use is permitted as part of mixed use developments and improved amenity and landscaping within this precinct is a desirable outcome. Inclusion of land generally west of Miller Street within the employment precinct seeks to provide for a more orderly planning outcome and clear demarcation between the employment area (where no residential use is permitted) and the transition area.

* Regional Demand (Precinct 4)

The Structure Plan designates this precinct (comprising the key anchors including Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, Epping Homemakers Centre, Northern Hospital) as the ‘activity heart’ of Epping Central, with Precinct 1 High Street Village refocused as the ‘neighbourhood heart’ centred around the more traditional retail strip along High Street.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

The Epping Central Structure Plan Review is being undertaken across several stages, with each stage involving consultation with the community and key stakeholders. The draft Structure Plan document has been prepared following extensive engagement with the community.

Stage 1 of the project, being the background review and issues analysis, also included a review of previous community engagements undertaken through the initial preparation of the original Structure Plan and of other Council strategic plans including Whittlesea 2040, which were used to develop the Future Directions Paper.

**Future Directions Paper**

Community engagement on the Future Directions Paper (Stage 2) was undertaken between 15 June 2020 and 17 October 2020. An initial six week community engagement period was subsequently extended as a result of the pandemic, which resulted community engagement being largely restricted to virtual on-line activities due to the Covid19 pandemic.

A range of communication and engagement activities were undertaken to inform, consult and involve participants across the community on the proposed key directions and to enable the community to share their lived experiences and ideas for Epping Central. Broad promotion of the community engagement occurred through Council’s communication channels and community networks. A summary of the activities undertaken is included in Attachment 4.

Members of the community from all age groups, genders, backgrounds and abilities provided feedback during community consultation. The online engagement platform, Social Pin Point collected information on the residing suburb, age and gender identification of each respondent.

Feedback was structured around thirteen broad Activity Centre wide Key Directions encompassing matters relating to the overarching Vision for Epping Central and key themes including housing, employment and business, transport and movement, streetscapes, open space and public realm and services and facilities.

The proposed Key Directions for the broader Epping Central Activity Centre were largely supported by the respondents, with the exception of Direction 1 which received a more varied response (17% Agree, 33% Neutral and 50% Strongly Disagree/Disagree). This direction was to *‘refine the vision for Epping Central to focus on its unique attributes, opportunities and strengths.’ A*s noted above 50% of respondents were not supportive of this direction, particularly as it related to refocusing the ‘heart’ of Epping Central from High Street Village Precinct to the Regional Demand Precinct.

This direction responded to recommendations provided by the independent Planning Panel for C130 and recognises the key anchors of the activity located in the Regional Demand Precinct. In making this change, it is not intended to downgrade the importance of High Street Village, which has an important role in supporting the local neighbourhood, but rather to recognise the significance of the Regional Demand Precinct and in particular the retail offering and development potential of Pacific Epping in offering the greatest potential to become a town centre within Epping Central.

In considering the community responses, Officers have emphasised the important role of High Street Village in the updated Structure Plan which incorporates the core residential neighbourhood, as a local neighbourhood centre to the surrounding residents. This Precinct is proposed to be refocused as the ‘neighbourhood heart’ and the Regional Demand Precinct as the ‘activity heart’ reflecting the key anchors located in this precinct including the Northern Hospital, Pacific Epping, Epping Homemakers Centre and Costco. In planning for a MAC consideration has also been given to the practicality of achieving the planning vision for Epping Central. Feedback will be invited in respect to the amended vision as part of the next round of consultation.

There were generally high levels of support for the precinct specific Directions with the exception of Precinct Direction 4 as it relates to the Dalton Road Precinct and Precinct Direction 5 as it relates to the Childs Road Precinct, which proposed to remove these precincts from the Structure Plan and to rezone them to an appropriate residential or commercial zone, respectively. As these areas are expected to experience only low to moderate levels of change over the life to the plan together with their physical separation from the core activity area, as part of the draft Structure Plan it is proposed to retain these two precincts within the Structure Plan boundary but designate them as ‘contributory’ precincts. It is also proposed to rezone the precincts to an appropriate zone. This seeks to ensure that land use and development within these areas continues to contribute to and is supported by the shared vision for Epping Central whilst change is considered at a more localised level.

