

Finance and Operations Committee

Agenda

Date: Wednesday 26 February 2020

Time: 6pm

Venue: Civic Centre (Council Meeting Room)

13 Mair Street, Benalla

Members of the community are welcome to attend the Meeting.

In accordance with the *Governance Local Law 2016* clause 4.6.4 an audio recording will be made of the proceedings of Council / Special Committee meetings.

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Agenda

Chair	Councillor Barbara Alexander	
Councillors	Councillor Danny Claridge	
	Councillor Peter Davis	
	Councillor Don Firth	
	Councillor Bernie Hearn	
	Councillor Scott Upston	
	Councillor Willie van Wersch	
In attendance	Dom Testoni	Chief Executive Officer
	Robert Barber	General Manager Corporate
	Jane Archbold	Manager Community
	Janine McMaster	Manager People Performance
	Jane Still	Governance Coordinator

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay respect to their elders and the elders from other communities who may be here today.

We also acknowledge all other peoples who have contributed to the rich diversity of this Country.

Apologies

Recommendation:

That the apology/ies be accepted and a leave of absence granted.

Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes have been circulated to Councillors and posted on the Council website www.benalla.vic.gov.au pending confirmation at this meeting.

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the Finance and Operations Committee meeting held on Wednesday 29 January 2020 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Governance Matters

This Committee Meeting is conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989* and the *Benalla Rural City Governance Local Law 2016*.

a) Recording of Council and Special Committee Meetings

All Council and Special Committee meetings will be audio recorded and made available for public access, with the exception of matters identified as confidential items in the agenda. This includes the public participation sections of the meetings.

These recordings are taken to facilitate:

- the preparation and accuracy of the minutes of open Council and Special Committee meetings
- broader access to open Council and Special Committee meetings, and
- the accuracy of submitter details (where relevant).

By participating in open Council and Special Committee meetings, individuals consent to the use and disclosure of the information that they share at the meeting (including any personal/sensitive information) for the purposes of Council carrying out its functions. Individuals also consent to the disclosure of that information to any person(s) who access those recordings.

Individuals may request, prior to presenting to Council, they be identified only by their first name. Any statements made or questions asked will still be captured on the recording.

Any queries about these recordings can be directed to the Council by calling 5760 2600.

b) Behaviour at meetings

It is an offence for any person to engage in improper or disorderly conduct at the meeting. Members of the public present at a meeting must remain silent during the proceedings other than when specifically invited to address the Committee.

The Chair may order and cause the removal of any person, not being a Councillor, who disrupts any meeting or fails to comply with a direction. A person removed from a Meeting must leave the premises or move to a public area of the premises where they can no longer disrupt the meeting.

If the Chair is of the opinion that disorder in the gallery makes it desirable to adjourn the meeting, the Chair may adjourn the meeting to a later time on the same day or to some later day as the Chair thinks proper.

c) Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

Pursuant to Sections 77, 78 and 79 of the *Local Government Act 1989* direct and indirect conflict of interest must be disclosed prior to debate on specific items within the agenda; or in writing to the Chief Executive Officer before the meeting.

Disclosure of indirect interests must also include the classification of the interest (in circumstances where a Councillor has made a disclosure in writing, the classification of the interest must still be declared at the meeting):

- (a) direct financial interest
- (b) indirect interest by close association
- (c) indirect interest that is an indirect financial interest
- (d) indirect interest because of conflicting duties
- (e) indirect interest because of receipt of an applicable gift
- (f) indirect interest as a consequence of becoming an interested party
- (g) indirect interest as a result of impact on residential amenity
- (h) conflicting personal interest.

A Councillor who has declared a conflict of interest, must leave the meeting and remain outside the room while the matter is being considered, or any vote is taken. Councillors are also encouraged to declare circumstances where there may be a perceived conflict of interest.

Business**1. Public submissions on any matter**

A person wishing to address the Committee on a matter not listed on the agenda must submit a 'Request to be heard' form by 10am on the day of the meeting. At the time of registering to speak persons must provide a summary of the matter on which they will be speaking. It must not be in contravention of the *Governance Local Law 2016*.

Requests to speak will be registered strictly in the order of receipt of the request at the Customer Service Centre.

A total of 12 minutes will be allocated for public submissions with a maximum of three minutes to each speaker.

Recommendation:**That the submission(s) be received.**

2. 2019/20 Community Sponsorship Program

SF/4294

Tom Arnold – Community Development Coordinator
Jane Archbold – Manager Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents funding applications under the 2019/20 Community Sponsorship Program.

BACKGROUND

The Community Sponsorship Program enables local community groups, clubs and organisations to seek funding to increase their capacity to work in partnership with the Council and others to address local needs and enhance the local community.

The Community Sponsorship Program distributes grants up to \$500 on a monthly basis, allowing local clubs, groups and organisations the opportunity to seek funds when the need arises.

DISCUSSION

Applications for consideration under the 2019/20 Community Sponsorship Program are detailed in the table below.

Applicant	Details	Amount Requested	Proposed Assistance
Lima School Community Centre Committee	Replacement of damaged weatherboards and window trims, new flashings above windows and barge capping. Also replace damaged guttering and weatherproof roof from leaks.	\$500	\$500
Molyullah Recreation and Public Hall Committee	Marquee hire for Molyullah East Sports.	\$500	\$500
Bridging Spaces 2020 Inc.	Morning workshop lead by the international guest speaker with Q&A, followed by lunch In the afternoon a screening of the documentary <i>Love is Listening: Dementia without Loneliness</i> which illustrates the beneficial effects of 'being with' people with dementia.	\$500	\$500

Applicant	Details	Amount Requested	Proposed Assistance
Benalla Sustainable Futures Group	Event at BPACC, <i>Climate Change, Present Facts & Future Projections</i> . Guest speakers and workshop.	\$500	\$500
Total		\$2,000	\$2,000

COUNCIL PLAN 2017-2021 (2019 REVIEW) IMPLICATIONS

Connected and Vibrant Community

- *Strengthen community capacity, emergency management preparedness, resilience and participation.*
- *Improve community connectedness and respect for diversity.*
- *Encourage community members to be healthy, safe and active.*

Engaging and Accessible Places and Spaces

- *Improve accessibility and use of community spaces and places for all.*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The *2019/20 Budget* allocates \$15,000 to the Community Sponsorship Program. To date \$10,680 has been allocated.

To ensure transparency and accountability, where assistance is provided in meeting the cost of Council facility hire, the payment is reflected in relevant ledger accounts via an internal transaction. For example, if the Council agrees to meet the hire cost of the Benalla Town Hall a credit would be made to the Town Hall income ledger account and a debit made to the Community Support Program expense ledger account.

In addition, recipients of support throughout the financial year are detailed in the Annual Report.

Recommendation:

That the following grants be funded from the 2019/20 Community Sponsorship Program:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Lima School Community Centre Committee | \$500 |
| 2. Molyullah Recreation & Public Hall Reserve | \$500 |
| 3. Bridging Spaces 2020 Inc. | \$500 |
| 4. Benalla Sustainable Futures Group | \$500 |

3. *Benalla Rural City Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2030*

SF/3438-02

Jane Archbold - Manager Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents for adoption the *Benalla Rural City Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2030*.

BACKGROUND

The draft *Benalla Rural City Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2030* (refer **Appendix 1**) was developed following extensive consultation with the community as part of the Department of Health and Human Service Age Friendly Victoria project.

During stage one of the project 386 surveys were completed. Nearly 700 people participated in stage two from across Benalla Rural City, including 613 residents and 72 people who work with, and for, older people.

Consultation included a survey administered by trained community volunteers, postcard questionnaires, interviews, listening hubs and conversations.

The data collected from the consultation process was summarised into key focus areas and presented for further input to a community forum attended by more than 100 people.

