

21 April 2021

HAVE YOUR SAY ON PROPOSED 2021/2022 COUNCIL BUDGET

Council has released its \$39.9 million Proposed Budget 2021-2022 and invites the community to review the plans for the year ahead and make a submission.

Mayor, Cr Lesley Hewitt, said Council has developed a financially responsible budget that is mindful of the impact of COVID, size of the Shire and the available resources.

“The budget allocates funding for the provision of more than 100 services, from home care for older members of the community, to road construction, urban planning, libraries, environmental initiatives, leisure facilities and more,” said Cr Hewitt.

“The global and local impact of COVID-19 is still being felt across the Shire. This budget continues our commitment to support the recovery of our businesses and community through direct investment into projects and activities that will stimulate growth and support our community,” she said.

“It specifically includes \$11.83 million towards capital works, which will go towards the improvement, renewal and creation of new infrastructure for our Shire. This is a significant allocation of funding, in fact, 63% of general rates, and has been made possible with support from State and Federal Government.

“We have aimed for a ‘business as usual’ budget as we review our financial sustainability and continue to work on our four-year Council Plan and key financial plans under the Hepburn Together Project.”

The budget responds to early feedback from the Hepburn Together project and direction of the new Council. The budget includes additional investment in strategic planning following Council’s review of the Hepburn Planning Scheme (more than \$400,000); will include the development of a new Council website (\$75,000); includes the development of a new Walking and Cycling Strategy (\$90,000); and Council will also undertake a review of key strategies to respond to

climate change and environmental development, including the Waste Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy and Sustainability Strategy.

The increase to rate income is capped at 1.5% in line with the Victorian Government's Fair Go Rates System.

"We are a lower rating Council – our average property rates for 2019/2020 were around \$115 less than similar sized councils, and around \$209 less than all Victorian councils*," said Cr Hewitt.

"One of our biggest challenges this year is managing the costs of waste, which have risen significantly over the last year due to the change in kerbside collection contract rates and a 20% increase in the volume of waste produced," she said.

For those with a kerbside collection service the waste charge will increase to \$479 per year to ensure cost recovery of this service.

"We realise this is a substantial increase, but it is a necessary adjustment to meet the rising costs of waste management, the growing volume of waste collected, global recycling challenges and the compulsory State Government landfill levy," said Cr Hewitt.

"Creating an efficient and cost-effective waste management service is a priority for Council and we will develop a five-year waste strategy later this year."

The proposed budget is available for inspection at Council offices in Daylesford, Clunes, Creswick and Trentham, the Daylesford Library and the Participate Hepburn website at <https://participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au>.

"It's important that our community members have a say in our budget for the year ahead and I invite you to take a look and make a submission either in support, or to suggest further ideas or changes," said Cr Hewitt.

Submissions are due to Council by Council by 5.00pm on Thursday 20 May 2021. Submit your feedback to Council offices; via the Participate Hepburn website; via post to the Chief Executive Officer, Hepburn Shire Council, PO Box 21, Daylesford VIC 3460; or via email to shire@hepburn.vic.gov.au.

Council will consider the budget for adoption at the Special Council Meeting scheduled for 6.00pm on Tuesday 29 June 2021 at the Daylesford Town Hall.

*Victorian Government's Know Your Council website <https://knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au/>

BUDGET SUMMARY

CAPITAL WORKS HIGHLIGHTS

- \$2.44 million for recreation facilities, including the commencement of the \$2.4 million Hammon Park Trail Head project, \$240,000 for cricket nets at Newlyn, \$144,000 for hard courts renewal across the Shire, and planning for the future with \$30,000 to undertake a Recreation Reserve Lighting Strategy and \$22,000 to undertake a masterplan for the ARC at Daylesford.
- More than \$1.45 million on road improvements, upgrades and rehabilitation, including an upgrade to Daylesford-Clunes Road in Smeaton, and the Cotswold and Glengower roads intersection near Glengower.
- More than \$1.62 million on gravel and road reseals across the Shire.
- \$600,000 for bridges, including Mollonghip bridge in Blampied.
- More than \$1.5 million to renew community buildings.
- \$534,000 on new and upgrades to footpaths and cycleways throughout the Shire.
- \$1.09 million on parks, open spaces and streetscape works, including Chatfield Reserve landscape works at Lake Daylesford, renewal of reserve and open space furniture, and streetscape improvements in Clunes and Creswick.

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Additional investment in strategic planning following Council's review of the Hepburn Planning Scheme (more than \$400,000).
- Support for low income earners to install solar power through the Solar Savers Program.
- Review of key strategies to respond to climate change and environmental development, including the Waste Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy and Sustainability Strategy.
- Further investment for COVID recovery opportunities.
- Finalisation of the Hepburn Together Project and associated plans and strategies, including the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.
- Continuation of a \$21 rebate on rates for pensioners.
- Increased investment in Information Technology, including new Council website, to improve customer experience and make it easier to find information about Council.
- Free pool entry and first year pet registration.
- Development of an Arts and Culture Strategy, a Reconciliation Action Plan and a Walking and Cycling Strategy.
- Ongoing funding for Council activities such as libraries, maternal and child health, sport and active recreation, tourism, care for the elderly, parks and gardens, programs for young people and more.