In addition to feedback on the proposed key directions, the community were asked broad questions designed to capture lived experiences and identify places that are valued within Epping Central and opportunities for improvement. The following is a summary of key issues identified for improvement through the consultation process.

* Walking and cycling throughout Epping Central should be prioritised and the number of pedestrian crossings and cycle paths should be increased.
* Create a village atmosphere around High Street Village shops and encourage more food-based businesses.
* Encourage student housing and alternative housing models that support local jobs, education facilities and a sense of community.
* Desire for better buildings and an increase in residential development particularly around High Street.
* Prioritise safety, improve lighting and increase landscaping particularly along Darebin Creek
* An increase of trees in parks and open spaces and along the Darebin Creek.
* Impacts on traffic and pedestrian safety are a concern.
* Improvements are needed for public transport, walking and cycling connections.

Submissions were also received from a number of key stakeholders including the Darebin Creek Management Committee, Department of Transport and the Environmental Protection Authority. Key aspects of these submissions have been incorporated into the draft Structure Plan including reference to the Darebin Creek Shared Trail in the transport section of the Structure Plan; planning to support increased residential density in proximity to the future station at Pacific Epping (as part of the Wollert Rail project); recognising the need to support and advocate for major road projects and upgrades to assist with reducing traffic movement and congestion through Epping Central.

A summary of the key findings from the community engagement for the Future Directions Paper have been made available on Council’s engagement platform and are included as Attachment 5.

**Stage 3 – Proposed Community Engagement - Draft Epping Central Structure Plan**

It is proposed to place the draft Epping Central Structure Plan on public exhibition for a period of 6 weeks between 24 October and 4 December 2022.

Stage 3 of the community engagement to seek feedback on the draft Structure Plan will include a variety engagement activities. Whilst the project will have an online presence through Council’s on-line platforms, active participation is largely intended to be conducted face-to-face, including targeted meetings/workshops with key stakeholders; pop-up stalls at Pacific Epping, on High Street in proximity to the Epping Services Hub, and Epping Train Station, and presenting to the Business Advisory Panel.

Other activities include direct notice to residential and business owners/occupiers and targeted notice to agencies, community groups, educational facilities and agencies previously notified as part of the stage 2 engagement. A call for feedback and input will also be made through Council’s communication channels.

In recognition of the limitations of the Stage 2 community engagement due to restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic, an emphasis has been placed on ensuring a range of face-to-face activities as part of this stage of the engagement.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Liveable neighbourhoods**

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

**Strong local economy**

Our City is a smart choice for innovation, business growth and industry as well as supporting local businesses to be successful, enabling opportunities for local work and education

The draft Epping Central Structure Plan aligns with the goals of Whittlesea 2040 with a strong focus on economic investment, job creation, public realm improvement and residential growth to support and facilitate the future vision of Epping Central as an attractive, welcoming and sustainable urban centre.

This report implements the 2022/23 Community Plan action to:

*Progress planning and development of key activity centres and employment precincts*  *including Cloverton Metropolitan Activity Centre and the Plenty Valley and Epping*  *Central structure plans.*

Epping Central is identified as a priority area for health, education, employment and transport related investment. It will offer a range of civic, retail, commercial and community services and facilities supporting its designation as a MAC and build on the regional importance of the health precinct anchored by the Northern Hospital.

The plan focusses on improvements to the public realm and open space; high quality and sustainable built form; improved pedestrian connections and movement; and a diversity of housing opportunities to create an interesting and exciting neighbourhood where people want to live, work, play and visit.