The project has been overseen by the Age Friendly Benalla Steering Committee with the majority of representatives being older people from the community, representing urban and rural localities. Input was also sought from Dr. Kathleen Brasher Principal, Strategic Advisor – Age Friendly Communities – Central Hume Primary Care Partnership.

DISCUSSION

The Strategy identifies six focus areas for action based on:

- input from local community members and service providers
- Benalla Rural City Council and Community plans
- World Health Organisation Age-Friendly domains (internationally recognised as means for assessing a community's age friendliness).

The six focus areas identified are:

1. Social Connection
2. Communication and Information
3. Health Services and Staying Active

4. Accessible and Safe Places and Spaces
5. Affordable and Maintained Housing
6. Getting About – Mobility and Transport

This whole of community strategy will form the basis of a more detailed action plan that will be guided by the Council's Community Development Team and the Age Friendly Benalla Steering Committee.

COUNCIL PLAN 2017-2021 (2019 REVIEW) IMPLICATIONS

Connected and Vibrant Community

- *Improve community connectedness and respect for diversity.*
- *Encourage community members to be healthy, safe and active.*

Engaging and Accessible Places and Spaces

- *Develop and maintain infrastructure so that it meets community need.*
- *Improve accessibility and use of community spaces and places for all.*

Thriving and Progressive Economy

- *Attract, support and strengthen local business.*
- *Support opportunities for diverse local employment.*
- *Facilitate population growth.*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Benalla Rural City Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2030 was developed at a cost of \$10,000.

Funding of \$24,500 from the Department of Health and Human Services will be used to deliver the *Benalla Rural City Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2030 Action Plan*.

CONCLUSION

The *Benalla Rural City Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2036* reflects international best practice as led by the World Health Organisation's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities approach to healthy ageing. This approach has been informed by more than a decade of research and practical studies from communities around the world, including Australia. The momentum is increasing as local governments recognise the social and economic benefits of creating age-friendly communities.

The adoption of the Strategy affirms the Council's belief that older people are valued community members. The Strategy also formalises the Council's commitment to advocating for and actively engaging with older people to ensure Benalla Rural City is an age-friendly community.

Once adopted, the Strategy will be redesigned into a community friendly format, officially launched and promoted throughout Benalla Rural City.

Recommendation:

That the *Benalla Rural City Age Friendly Strategy 2020-2030* be adopted.

Draft Benalla Rural City
Age Friendly Strategy
2020-2030



AGE FRIENDLY BENALLA

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Jan Osmotherly Osfield Consultants 2019

Introduction

An Age Friendly community is one that is good for everyone.

By creating a community where older people can live safe, purposeful and healthy lives – in mind and body – we are creating a community where everyone, no matter their age, benefits. Benalla Rural City, along with most places in the world, has an increasing proportion of its population over 55 years of age and living for much longer.

This Strategy has been developed as a framework for actions and planning decisions to ensure Benalla's older people can be supported to remain active, valued and as healthy as possible - in other words, to age well.

An Age Friendly Benalla will be a place where the community - including all its residents, its businesses, all levels of government and organisations mindfully work together to address the challenges and opportunities of ageing well in a rural setting.

This Strategy draws on international evidence from the World Health Organisation's Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities along with evidence from other Australian rural communities, planning and implementing their individual Age Friendly Strategies. Examples of best practice have been researched and inform the Strategy where appropriate. Most importantly, it has been informed by "*What you told us*" as residents of the Benalla Rural City community.

Looking at the community through an age-friendly lens means not seeing people as the numerical age they are, but rather focusing on the positive attributes and strengths they bring. Older people want to be known for what they 'can do' rather than what they cannot do, or cannot do as quickly anymore.

Consultation – What You Told Us

Extensive Benalla Rural City community consultation began in 2017 as part of a Department of Health and Human Services Age Friendly Victoria project. 386 surveys were completed during stage one of the project which was overseen by the Benalla Age Friendly Steering Group, with the majority of representatives being older people from the community, representing both town and rural localities.

In stage two challenges, observations and ideas from nearly 700 people across Benalla Rural City have helped shape this Strategy.

During stage two 613 residents from across the Shire have engaged in the consultation process through surveys administered by trained community volunteers, postcard questionnaires, interviews, Listening Hubs and conversations.

72 people who work with, and for, this age group also expressed their views and observations in interviews and focus group discussions. Key stakeholders consulted included a wide range of health and support services from Personal Care Workers to health administrators.

The data collected from this extensive process was summarised by Jan Osmotherly into key focus areas and presented to a Community Forum for further input. This was attended by approximately 100 people of all ages, in September, 2019.

Underpinning responses was the desire of older people to maintain a good level of independence and to stay living in their own home for as long as possible.

People's experiences of ageing are diverse, positive comments gathered during the consultation phases included:

- People feel well connected to their community
- Appreciation of community facilities and open spaces in Benalla Rural City
- Diverse range of clubs and activities available
- Older people generally well respected
- High volunteering rates and opportunities
- Local support services currently operating in Benalla Rural City considered caring and responsive to the needs of older people

With challenges identified including:

- social isolation and loneliness
- knowledge gaps about relevant services and activities
- chronic health issues
- availability of sufficient affordable local health services
- the digital age
- limited transport options
- accessible safe places and spaces, particularly footpaths
- affordable maintained housing

**Affordability,
availability
and
accessibility of
all services,
activities and
housing is
critical**



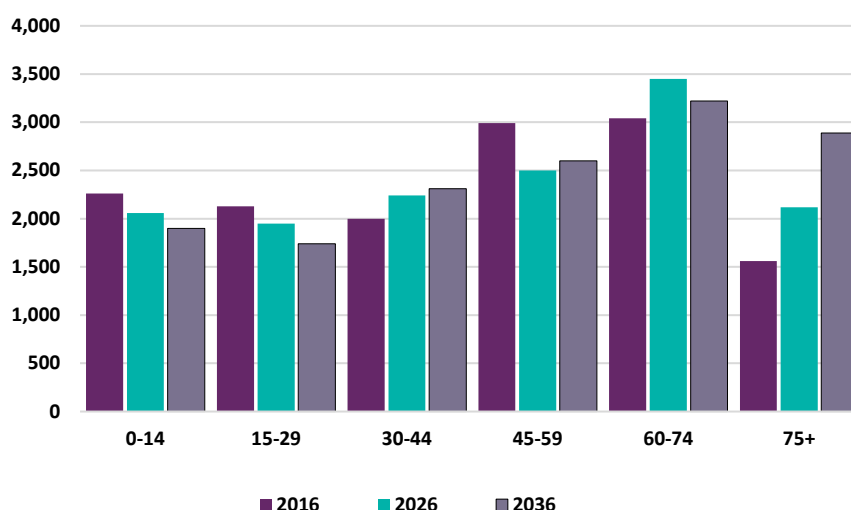


Participants - Age Friendly Community Forum, September, 2019

Benalla Rural City Data

Official projections estimate that by 2036, 44% of Benalla’s population will be over 60 with 29% being over 70 years of age. This makes Benalla one of the Top 10 Victorian Local Government Areas for older people with significantly greater numbers than the projected national average.¹

Benalla Rural City Population by age



Strategic Context

The Benalla Age-Friendly Strategy reflects international best practice as led by the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Age-Friendly Cities and Communities approach to healthy ageing. This approach has been informed by more than a decade of research and practical studies from communities around the world, including Australia. The momentum is increasing as local governments recognise the social and economic benefits of creating age-friendly communities.

There is increased evidence that everyone – *all ages* - benefit from living, working and visiting an age-friendly community.

Creating age-friendly communities makes economic sense. The contributions made by older residents are essential for Benalla’s social and economic prosperity. They are the backbone of volunteer emergency services, transport, sport and social services; they keep rural community services sustainable by operating and using local businesses, health and community services; they provide assistance and support to other community members.