The draft Structure Plan sets out a policy, development and implementation framework for the future development of Epping Central providing an integrated and strategic vision to guide the growth and development of the centre. The successful delivery of the Structure Plan will require support from all levels of government and collaboration across the whole organisation as part of the integrated approach to Council action planning.

**Considerations**

**Planning Assessment**

The draft Epping Central Structure Plan has been prepared with consideration of the following policies and guidelines:

* Planning Practice Note 58: Structure Planning for Activity Centres
* State Government document- ‘Activity Centres Toolkit: Making It Happen ‘
* Urban Design Guidelines of Victoria

The Structure Plan implements the following planning strategies and policies:

* Plan Melbourne, 2017-2050 which identifies Epping as a Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC).
* Councils Municipal Planning Strategy including Clause 02.03-1 Settlement

*Council aims to support activity centres by:*

*Facilitating the development of Epping Central as a Metropolitan Activity Centre.*

* Victorian Planning Provisions including Clause 1.03-1R: Activity centres - Metropolitan Melbourne

*Support the development and growth of Metropolitan Activity Centres by ensuring*  *they:*

* *Are able to accommodate significant growth for a broad range of land uses.*
* *Are supported with appropriate infrastructure.*
* *Are hubs for public transport services.*
* *Offer good connectivity for a regional catchment.*
* *Provide high levels of amenity.*

**Implementation**

The draft Structure Plan has been informed by the outcomes of the stage 2 community engagement findings.

Delivery of the vision for Epping Central over the short, medium and long term will require coordinated action between Council, the State Government, the local community, businesses and landowners. Preparation of a planning scheme amendment to give effect to the updated Structure Plan is identified as Stage 4 of the project.

The Structure Plan also identifies some additional opportunities for further strategic work to implement key aspects of the Structure Plan, although it is not intended to be an exhaustive list of actions. It is intended that these future strategic work opportunities will be incorporated within Council’s action planning as part of its integrated planning process having regard to budget implications and Council resourcing.

**Financial Implications**

Costs associated with the community consultation and finalisation of the Structure Plan are included in the current budget.

A high priority outcome of the Structure Plan will be the preparation of a planning scheme amendment to review the existing Activity Centre Zone (ACZ1) to give effect to the updated Structure Plan. It is anticipated that the planning scheme amendments and some of the actions will be implemented within existing resources. Where there is a need for extra resourcing, this will be considered as part of the annual budget process, and where possible via external government grant funding and exploration of potential partnership opportunities with government agencies and key stakeholders.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

A detailed engagement plan has been prepared in consultation with the Communications and Engagement Teams. It is noted that as part of the Stage 2 community consultation process the engagement period was extended to enable interested community members to respond to the consultation with much of the engagement activities required to be undertaken online. As part of the proposed community engagement activities proposed for the draft Structure Plan it is proposed to undertake direct notice of land owners and occupiers within the structure plan boundary and a variety of face-to-face activities including pop-up sessions in several locations with a view to capture the views of a broad range of people who live, work and visit Epping Central.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

Businesses, residents and other stakeholders including key landowners, community groups, schools and government agencies will be informed about the Structure Plan and encouraged to have their say on the draft Structure Plan via a mix of Council’s communications channels and direct contact.

**Critical Dates**

Updating the Epping Central Structure Plan is a 2021/22 and 2022/23 Community Plan Action item. The 2022/23 action is to progress the project and finalise a draft Of the Epping Central Structure Plan for community consultation. The draft Structure Plan has now been finalised and the engagement period is proposed to commence on 24 October and conclude on 4 December. It is expected that a report on the outcomes of the community consultation will be prepared in early 2023.

**Next Steps**

Following completion of the Stage 3 engagement it is anticipated a final version of the Epping Central Structure Plan with officer recommendations will be presented to Council for consideration by mid 2023.

If the final Structure Plan is approved by Council, it is anticipated that Council officers will commence Stage 4 of the review being the preparation of a planning scheme amendment to give effect to the Structure Plan. It is noted that further community consultation will be undertaken via statutory public exhibition as part of this process.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The Epping Central Structure Plan review project updates the existing Epping Central Structure Plan 2011 to better align with current policy and respond to emerging issues and opportunities.

Whilst the broad vision and principles of the current Structure Plan continue to be relevant, the review has also provided the opportunity to expand on the vision for Epping Central to focus on its unique attributes, strengths and opportunities. The review has provided the opportunity to incorporate the Epping Renewal Site within the Structure Plan boundaries having regard to the significant redevelopment opportunity it presents to increasing employment and residential opportunities on the site in proximity to the MAC. Other changes include some alterations to the boundaries and status of individual precincts, introduction of development principles and guidelines to ensure high quality built form and design outcomes, and identifying new open space, urban plaza and community facility opportunities.

It is recommended that Council endorse the draft Epping Central Structure Plan for the final stage of community and stakeholder engagement commencing 24 October and concluding on 4 December 2022.

A report considering the outcomes of the community and stakeholder engagement and presenting the final Structure Plan document will be presented to Council inMarch/April 2023.

**5.4 Sustainable Environment**

Nil reports

**5.5 High Performing Organisation**

5.5.1 Unconfirmed Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee Meeting

**5.5.1 Unconfirmed Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee Meetings**

**Responsible Officer** Executive Manager Governance and Strategy

**Author** Nicole North-Vanner, Internal Assurance and Governance Advisor

**Attachments**

1. Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 1 September 2022 - Minutes [**5.5.1.1** - 16 pages]
2. Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 12 September 2022 - Minutes [**5.5.1.2** - 33 pages]

**Purpose**

To enable Council to have oversight and understanding of the Audit and Risk Committee operations and as required under Council’s Audit and Risk Committee Charter, this report presents the unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meetings held on 1 and 12 September 2022.

**Brief Overview**

The minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee meetings held on 1 and 12 September 2022, are provided to inform Council of the Committee’s discussions and resolutions.

**Recommendation**

**That Council note the unconfirmed minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meetings held on 1 and 12 September 2022.**

**Key Information**

The Audit and Risk Committee is an independent advisory Council committee, and its role is to report to Council and provide advice and recommendations. The Committee acts in this capacity by monitoring, reviewing and advising on issues within their scope of responsibility and assisting Council’s governance obligations.

Council is provided with the minutes of the meetings to inform it of Committee discussions and resolutions.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**High performing organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, make decision in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community

The Audit and Risk Committee responsibilities are a demonstration of Council’s commitment to good governance. The Committee provides advice to Council on the financial and non-financial reporting processes, internal controls, the audit process, risk management and compliance with legislation and regulations.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Governance - Ineffective governance of Council’s operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach*

The Audit and Risk Committee assists Council to monitor governance, risk and compliance by making recommendations to Council.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The Audit and Risk Committee met on 1 and 12 September 2022. The unconfirmed minutes of that meeting are attached to this report for noting by Council to inform it of Committee resolutions and discussions.

5.5.2 2021-2022 Annual Report

**5.5.2 2021-2022 Annual Report**

**Responsible Officer** Chair of Council

**Author** Janine Morgan, Executive Manager Public Affairs

**Attachments**

1. City of Whittlesea Annual Report 2021-2022 FINAL [**5.5.2.1** - 204 pages]

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to present the City of Whittlesea Annual Report 2021-22 for endorsement.

**Brief Overview**

The 2021-22 Annual Report has been developed to capture and highlight Council’s achievements in the 2021-22 financial year and report against Council’s progress towards achieving the goals in the Community Plan.

The theme of the report this year is ‘Stronger Together’, which reflects Council’s collaboration and partnerships with community, government, industry and business. This collaborative approach was particularly evident throughout the height of the pandemic, as Council worked together with the community, health providers, businesses, other service providers and other levels of government to support the City of Whittlesea community.