In addition, the increasing demand for home-based goods and services to assist people age in place increases economic growth through employment and training opportunities, while many of the existing members of the essential local workforce are also growing older benefiting from a longer working life when the environment is supportive. Moreover, for communities with an interest in capturing the tourism market, there is evidence of the spending power of the international and domestic ‘silver’ tourists in those towns that are focussed on developing age-friendly communities and businesses. Creating an age-friendly Benalla will enable older residents to remain healthy, independent, safe, and contributing to their local community.

¹ Victoria in Future 2019: Population and household projections to 2051, The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

World Health Organisation

“In practical terms, age-friendly environments are free from physical and social barriers, and are supported by policies, systems, services, products, and technologies that:

- *Promote health, and build and maintain physical and mental capacity across the life-course*
- *Enable people, even when experiencing capacity loss, to continue to do the things they value*

In doing so, age-friendly communities:

- *Recognise the wide range of capacities and resources among older people*
- *Anticipate and respond flexibly to ageing related needs and preferences*
- *Respect older people’s decisions and lifestyle choice*
- *Reduce inequities*
- *Protect those who are most vulnerable*
- *Promote older people’s inclusion in and contribution to all areas of community life”²*

Age-Friendly Declaration Victoria

In 2016, the Victorian government announced ‘Age-friendly Victoria’ in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria. This declaration document reinforced the need espoused by the WHO for a greater focus on positive ageing.

In the same year, the Commissioner for Senior Victorians released a pivotal study on social isolation and loneliness among senior Victorians with the underlying premise: ageing is everyone’s business.

These two seminal documents have set the state policy direction to meet the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities created by an ageing population.

Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2017 -2021

This Strategy aligns with all the key themes of the Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2017 -2021, with a clear connection to:

- **Connected and Vibrant Community:** We are committed to building a healthy, active, safe and socially connected community that offers opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to participate in community life.
- **Engaging and Accessible Places and Spaces:** We will provide community places and spaces to meet the needs of our community and focus on thoughtfully planned growth to maintain and enhance the high amenity and character of our Rural City.
- **Thriving and Progressive Economy:** We will support, promote and encourage the long-term growth, diversification and strengthening of our economy as a key contributor to a healthier and more sustainable community.

*“Local government has a pivotal role in leading and facilitating communities where people of all ages regardless of ability or life stage, can live a quality life. An age-friendly city or community is friendly for **all** ages and embraces much of what local government does.”³*

² The Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities: Looking back over the last decade, looking forward to the next. WHO© World Health Organization 2018

³ Age-friendly Cities and Communities Information Kit for Local Government Councillors and Senior Management COTA Vic ; MAV 2017

As stressed in the Victorian government’s *Age-friendly Declaration*, such objectives are best achieved through ‘partnerships between seniors, governments, communities, businesses and support agencies.’⁴

Our Values

We respect and value our ageing residents. They are vital to the prosperity of our community through their skills and experience, volunteering, mentoring and wisdom.

Benalla Rural City is a great place for older people to live and retire. It is important to plan for and provide services, facilities and the community to support our older residents.⁵

Council is committed to taking a leadership role to build an Age-Friendly Benalla Rural City, working in partnership with community groups and residents, businesses, tourism, education, health and support services.

This Strategy is underpinned by the World Health Organisation Age-Friendly Cities Frameworks and human rights principles including the right to:

- Respect – to be valued and respected at all stages of life
- Inclusion – to be supported to participate in community irrespective of age, health or ability
- Diversity – to be part of the community regardless of beliefs, backgrounds
- Empowerment – to be an active participant in decisions which affect everyday life



Implementation

This strategy has identified Six Focus Areas for action based on:

- Input from local community members and service providers
- Benalla Rural City Council & Community Plans

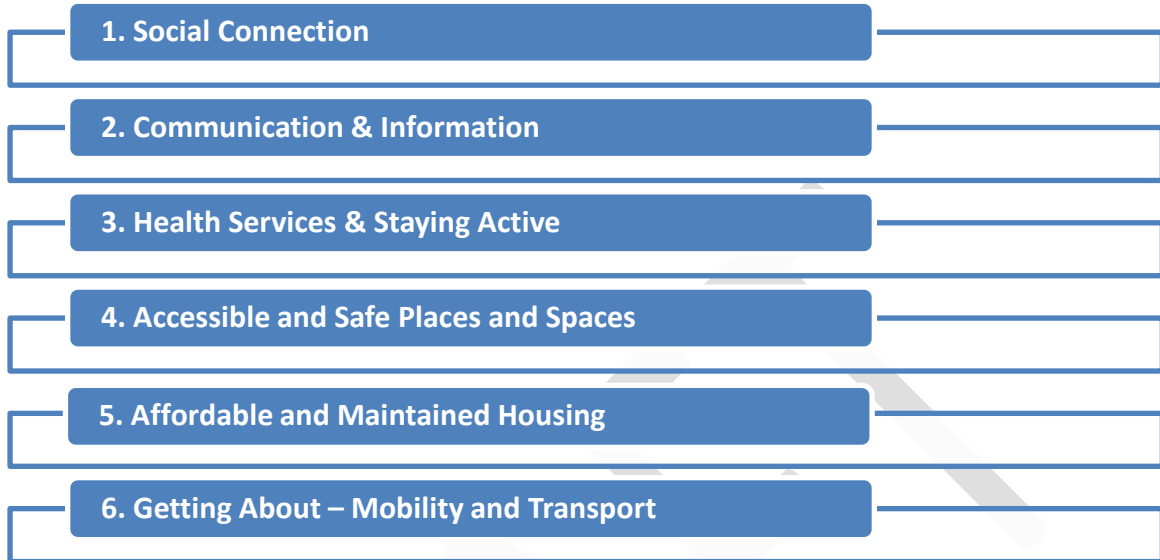
⁴ Victorian Government and Municipal Association of Victoria Age-friendly Victoria Declaration, 2016

⁵ Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2017 – 2021 p.16

- Adaptation of the World Health Organisation Age-Friendly domains (internationally recognised means for assessing a community's age friendliness)

They are *not* six discrete areas. There are many interrelated factors.

Focus Areas



A series of action plans will be developed for each of these Six Focus Areas. They will identify specific actions, partners in delivery, timelines and measures of progress. The Benalla Age Friendly Steering Committee will assist in drafting priorities for action including development of governance arrangements for overseeing the implementation of the strategy.



This is a 10 year whole of Community Strategy for detailed planning and implementation of actions. Ongoing monitoring and regular review of progress will identify areas for improvement and indicate any modifications necessary.

FOCUS AREA ONE: Social Connection

Good health and wellbeing involves maintenance of social connections alongside feelings of purpose and value.

Many older Benalla Rural City residents remain active participants in diverse activities including paid work, volunteering and/or are members of community groups throughout their ageing journey. They continue to engage in learning, socialising and sharing their knowledge and skills.

However, for some, ageing has meant that for whatever reason, including failing health, they can no longer participate in work (paid or unpaid) and/or have a valued role in caring for family and friends. This is frequently accompanied by loss of connection to others and to community.

Isolation and loneliness are serious issues for some of our older residents. Those living alone on farms or in rural townships with very small populations are of particular concern. Others more likely to experience social isolation and loneliness are those on low incomes, those with a disability, those with chronic health issues and those over the age of 55 who are also full-time carers.

Research has shown that loneliness posed health risks as big as or bigger than obesity, smoking and air pollution.⁶ It was particularly common in people over the age of 75 leading to a faster rate of physical and mental decline.

What You Told Us

"I'm concerned of the amount of older people living alone who are not members of community groups and who are just sitting at home. They are not accessing what is available and don't know what is available."