The 2021-22 Annual Report includes the following:

* Highlights of the year
* Performance measures for each of Council’s five goal areas
* Financial summary

**Recommendation**

**THAT Council:**

1. **Endorse the 2021-22 Annual Report in accordance with section 98 of the *Local Government Act 2020.***
2. **Write to the Minister for Local Government, Local Government Victoria and all local members of parliament to advise of highlights of the Council over the past twelve months and provide a copy of the Annual Report.**

**Key Information**

The 2021-22 Annual Report has been developed to capture and highlight Council’s achievements in the 2021-22 financial year and report against the progress towards achieving the goals in Council’s Community Plan.

The theme of the report this year is ‘Stronger Together’, which reflects Council’s collaboration and partnerships with community, government, industry and business. This collaborative approach was particularly evident throughout the height of the pandemic, as Council worked together with the community, health providers, businesses, other service providers and other levels of government to support the City of Whittlesea community.

The Annual Report also features stories and quotes from the community, highlighting programs, achievements and partnerships that support the work Council does.

Highlights of the 2021-22 financial year include the following key achievements:

**COVID-19 response**

* Adapting services, programs and support to meet the changing needs of the community.
* Activation of the Emergency Management Team, which included 137 staff from 23 different departments.
* Partnered with Northern Health to run mass vaccination centres from Council facilities.
* Conducted close to 8,000 business support visits between August and October 2021 to help ensure businesses remained compliant to COVID-19 restrictions and provide information and support as required.
* Implementation of COVID-19 recovery initiatives from Council’s $2 million COVID Recovery Fund.

**Connected Community**

* Completed a feasibility study into the delivery of an Aboriginal Gathering Place to increase connections to culture, heritage, land and healing.
* Adoption of the new Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 following extensive consultation and active engagement with key stakeholders that captured more than 3,000 pieces of feedback.
* In partnership with LaTrobe Business School, The Public Value School and the Victorian Local Governance Association, delivered the first intake of the Community Leadership Program.
* Council’s Youth Services team gained Rainbow Tick accreditation, demonstrating Council’s commitment to creating socially cohesive communities and supporting and celebrating diversity in the City of Whittlesea.
* Strong advocacy for key priorities including the delivery of a Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre in Mernda to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for the whole municipality, an Aboriginal Gathering Place and improvements to public transport.

**Liveable neighbourhoods**

* Delivered a $54 million capital works program, which included more than 143 projects to build and upgrade community centres, sporting fields, playgrounds, roads, bike paths and footpaths across our municipality.
* Implementation of masterplan actions for major parks and reserves including Whittlesea Public Gardens in Lalor.
* Advocated to the Federal Government for investment in the E6 Freeway, Bridge Inn Road, Craigieburn Road East, Epping Road, Findon Road and Donnybrook Road.

**Strong Local Economy**

* Roll-out of the *It’s All Here* campaign and incentives program to support local businesses following the effects of COVID-19 lockdowns.
* Adopted the Investment Attraction Plan 2021-2026 and Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026 to build and support a strong and innovative local economy.
* Launched the City of Whittlesea Business Network and established the Business Advisory Panel.
* Continued advocacy for strategic projects to foster a strong local economy including the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal which resulted in the Federal Government announcing a $1.62 billion investment into the project, which is expected to draw more than 20,000 jobs and further investment into the region.

**Sustainable Environment**

* Opened the Mernda Repair Café, in partnership with Mernda Community House and Whittlesea Community Connections.
* Established a partnership with the Wurundjeri Woiwurring Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Council’s Narrap Rangers unit to share knowledge about traditional practises.
* Trialled the Zero Waste Rebates program, offering residents rebates on the purchase price of reusable nappies, reusable sanitary products or composting materials.
* Continued to implement Council’s Greening Whittlesea Strategy actions including planting more than 10,000 trees and 42,000 new shrubs throughout parks and open spaces.
* Endorsed the draft Green Wedge Management Plan 2022-2032 and conducted community consultation.

**High Performing Organisation**

* Adopted the Community Plan 2021-2025, following extensive community consultation. The plan builds on and re-endorses the long-term community vision – *Whittlesea 2040, a place for all* and incorporates various other Council plans including the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, Disability Action Plan and Pandemic Recovery Plan actions into the one overarching document.
* Adoption of the 2021-31 Long Term Financial Plan, the 2022-23 Budget and the Asset Plan to strategically manage Council’s portfolio of assets over the next ten years.
* Strengthened community engagement opportunities, including the introduction of monthly Coffee with Council and regular community engagement pop-ups across the municipality, as well as the enhancements to Council’s digital engagement platform – Engage Whittlesea.
* Endorsed a new Complaints Policy and developed the Workforce Plan 2021-2025 and Gender Equity Action Plan 2021-2025.
* Delivered improvements to Council’s customer support channels and implemented customer feedback software through the Customer First program.

**Events**

* Delivered a number of virtual events including Super Kids Sunday and Bringing Up Kids Expo, which included fun and engaging online content, workshops and live-streamed performances.
* Hosted a Community Carols event, which was delivered both in person and live-streamed.
* Ran a successful Community Festival, which was held over two days, attracting thousands of people and featured live music, creative workshops, market stalls and other family friendly activities.
* Delivered the Summer Series program, hosting live music events in various parks and reserves across the City of Whittlesea.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

The 2021-22 Annual Report was developed with the input of departments from across the organisation to capture the relevant achievements of the 2021-22 financial year and meet Council’s legislative requirements.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**High performing organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

No implications

**Social, Cultural and Health**

No implications

**Economic**

No implications

**Financial Implications**

The cost is included in the current budget.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Governance - Ineffective governance of Council’s operations and activities resulting in either a legislative or policy breach*

Section 98 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, requires Councils to prepare an Annual Report in respect of each financial year. The 2021-22 Annual Report must be presented to a Council Meeting by 31 October 2022.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

Following endorsement of the 2021-22 Annual Report, a media release will be developed and issued to local media and uploaded to Council’s website.

**Critical Dates**

In accordance with Section 98 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the 2021-22 Annual Report must be presented to a Council meeting by 31 October 2022.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The City of Whittlesea 2021-22 Annual Report is an integral part of Council’s commitment to open and accountable governance. It provides the community with an overview of Council’s financial and operational performance and achievements during 2021-22 in delivering against Council’s priorities set out in the 2021-25 Community Plan and 2021-22 Annual Budget.

5.5.3 Joint Letter - Removal of Angophora Trees - University Hill, Bundoora

**5.5.3 Joint Letter - Removal of Angophora Trees - University Hill, Bundoora**

**Responsible Officer** Director Infrastructure & Environment

**Author** Will Jones, Senior Arborist Planning and Risk  
 Mark Corea, Unit Manager Parks & City Forest Management

**In Attendance** Will Jones, Senior Arborist Planning and Risk

**Attachments**

1. Tree Assets - Overhead Imagery [**5.5.3.1** - 1 page]
2. Independent Tree Health, Condition & Valuation Report [**5.5.3.2** - 32 pages]

**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to outline Council’s response to a joint letter received from five residents, requesting Council replace the “Eucalyptus” trees from a section of Queens Gardens in Bundoora.

**Brief Overview**

A joint letter was received by Council on 15 July (dated 26 May) 2022 from five residents requesting Council replace the "Eucalyptus" trees in the nature strip, in a section of Queens Gardens, Bundoora. The trees concerned are *Angophora costata,* and shall be referred to as such for the remainder of this report.

The signatories of the joint letter stated that the trees were “interfering with the use and enjoyment” of their properties. This was further defined as concerns relating to;

* Damage to the nature-strip as a result of leaf litter and gumnuts that fall to the ground,
* Safety concerns relating to the gumnuts, specifically children falling or choking on the debris,
* Damage to private property as a result of the falling debris, particularly a fishpond and gutters,
* Concerns relating to a perceived heightened fire hazard risk relating to the trees.