"There's a lot of older blokes sitting out there on farms by themselves, fiercely independent but not up to doing things like they used to. These blokes aren't going to come to a service or an activity on their own bat. You need to go where they are. On their turf and engage with them first."

"Some people want to be isolated. They are private people and are happy with that but they need help now and won't ask for it. Others simply have been alone for so long, they don't have confidence to go out and meet others."

"At my age and stage of health I just can't be bothered going out. It's just too hard. My eyesight's not good, I've got to juggle my wheeler and my shopping bags, and then there's the transport ..."

"I'm very slow now and I forget people's names all the times. I don't want to be a burden."

"It's a challenge making new friends when all my old friends are dead."

"For some of my clients, I might be the one constant visitor they have and they follow me around the whole time I'm there, talking. It's very sad." Home Care worker

"Dementia can & does exacerbate isolation."

Concern to address social isolation and loneliness was a major feature of our community consultation.

⁶ <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/letter/articles/vh-letter-47-loneliness> Accessed Sept 3, 2019 quoting research: Advancing Social Connection As Public Health Priority in the United States. Holt-Lunstad, Julianne, Robles, Theodore F., Sbarra, David A.

What We Want To Achieve

Create more opportunities for older residents to be included in the life of our community; to connect with others in meaningful ways. Such opportunities need to be:

- Affordable
- Accessible - including more activities being locally available in outlying rural localities
- Diverse and inclusive
- Well publicised

Suggested Strategies

- Investigate the feasibility of establishing an informal friendly visiting program *“Checking on older people that live on farms. maybe the community getting together and making a roster to check on older people”*
- Implement a volunteer phone call service *“When living on your own, a friendly phone call to see if you are ok would be lovely, especially when you have no family in Benalla.”*
- Improve links to existing intergenerational projects e.g. reading to pre-schoolers, L2P program, Connect 9, Tomorrow Today Foundation
- Investigate options for establishing local rural community hubs to offer activities identified and prioritised by local communities *“In our small community a monthly morning tea would be a way to get people together for social interaction and a sharing of produce/chatter.”*
- Explore inexpensive programs for exercise and social interaction for older people across the rural city including outlying areas
- Consider expansion of volunteer transport services to take people to activities – particularly those who are geographically isolated
- Trial informal ‘classes’ for people after loss of their partner – e.g. cooking classes, financial management classes
- Consider piloting La Trobe City Council’s Welcoming and Age Friendly Group Kit
- Continue to offer Benalla Unpacked tours, targeting new residents
- Open up Community Meals program to all residents over 65
- Continue to support a range of activities across Benalla Rural City during Seniors Festival each October.

FOCUS AREA TWO: Communication and Information

Effective communication is essential to everything. It is a two-way process of sharing information, emotions and ideas in a way that is readily understood by the receiving party.

This can be challenging for many reasons including:

- As the internet now is the major medium used by government, businesses and services for communication there is an assumption that everyone has basic Information Technology (IT) competency and uninterrupted access to the internet
- fear of ‘scams’
- health issues such as hearing loss, vision impairment, dementia, arthritis affect people’s ability to use computers and other devices

- ageist assumptions about the intellectual capacity and interests of older people
- an overabundance of information about almost everything, making it difficult to navigate systems and identify what is most relevant

There is a wide variation in the older age group regarding IT skills and resources. The reliability of the internet is also extremely variable and usually worse in outlying areas. This means ensuring information is available in a variety of accessible formats, while continuing to offer a range of opportunities for older adults to develop confidence and competence in navigating the digital world.

Being armed with the most up to date information is pivotal to maintaining independence for as long as possible. It is a whole of community issue to provide such information in a range of inclusive, user friendly formats.

What You Told Us

“The biggest challenge is knowing what is available and how to access things whether it be social activities or health services”

“We need more information sessions and not just in Benalla Township. (We need info) .. about ageing and illness like dementia, and what support we can get to stay at home and how to understand the My Aged Care system.”

“I’m old but I’m not stupid.”

“I feel discriminated against by employers and utility companies for not having a smart phone or computer.”

“Younger family members often over 55 themselves have to navigate service systems for their older parents and have little or no understanding. They often don’t seek information until crisis stage. This is very stressful.”

“Technology, I’m allergic to it.”

“I’m scared being on-line might lead to something I couldn’t get out of or get me into trouble.”

“My (daughter/son) has given me this mobile phone and they said it’s really great because I can stay connected to them BUT I don’t know HOW to use it.”

“I’ve been 4 years with this phone and I couldn’t text. I was too embarrassed to ask for help.”

What We Want To Achieve

- **Readily accessible up to date information about available activities and age related services in a variety of formats**
- **Improved confidence and competence for older people in using digital media**
- **A community that actively listens to the needs and wisdom of older people and involves them in decision making**

Suggested Strategies

- Advocate for a mobile health and information van to visit outlying communities
- Review and improve local communication channels about services and activities
- Equip workers and volunteers who support older people with current information about activities/services
- Continue to provide and promote IT training , particularly informal basic help sessions such as Café Connect model

- Provide opportunities for older people's voices to contribute to decisions and planning about relevant services and infrastructure
- Encourage more intergenerational projects like skill exchanges; young people helping older people with technology
- Consider developing a multimedia strategy to promote and celebrate older residents
- Offer a variety of workshops and training sessions to improve the health and wellbeing of older people.

FOCUS AREA THREE: Health Services - Staying Active

*'Australians living in rural and remote areas tend to have shorter lives, have higher levels of disease and injury and poorer access to and use of health services compared to people living in metropolitan areas.'*⁷ The inadequacy of health services in Benalla Rural City was raised many times in Strategy consultations. Benalla Rural City, along with many other rural localities, has a growing ageing population with greater needs, yet less accessible and affordable services than their city counterparts. Like other rural towns, Benalla has difficulty in attracting and retaining health professionals. It also has far lower bulk-billing rates⁸ than metropolitan areas which is even more significant given that Benalla has a high proportion of people on relatively low incomes. Chronic health conditions can be delayed or even prevented by living a healthy lifestyle earlier in life. Staying physically and mentally active, eating well and socialising are accepted globally, as keys to healthy ageing.

One major health issue raised throughout consultations was that of dementia. Dementia is the second leading cause of death in Australia and the single greatest cause of disability in Australians over the age of 65 years (AIHW 2018). Nearly 400 people were diagnosed as living with dementia in Benalla Rural City 2017 – the majority over 55 years of age.

What You Told Us

"We need more permanent long term resident doctors."

"The thing that frequently comes up in my regular discussion with older people is about men who are left alone. And they won't ask for help. And they clearly have depression mental health issues."

"I need transport to the doctor and dentist."

"There's just not enough care workers to help us elderly."

"We need more very low cost or free activities for us pensioners to stay active."

"People want activities in their own rural community, rather than having to travel into Benalla Township for everything."

"I just can't get around like I used to so it's easy to stay put and do not much."

"It's just very hard to cope with reduced energy, strength, sight and hearing. It all seems to come at once."

"A lot of family members can't cope with dementia and they tend to stay away and not visit."

"I've lost friends because my wife has dementia and they don't know how to deal with it. It's easier to just not go out. It's so much harder to get the two of us organised anyway."