**Recommendation**

**In response to the joint letter received from five residents on 15 July 2022, requesting Council replace the *Angophora costata* in Queens Gardens, Bundoora, THAT Council resolve:**

1. **That Council Officers advise the signatories of the Joint Letter that the trees will be retained and continue to be monitored and maintained as part of Council’s biennial inspection program and street sweeping program.**
2. **That** **as a result of the onsite meeting comprising of two signatories, Unit Manager Parks & City Forest Management, Manager Maintenance & Operations and Senior Arborist – Planning and Risk, two trees will be pruned back from the resident's property line. Works will be completed prior to the end of the calendar year.**

**Key Information**

The joint letter submitted by residents relates to the north-western end of Queens Gardens, Bundoora. This section of Queens Gardens is planted with mature *Angophora costata* (Smooth-barked Apple Myrtle). The trees are approximately 12 years old and were planted as part of the residential development.

The concerns raised by the signatories of the joint letter were primarily to do with the effect of these trees on the environmental presentation and quality of surroundings, and some concerns regarding public safety in the precinct. These points were further detailed by the signatories in correspondence received with the submission of the joint letter.

The signatories detailed concerns regarding

* the safety of the footpaths due to fallen gumnuts,
* the perceived mess that the trees create (from falling leaves and twigs) and the required effort by the residents to maintain the presentation of their properties and nature-strips in the street,
* the perceived heightened bush fire risk that the residents feel these trees present.

The trees in this area of Bundoora are maintained under a biennial inspection schedule. The trees were last inspected by Council’s tree maintenance contractor in April 2022, and their next inspection will be completed in March 2024. Minor canopy uplifting works were completed as a result of the recent inspections.

A review of maintenance records indicates there have been no instances of limb failure in the trees concerned as a result of wind events. These trees were inspected by Council’s contracted arborist and found not to have an increased risk of failure.

Given the surrounding urban landscape, and the lack of understorey fuel within the nature-strips, fire would be unlikely to spread far into the subdivision, even under elevated fire weather conditions. Continuation of understory fuel management, including mowing of the grass, excluding the planting of shrubs or other ladder fuels beneath the canopies, and maintaining a minimum vertical separation of 2 metres from the ground to the first branch (which is already undertaken as part of biennial program) is recommended to continue to minimise fire risk.

As part of Council’s response to this joint letter, the trees were inspected by Ryder Arboriculture & Environment, with a detailed report provided to Council covering health, structure and tree risk assessment. All trees were assessed as having fair to good health, are generally well established, with none showing any significant decline. Tree structure was fair to good, all trees were growing typical of the species and with no major defects observed. Life expectancy was generally long with all trees expected to have a longevity of at least 10-20 years or more. None of the trees require any remedial pruning.

Although the points raised by the petitioners are valid when replacing trees of poor health and higher risk, one of the overarching principles in the Street Tree Management Plan is to ‘retain street trees through appropriate management’ (Guiding Principle No 4).

The advantages of retaining these mature healthy trees lie in the current benefits they contribute to the local streetscape, providing clean air, carbon storage, managing and cleaning storm water run-off, providing habitat for indigenous wildlife, and affecting a cooler environment by providing shade and a windbreak, as well as other benefits as cited in the ‘Benefit of Trees,’ Greening Whittlesea Strategy.

Assessments by Council’s arborist as well as the independent consulting arborist both validate the health and amenity value of the trees in line with both the Street Tree Management Plan and The Greening Whittlesea Strategy. All trees were deemed to be in fair to good health. No tree was identified as presenting an elevated risk, and no trees were identified as requiring removal.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

An onsite meeting to discuss the concerns raised in the joint letter was organised by Unit Manager Parks & City Forest and took place on 12 August 2022. The meeting was attended by the Manager Maintenance & Operations, the Unit Manager Parks & City Forest, Senior Arborist Risk & Planning, and two signatories of the joint letter.

A commitment was made at this meeting to undertake an independent report regarding the health and safety of the trees concerned. This assessment has since been completed and is included as an attachment to this report.

In addition, it was also agreed for two trees to be pruned back from the property line. These works will be completed as part of programmed works and completed prior to the end of the calendar year.

**Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies**

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**High performing organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

After a site meeting with residents and Council officers was completed, an independent arboricultural report was commissioned to further provide relevant information to appropriately assess the residents' requests.

**Considerations**

**Environmental**

The retention of mature trees in urban streetscapes is a key tenet of the Greening Whittlesea Strategy (2021) and the subordinate Street Tree Management Plan (2019). A goal of the Greening Whittlesea Strategy is to increase canopy cover in urban areas by 20% over a 2019 benchmark. Every mature tree that is removed, impacts on the ability to achieve this goal. Replacement trees take considerable time to establish and reach maturity and will not be considered as achieving sufficient canopy cover until approximately five years after they are planted. The current trajectory for increasing canopy cover amid global climate change impacts needs to be enhanced according to Greening Whittlesea Strategy, due to urban densification. This is despite Council planting 4,000 trees per year and developers handing over an additional 6,000 trees per year. Council also removes approximately 1,500 trees per year because of tree decline, tree death and storm damage.

**Social, Cultural and Health**

The Greening Whittlesea Strategy outlines the social, cultural and health benefits of street trees that are widely acknowledged and documented in academic literature.

**Economic**

The Greening Whittlesea Strategy outlines the economic benefits of street trees that are widely acknowledged and documented in academic literature.

**Financial Implications**

The cost is included in the current operational budget.

**Link to Strategic Risk**

**Strategic Risk** *Community and Stakeholder Engagement - Ineffective stakeholder engagement resulting in compromised community outcomes and/or non-achievement of Council's strategic direction*

A pro-active response to petitions and joint letters enables residents to have their concerns considered and independently evaluated. The trees concerned were assessed arboriculturally to evaluate their appropriateness against the Street Tree Management Plan.

**Implementation Strategy**

**Communication**

Council Officers will advise the signatories of the joint letter of the outcome of the independent arboricultural assessment.

**Critical Dates**

The implementation of any works resulting from the independent assessment are not subject to any critical dates.

**Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

**Conclusion**

The request by the five signatories of the joint letter was considered and an independent arboricultural consultant report received. Where possible, mature canopy trees should be retained if they benefit the streetscape in which they are planted.

Mature canopy trees:

* contribute towards the overall canopy cover targets for the municipality,
* help to moderate hot temperatures by shading areas, cooling and reducing heat radiated from urban buildings, structures or surfaces,
* may serve as a windbreak, as well as provide protection from rainfall; and
* filter the air we breathe and remove airborne particulates whilst releasing oxygen into the atmosphere.

As there were no major concerns identified by the independent arborists report, or Council’s arborist, the trees should be retained.

**6 Notices of Motion**

Nil Notices of Motion

**7 Urgent Business**

Nil Urgent Business

**8 Reports from Council Representatives and CEO Update**

**9 Confidential Business**

**9.0.0 Close Meeting to the Public**

Under section 66(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* a meeting considering confidential information may be closed to the public. Pursuant to sections 3(1) and 66(5) of the Local Government Act 2020.

**Recommendation**

**THAT the Chair of Council recommends that the meeting be closed to the public for the purpose of considering details relating to the following confidential matters in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* as detailed.**

**9.1 Confidential Connected Communities**

Nil Reports

**9.2 Confidential Liveable Neighbourhoods**

Nil Reports

**9.3 Confidential Strong Local Economy**

Nil Reports

**9.4 Confidential Sustainable Environment**

Nil Reports

**9.5 Confidential High Performing Organisation**

Nil Reports

**9.6 Confidential Notices of Motion**

Nil Confidential Notices of Motion

**12 Closure**