⁷ Survey of Health Care: selected findings for rural and remote Australians April 2018 AIHW

⁸ <https://www1.racgp.org.au/ajgp/2019/january%E2%80%93february/the-mosaic-of-general-practice-bulk-billing-in-reg>

What We Want To Achieve

- **Improved health outcomes for older people so they remain independent for as long as possible**
- **More older people accessing affordable activities which improve their physical and mental health**
- **A community that understands and is inclusive of people with dementia and their carers**
- **Sufficient services available to support people to age in place where possible, no matter where they live**

Suggested Strategies

- Sustained advocacy for more affordable age-friendly medical services available locally. More bulk-billing. More GPs.
- Advocate for, partner with more outreach mental health services
- Improve community awareness of dementia including training businesses in dementia friendly strategies
- General welfare support and ‘checking up’ on people
- Investigate funding to run strength training, tai chi, exercise classes, etc. for older people in small communities
- Develop a campaign to encourage Benalla businesses and organisations to employ older people to keep them active, engaged and economically independent
- Maintain funding for Rural Outreach Worker and consider expanding the role to include a greater emphasis on group education sessions focusing on mental health and looking after yourself.

FOCUS AREA FOUR: Accessible & Safe Places & Spaces

The safety and accessibility of outdoor spaces and buildings is vital in ensuring the community is age-friendly and is identified in the Council plan and the Community Access and Inclusion plan. The state of footpaths, gutters, roads and tracks have a direct impact on mobility and quality of life. In the need to encourage people to be physically active, we need to ensure that places are safe. Buildings need to be accessible, in particular given the increasing numbers of residents with mobility issues and greater usage of wheeler walkers and mobility scooters. Thought should be given to adequate lighting, signage and parking spaces.

Well maintained recreational spaces with adequate seating for rests, along with well-designed and planned infrastructure can all assist the older person to feel confident they can go to wherever they want to go.

Advocating for the maintenance of community halls in the small outlying townships is also significant given the pivotal role they play for local residents including social activities, venues for information sessions and so on.

What You Told Us

“Using a wheelchair or wheeler around town is very difficult. Potholes, poor footpaths, deep steep gutters are dangerous”

“We need more seating (rest areas) for those of us who like to walk but need the occasional rest.”

“We need an area around the lake where carers and family could take people with dementia or in wheelchairs to fish, draw, read, walk that is safe and secure”

“We need more public toilets with disability access – particularly in the small townships.”

“We definitely need more disabled parking spaces.”

“Bus shelters in the vicinity of the 3 supermarkets would be greatly appreciated with rain in the winter”

“More street lighting would make us feel safer “

What We Want To Achieve

- **Outdoor spaces and buildings which are accessible and safe so that people are confident to go where they want to go**

Suggested Strategies

- Develop and promote a schedule of work focusing on footpaths and gutter upgrades and maintenance
- New infrastructure or upgrades of existing facilities to consider dementia friendly design principles
- Develop a plan to improve lighting in streets and public spaces
- Work with planners to consider safety measures such as more pedestrian crossings, longer time at traffic lights
- Partner with bus companies to examine number and accessibility of bus stops
- Consider using larger print on future signs across the municipality
- Work with the Accessibility Reference Group to ensure parking caters for older people
- Work with taxi companies to evaluate accessibility of current taxi ranks and drop off points in the CBD
- Undertake an audit of maintenance requirements, accessibility and insurance coverage of public conveniences, community halls and defibrillators across the municipality

FOCUS AREA FIVE: Affordable, Maintained Housing

The World Health Organisation has defined certain criteria for age-friendly housing. Firstly, there needs to be sufficient supply of affordable housing options available for older people. And secondly, the design of such housing needs to incorporate interior spaces and level surfaces that allow safe freedom of movement.⁹

The Australian Commonwealth Government has established six core design elements in their Liveable Housing Design Guidelines¹⁰ for new dwellings which better meet the needs of not only older people but the entire population.

“Liveable design recommends the inclusion of key easy living features that aim to make homes easier and safer to use for all occupants including: people with disability, ageing Australians, people with temporary injuries, and families with young children.”¹¹

⁹ South Australia's Communities for All: Our Age-friendly Future: Age-friendly Living: Guidelines for Residential Development; 2012 Government of South Australia.

¹⁰ Liveable Housing Guidelines Second edition, LHA 2012

¹¹ Ibid p. 8

If these features are included at the design stage, they are far more cost effective than retrofitting when a need arises such as impaired mobility.

Such design can assist in maximising the length of time a person can safely stay in their own home. This is the stated aim of the vast majority of older people consulted in the design of this Strategy.

Careful planning is required to ensure there is a sufficient supply of a range of affordable age-friendly housing options - no matter what phase of the ageing journey residents find themselves in.

Awareness raising and promotion of affordable, appropriate home modifications or downsizing options is desirable. This can assist people in making the necessary adjustments to their accommodation before it becomes an absolute necessity.

Finally, another key factor to allow an older person to retain their independence and stay living where they want to live, is the maintenance of their home.

Requiring more support for home maintenance both inside and outside was one of the most commonly expressed challenges of growing older, recorded in the extensive consultation for this Strategy.

What You Told Us

"We need more affordable private rentals. Real estate agents don't realise many older people only get casual or part time work or are on the pension."

"I want to downsize but I can't find a suitable place that is manageable for me."

"Finding tradies for small maintenance and repairs is very hard"

"We can get help with nursing, meals and cleaning. But there is a real need for a handyman to change light globes, assist with high cleaning, changing smoke detectors."

"My biggest challenge is just keeping up with the daily requirements of living in my home like the cleaning, the fixing, the mowing."

"I need help to get rid of big items that can't go in the bins as we have no roadside pickups anymore."

"I just can't maintain my rural property any more without a bit of help but I can't afford it."

"Why can't we have more things offered in peoples own community? Let's not get so bogged down in process that nothing gets done. Volunteers in communities could help one another with cleaning gutters and lawn mowing and odd jobs."

"There are older tradespeople and underemployed people with skills to do odd jobs/home maintenance, but it's the bureaucracy that is the problem. They haven't got the level of insurance, ABNs etc required."

"Some Aged Care facilities prohibit residents from having their pets live with them and this really stops people from agreeing to go into care when perhaps that's the best option."

What We Want To Achieve

- **Sufficient affordable, accessible housing options (purchase or rental) which enable older people to safely and comfortably age in place**
- **A range of voluntary /low cost services for helping older people maintain their homes inside and outside**

Suggested Strategies

- Investigate the feasibility of piloting a volunteer community home maintenance and gardening program in partnership with local organisations such as the Benalla Men's Shed and Rotary Club of Benalla
- Develop a promotion campaign highlighting the benefits of multigenerational housing options that allow older community members to live with family or friends
- Consider offering workshops that focus on key issues of concern such as understanding and taking control of energy bills and home modifications that improve accessibility in partnership with organisations such as Benalla Health, Consumer Policy Research Centre, Benalla Sustainable Future Group
- Advocate to property developers and local real estate agents key planning, design and approval processes that are age friendly
- Advocate for inclusion of higher number of one and two bedroom houses/units as part of the Benalla West Revitalisation project
- Consider developing brochures for older people outlining ways of future proofing their homes
- Consider staging open days which display suitable age friendly housing design features.

FOCUS AREA SIX: Getting About: Mobility and Transport

One of the biggest fears voiced by older residents in Benalla Rural City concerned losing their independence. Key to this independence is remaining mobile – whether it be by walking, driving, cycling, using a wheeler, scooter, wheelchair or confidently using public transport. Many expressed fear of losing their driver's licence for this reason, sensing that their world may 'close down'.

Losing the ability to get around is a major issue for people as they grow older and less mobile. It is a significant threat to healthy ageing as it inhibits the ability to access services in a timely fashion and to remain connected and active in the community. It is one of the major reasons for social isolation.

It is even more of a challenge in a rural location where adequate affordable public transport to all parts of the municipality is not feasible. Given how important mobility and transport is for active healthy ageing, time and planning needs to be invested into a range of options which reflect the challenges of where older people are located.

What You Told Us

"Public transport needs to reach more areas of town."

"Many resist giving up driving because they don't want to lose their independence. It's hard to rely on others for getting somewhere."

"No weekend transport in town makes it difficult to go out."

"A community bus for older people to pick them up from home and take them to the doctors or shopping would be good."

"Top priority for me would be to have much better access to the town bus service. The bus stops are way too far apart and because of my health problems I cannot walk to the nearest stop."

"For some I know, it takes too much bother and time if you are reliant on a wheelie walker and you have to juggle that and bags on a bus or getting into a taxi. In the end, many find it easier not to go out and their social circle just gets smaller and smaller."

“You can access a council service to take you out for home shopping, but there is limited funding and you must have had an Aged Care Assessment.”

“We need community transport for those of us in rural villages who want to stay living here.”

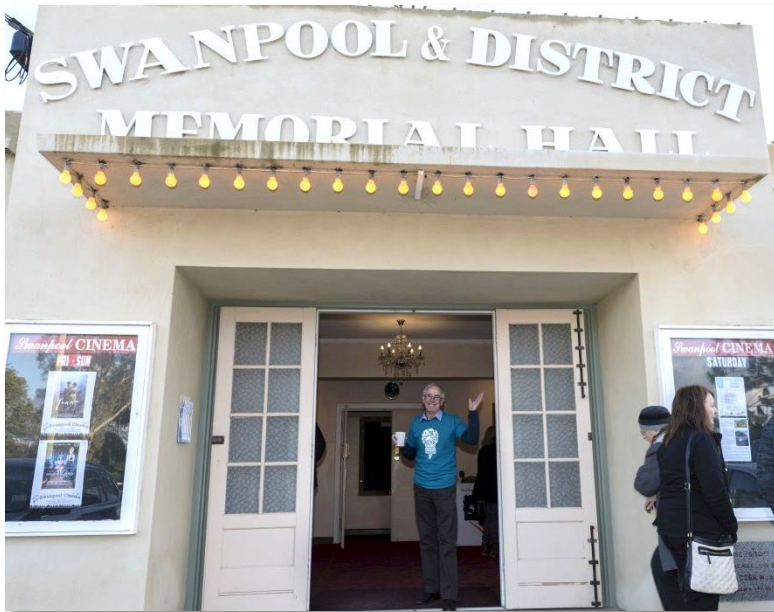
What We Want To Achieve

- **Affordable and adequate transport options throughout the Benalla Rural City, including the small outlying settlements, catering for a range of mobilities**

Suggested Strategies

- Consider the feasibility of developing a volunteer transport program in communities based on the successful TOAST (Tolmie Offers A Seat to Town) model
- Advocate for improved public transport in particular, small buses to rural townships, extension of existing bus routes and bus stops and improved train services
- Develop and promote a schedule of improvements for footpaths and walking paths across the municipality
- Look at the feasibility of setting up a Refresher driving course for older people based on L2P model
- Expand social support activities model which already provides transport to and from activities each week for eligible older people.





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DRAFT

4. Volunteer Recognition

SF/1538

Natalie Phillips – Volunteer Development Coordinator
 Janine McMaster – Manager People and Performance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents for consideration proposals to recognise the contribution of volunteers.

BACKGROUND

At a recent meeting of the Volunteer Development Working Group a recommendation was made proposing that active volunteers be recognised for their years of service in a similar manner to how the Council acknowledges staff for their years of service.

Many programs within the Council could not operate without the benefit of volunteers who freely provide their time and energy.

Based on current numbers of volunteers those eligible for awards in various years and categories are detailed below:

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
5	26	21	42	50	35
10	11	8	3	27	14
15	5	3	8	7	5
20	3	2	1	5	9
25	2	0	2	2	2
30	1	0	1	1	1
35	0	0	0	2	1
40	0	0	1	0	0
45	0	0	0	2	0
50	1	1*	0	1*	0

*It has been suggested that the two volunteers of between 45-49 years of service be recognised with a 45-year acknowledgement in the first year.

DISCUSSION

A number of options for the recognition of volunteers have been considered, including providing volunteers with:

- a celebratory event recognising the contribution of volunteers
- a certificate acknowledging a volunteer’s years of service
- a jacket lapel pin (refer **Appendix 1**) acknowledging years of service

- a trophy or plaque acknowledging years of service (refer **Appendix 2**)
- a monetary/voucher award, similar to the existing staff formula, of \$10 for each year of service, for example, \$50 for five years of service.

COUNCIL PLAN 2017-2021 (2019 REVIEW) IMPLICATIONS

Connected and Vibrant Community

- *Strengthen community capacity, emergency management preparedness, resilience and participation.*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The *2019/20 Budget* has a \$9,200 Materials and Services allocation for Volunteer Development communications and other operating costs.

Costs associated with acknowledging years of service require an additional \$4,000 budget allocation as detailed in the table below:

Year of award	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Celebratory event	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Certificates	\$250	\$300	\$300	\$400	\$500
Lapel Pins at 5-year intervals	\$600	\$600	\$600	\$600	\$700
Trophies for 20, 30, 40 and 50 years	\$500	\$300	\$300	\$700	\$1,000
Total	\$3,850	\$3,700	\$3,700	\$4,200	\$4,700

Recent calculations estimate the value to the Council of work undertaken by volunteers is more than \$500,000 annually.

Recommendation:

- 1. That the Council acknowledge volunteers' years of service milestones via:**
 - a. a celebratory event at a local venue held annually in May**
 - b. certificates indicating years of service presented to all volunteers**
 - c. lapel pins indicating years of service presented to volunteers at five-year intervals**
 - d. trophies indicating years of service presented to volunteers at 10-year intervals commencing at year 20.**
- 2. That additional expenditure of \$4,000 to acknowledge volunteers in May 2020 be approved from the *2019/20 Budget*.**
- 3. That an increased allocation of \$4,000 to Volunteer Development to cover costs associated with acknowledging volunteers be considered in the formulation of the *2020/21 Budget*.**

Example of Lapel Pin

Front



Back



Example of trophy



5. Council Policy CP15 Councillor Resources and Expenses Policy

SF/SF/3495

Jane Still – Governance Coordinator
Robert Barber – General Manager Corporate

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the revised Council Policy *CP15 Councillor Resources and Expenses Policy* for discussion.

BACKGROUND

Section 74 of the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) provides for allowances payable to the Mayor and Councillors, and Section 75 for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses to Councillors performing duties as a Councillor.

Official duties of a Councillor are defined in section 75(2) of the Act as duties performed by a Councillor that are necessary or appropriate for the purposes of achieving the objectives of a Council.

The purpose of the *Councillor Resources and Expenses Policy* (**refer Appendix 1**) is to:

- establish the basis upon which Councillors will be reimbursed for expenses in undertaking their role as a Councillor
- establish support provided to Councillors for approved activities
- establish levels of reimbursement which may be claimed by Councillors

In May 2007 the Victorian Government convened the Local Government (Councillor Remuneration Review) Panel, and subsequently released *Recognition and Support, the Victorian Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources 2008* and the *Information Guide on Mayor and Councillor Entitlements – Reimbursement of Expenses and Provision of Resources and Facilities Support for Victorian Mayors and Councillors 2008*.

Since that time the Independent Broad Based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Auditor General's Office have also undertaken a number of investigations which have highlighted the need for stronger controls over the administration of Councillor resources and expense reimbursement.

The Council's policy has been reviewed against the Victorian Government guidelines and VAGO's *Fraud and Corruption Controls Over Councillor Entitlements and Expenditure* report (June 2019).

The Governance Coordinator also undertook a desktop audit of 63 Victorian councils to establish a benchmark for current practices.

DISCUSSION

The revised policy includes substantial changes, summarised below.

Inclusion of all resources provided to Councillors

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office requires councils to apply fraud and corruption controls over Councillor reimbursements and entitlements. It is not possible to consistently apply fraud and corruption controls if entitlements are not explicitly described.

The Council currently meets all its obligations set out in the *Information Guide on Mayor and Councillor Entitlements – Reimbursement of Expenses and Provision of Resources and Facilities Support for Victorian Mayors and Councillors 2008*, however these are not explicitly described in the current policy.

Combining with *CP8 Professional Development for Councillors* policy

Professional development is a resource made available to Councillors for which costs may be reimbursed. It is appropriate to include it in Councillor entitlements and expense matters.

Of the Councils surveyed for this project, 74 per cent include professional development entitlements in their policies.

Fees for Audit Advisory Committee members

In line with section 75B of the *Local Government Act 1989* councils must include in their policy any applicable reimbursement of expenses to independent members of Council committees including the Audit Advisory Committee.

Approval arrangements

The current policy requires receipts "where possible". This does not reflect the rigor required by the Victorian Government guidelines or VAGO. Neither does it reflect the current practice of the Council, which requires receipts or a statutory declaration before a claim can be reimbursed.

Regarding travel entitlements, the Victorian Government requires that:

- approval should be sought for all Councillors undertaking discretionary trips and interstate, from the CEO at a minimum
- all overseas travel should be by resolution of the full Council
- the Council's policy should specify any additional approval arrangements required by the Council.

Meals and alcohol

VAGO states that Councillors must also consider how their community may perceive entitlements that appear excessive or where there is no clear business purpose, such as:

- expensive meals
- additional financial allowances
- alcohol at council meetings.

“While councils may consider that spending council funds on meals and alcohol is appropriate and reasonable in some circumstances, they need to consider community expectations and perceptions that can be associated with this type of expenditure.”

The revised Policy inserts a requirement that all purchases of alcohol for the purpose of Councillor refreshments are to be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Reporting

The following accountability of Councillors and the Council for upholding the policy for resources and expenses are appropriately referenced in the revised policy:

- quarterly reporting
- Annual Report
- the policy is to be made available for public inspection.

COUNCIL PLAN 2017-2021 (2019 REVIEW) IMPLICATIONS

High performing organisation

- *Provide good governance and responsible management and planning.*
- *We are compliant with our legislative and risk management responsibilities.*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no material financial implications resulting from the policy review.

Recommendation:

- 2. That Council Policy CP15 Councillor Resources and Expenses Policy be adopted.**
- 3. That Council Policy CP15 Councillor Resources and Expenses Policy be reviewed in February 2022.**

CP 15 Councillor Resources and Reimbursement Policy

Responsible Officer:	General Manager Corporate
Document type:	Council Policy
Reference:	CP 15
Approved by Council:	
Date approved:	
Date of next review:	

Policy Objective

- To establish the basis upon which Councillors will be reimbursed for expenses in undertaking their role as a Councillor
- To establish support provided to Councillors for approved activities
- To establish levels of reimbursement which may be claimed by Councillors.

Section 74 of the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) provides for allowances payable to the Mayor and Councillors, and Section 75 for reimbursement of out of pocket expenses to Councillors performing duties as a Councillor. In recognition of the special role of Mayor, the policy provides for the provision of some additional facilities and expenditure specific to the Mayoral office.

The Policy is consistent with the Victorian Government's Information guide for the Reimbursement of Expenses and Provision of Resources and Facilities Support for Victorian Mayors and Councillors.

Principles

The fundamental test to be applied in determining whether or not a Councillor expense is appropriately incurred is whether the expenditure is necessary, supplementary or incidental to, or consequent on, the exercise of Council duties.

Official duties of a Councillor are defined in section 75(2) of the Act as duties performed by a Councillor that are necessary or appropriate for the purposes of

achieving the objectives of a Council having regard to any relevant Act, regulations, Ministerial Guidelines or Council policies.

Expenses incurred by Councillors when acting in a private capacity will not be reimbursed or paid.

Any costs incurred by a Councillor which are not covered specifically within the policy will not be met, unless the Councillor has received prior written authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer.

Reimbursement claims will not be processed without appropriate supporting evidence.

Expenses must be claimed no later than the month following the occurrence of the expense. Claims outside this timeframe will not be considered.

Councillors must not use Council provided materials and/or facilities for election purposes. This applies to their own candidature or in assisting the candidature of others.

Procedure

1. Councillor and Mayoral Allowances

The Minister is responsible for setting the limits and ranges of Councillor and Mayoral allowances, and the allowance category for each Council.

Any personal taxation implications from the receipt of allowances are the responsibility of individual Councillors.

1.1. Councillor Allowance

Councillor allowances are paid monthly in advance before the last day of the prior month and will be set at the first Annual Council Meeting of each Council term or at another Council Meeting at the Council's discretion.

1.2. Mayoral Allowance

The Order of the Governor in Council allows for a separate Mayoral allowance limit. The Mayoral allowance is paid monthly in advance before the last day of the prior month and will be set at the first Annual Council Meeting of each Council term or at another Council Meeting at the Council's discretion.

The Mayor is not entitled to receive an allowance as a Councillor if they receive a Mayoral allowance.

If a Councillor is appointed to act as a Mayor for a continuous period exceeding 50 days, the acting Mayor may be paid a Mayoral allowance instead of a Councillor allowance for that period.

1.3. General

Section 74A(3) of the Act states that a Council does not have to pay an allowance under Section 74 to a Councillor who does not wish to receive it.

1.4. Remote area allowance

Where a Councillor (including a Mayor) normally resides more than 100 kilometres (round trip) by the shortest possible practicable road distance from the location or locations specified for the conduct of ordinary, special or committee meetings of the Council or any municipal or community functions which have been authorised by Council resolution for the Councillor to attend, he or she shall be entitled to be paid an additional allowance of \$40.00 per day, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per annum.

1.5. Superannuation Guarantee Equivalent

Mayoral and councillor allowances are subject to the addition of the equivalent of the superannuation guarantee (9.5%).

1.6. Fees for Audit Advisory Committee members

Independent members of the Audit Advisory Committee will be paid a fee per meeting as follows:

- Chair: \$400
- Ordinary members: \$300

2. Civic support, facilities and equipment

2.1. Each Councillor is entitled to the following home/workplace facilities:

- A tablet computer and specified accessories
- Access to internet, email, and Councilor Assembly and Meeting minutes and agendas from the tablet computer
- Access to a fax machine and photocopier at the Civic Centre.

The quality and type of facilities will be at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer and Manager People Performance.

The Council will pay all charges associated with the use of the technology devices for Council related business. Councillors must adhere to the policies for security, maintenance and use of equipment.

The above facilities remain the property of the Council and must be returned within seven days of the cessation of a Councillor's term of office.

2.2. Insurance

The Chief Executive Officer will ensure that policies of insurance are maintained in accordance with the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1989* and the *Accident Compensation Act 1985* to provide the relevant protections to Councillors while performing their duties as a Councillor.

2.3. Facilities for the Mayor

2.3.1. Mayoral vehicle

A fully maintained vehicle including all associated costs such as servicing, fuel and insurance will be provided to assist the Mayor to carry out their duties and for private use during the Mayoral term.

The Mayoral vehicle will be traded in accordance with the Council's Fleet policy.

2.3.2. Mayoral Regalia

Mayoral regalia is available for the Mayor on request, for use at official civic events.

2.3.3. Office accommodation

Appropriate office accommodation will be provided at the Civic Centre to assist the Mayor perform their role.

2.4. Civic Entertainment / Hospitality

2.4.1. Meeting/Function Rooms

Subject to availability, meeting/function rooms owned and controlled by the Council can be booked by Councillors, free of charge, for meetings, interviews and other functions provided they are associated with Council business.

2.4.2. Civic Hospitality

All formal civic entertainment functions will be coordinated by the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer, and must have prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

2.4.3. External Hospitality

Councillors will be reimbursed reasonable expenses incurred while entertaining visiting dignitaries or Council business guests on behalf of the Council, including the reasonable cost of drinks accompanying a meal. The Chief Executive Officer must give prior approval to any such entertainment.

2.4.4. Partner Hospitality

Where an invitation to a function or event has been extended to the partner of a Councillor, the cost of the hospitality for the partner will be reimbursed. The Chief Executive Officer must give prior approval to the reimbursement of costs for the partner.

2.4.5. Meals and refreshments

Where Council or Committee meetings are held at times that extend through normal meal times, the council will provide suitable meals and refreshments. All purchases of alcohol are to be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

2.4.6. Stationery and secretarial support

Secretarial support will be made available for Councillors to assist them with diary management and in responding to correspondence, enquiries and request for service as part of their official duties as a Councillor.

All Councillors will be issued with business cards, diaries and compendia.

Upon request Councillors will be provided with standard stationery held or obtained generally for the organisation's requirements.

The stationery may include writing implements, diaries, writing pad/books, paper and envelopes and the like.

Postage stamps and official letterhead will not be provided to Councillors. Letterhead is only to be used by officers for Council business or the Mayor representing the Council. Councillors are to provide their own letterhead for electoral purposes.

The Chief Executive Officer will determine what is appropriate stationery and what quantities are appropriate.

Council business papers, personal mail and other Council information will be delivered to the Councillors' nominated location weekly or as required.

2.4.7. Photocopying

A photocopy service will be provided for Councillors should they need Council related documents copied. Requests for photocopying can be made through the Executive Officer Executive Assistant.

2.4.8. Business access

Each Councillor will be provided with an access card allowing 24-hour entry to the Civic Centre. The Mayoral access card will allow access to the Mayor's office.

2.4.9. Councillors with disabilities

The Council may resolve to provide reasonable additional facilities and meet reasonable additional expenses to assist a Councillor with a disability to perform their official Council duties.

3. Childcare / Family care

Expenses for licensed childcare services (for children being cared for up to and including the age of 14 years will be paid or reimbursed by the Council, if claimed, when a Councillor attends:

- Council meetings and Council business related to Council meetings
- Council functions
- Meetings arising as a result of a Councillor being appointed by the Council to an external body or committee except where the body itself reimburses the relevant care expenses
- Conferences, study tours, training sessions and seminars in capacity as a Councillor.
- Recognised childcare expenses consist of reasonably hourly fees and associated travelling expenses.

4. Communication Expenses

Councillors will be provided with a mobile telephone on request.

The Council will pay all appropriate connection fees, rental charges and business call charges. The direct cost of any private use must be reimbursed to the Council.

5. Travel Expenses and Arrangements

5.1. Use of private vehicles

Councillors using their own vehicle for travel for the purpose of their duties as a Councillor will be reimbursed on a per kilometre basis for travel outside the municipality only. Reimbursements will be in accordance with the Victorian Local Authorities Award 2001 as varied from time to time.

Councillors undertaking private travel arrangements in conjunction with any travel for the purpose of their duties as a Councillor must ensure that all costs incurred for private purposes are clearly identified and appropriate records maintained.

When a ride share service or taxi service is used for Council related business, appropriate receipts are required for reimbursement to be claimed.

5.2. Use of Council vehicles

Councillors have access to the Mayoral vehicle if it is not in use, for the purpose of undertaking Council business. When it is not available, Councillors may request access to the Council fleet.

5.3. Infringement notices

Councillors must not infringe against parking restrictions or any Victorian Road Rules and are personally liable for any infringement penalties received.

5.4. Interstate and International Travel

All application for international travel on Council business must be approved by the Council at an Ordinary meeting of the Council.

All applications for interstate travel on Council business by the Mayor or Councillors must be in writing and assessed and approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Arrangements for travel and associated accommodation, car hire, etc, should be booked through the Chief Executive Officer Executive Assistant.

All interstate and international travel undertaken by Councillors on Council business is recorded in the Interstate and International Travel Register.

5.5. Partner travel

The costs of a partner accompanying a Councillor on Council business (local, interstate or international) must be borne by the Councillor unless there is a bona fide business purpose or necessity for the presence of a partner. Travel by a partner at Council expense must be approved in writing by the Chief Executive Officer, prior to departure.

6. Conferences, training and professional development

6.1. Conferences and training

Councillors sponsored by the Council to attend conferences and seminars shall have all reasonable expenses for travel, transport, accommodation, registration fees, meals and other out of pocket expenses relating to the conference or seminar reimbursed or paid.

If a Councillor is attending a conference and will make a presentation on behalf of the Council, any presentation fees will be paid into the general revenue of the Council.

6.2. Professional Development

Councillors are encouraged to avail themselves of opportunities to attend appropriate professional development courses and conferences and seminars which may be of benefit to the individual Councillor and/or Council as a whole.

Councillors have an obligation to be properly informed on all matters pertaining to the Council. To assist in this education process Councillors are encouraged to attend professional development courses and conferences and seminars with relevance to Local Government.

Details of professional development courses and conferences and seminars which may be relevant and of interest to Councillors will be circulated to all Councillors through the weekly Councillors' Briefing Paper.

Should a Councillor express an interest in attending a particular professional development conference/seminar, notify the Executive Assistant to the CEO

and Mayor who will complete the registration and arrange accommodation and transport as required.

6.2.1. Report to Council

Following attendance at a professional development course or conference/seminar Councillors will be required to present either a verbal or written report to the Council at the next Ordinary Meeting of Council under the item "Reports by Councillors".

6.2.2. Budget Consideration

The Council's Professional Development Budget allocation will be determined annually by the Council as part of its annual budgetary process.

6.2.3. Reporting

A quarterly report will be submitted to the Council detailing year to date expenditure on Councillors' attendance at professional development courses and conferences and seminars.

6.2.4. Expenses

In accordance with Section 95 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the Council will reimburse Councillors for necessary out of pocket expenses incurred during the professional development activity.

Reimbursement will be on the basis of actual costs incurred and will be subject to the presentation of original receipts. Reimbursement of all expenses will be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer and reported to the Council quarterly.

7. Management and accountability

7.1.1. Expense reimbursement claims

When a Councillor requires reimbursement of monies expended while conducting Council business, the following procedure should be followed:

- 7.1.1.1. Obtain a relevant receipt or supporting documentation for expenditure. A statutory declaration will be required if receipts cannot be obtained.
- 7.1.1.2. Provide the receipt to the Chief Executive Officer Executive Assistant no later than three months after the expenditure. The CEO-EA will complete a Prompt Payment form.
- 7.1.1.3. The Chief Executive officer will endorse and approve all reimbursements.

7.1.2. Reporting

Reports are submitted quarterly to the Council for public meetings, and detailed reports of each Councillors' expenses each year are provided in the Annual Report.

8. General provisions

- 8.1. Councillors are to ensure that all equipment and other entitlements are correctly used and securely stored at all times.
- 8.2. Any person who ceases to be a Councillor must immediately cease to use any equipment or other entitlement. The use of any Council business cards, Council letterhead, Councillor name tag or any equipment or entitlement that may in any way be assumed by any person that the person holds the position of a Councillor of the Benalla Rural City Council is prohibited and must cease immediately the entitlement to be a Councillor ceases.

Related legislation:

Local Government Act 1989

Related documents

Recognition and Support, the Victorian Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources

Information Guide on Mayor and Councillor Entitlements – Reimbursement of Expenses and Provision of Resources and Facilities Support for Victorian Mayors and Councillors 2008

VAGO Fraud And Corruption Controls Over Councillor Entitlements And Expenditure

Councillor Code of Conduct 2017

CP 4 Fraud Prevention

Closure of Meeting