



National Disability Award winner
Australian Human Rights Commission winner

Draft Transcript

Draft Transcript

Surf Coast Shire Ordinary Council Meeting

Tuesday, 25 February 2025 at 6pm

About This Document

This document contains a draft transcript only.

This draft transcript has been taken directly from the text of live captioning provided by The Captioning Studio and, as such, it may contain errors.

The transcript may also contain 'inaudibles' if there were occasions when audio quality was compromised during the event.

The Captioning Studio accepts no liability for any event or action resulting from this draft transcript.

The draft transcript must not be published without The Captioning Studio's written permission.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Good evening and welcome to our February Council meeting. I'm Mayor Mike Bodsworth and it's a pleasure to welcome everyone joining us tonight.

This meeting is also being live streamed, so a big welcome to those tuning in online, and of course welcome to my fellow Councillors. Live captioning will accompany the live stream of this meeting. We hope that this assists those who may have hearing difficulties.

I'd like to acknowledge that we meet on Wadawurrung country and that the Surf Coast municipality also includes the traditional country of the Gadubanud and Gulidjan people of the Eastern Maar Nation. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to walking with traditional owners on a reconciliation journey that recognises and celebrates culture and the unique land, sea and waterway country of the Surf Coast. I would also like to acknowledge Aboriginal people attending or viewing this meeting tonight.

I want to thank everyone here in attendance and everyone watching at home for joining us tonight for our first Council meeting of 2025. Over the summer, our events calendar was packed full of community events and markets and popular outdoor active events, with a major highlight being the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race. This was a huge hit, as always, and I want to thank everyone who attended or participated in this exciting event in our community.

Before we proceed with tonight's agenda, I want to acknowledge that we have a lot of community members in the gallery tonight. I know that many of you feel deeply about items on tonight's agenda, in particular the items relating to the way that Council acknowledges 26 January.

In light of this, I would like to outline my expectations for how we conduct ourselves at this meeting tonight. Those who have submitted public questions or submissions will have the opportunity to address Council. It is my expectation that each person in the gallery and each Councillor listens respectfully during public question time, even if they do not agree with the position being put forward.

This same expectation applies once the debate has commenced and I expect that each Councillor is afforded the same opportunity to speak without interruption. I want to make it really clear that conduct such as heckling or

Draft Transcript

otherwise interrupting when another person is speaking is not acceptable. I will be asking that any person who is behaving in a disorderly manner is removed. It's important to us as Councillors to be able to fulfil our responsibilities in a safe and respectful environment to ensure members of the public can engage and be heard in a supportive environment and to ensure high-quality local governance.

And now to our agenda for tonight, so let's get under way. Council meetings operate according to our adopted Governance Rules, which include the following procedures. During the meeting, the mover of a motion or an amendment may speak for a maximum of 5 minutes to open the debate and then a further 2 minutes to make a closing statement. Any other Councillor, including the seconder, may speak to a motion for no more than 3 minutes.

I ask that members of the gallery avoid using mobile phones during the meeting as this can be distracting for Councillors as well as other members of the gallery. I also note that any unauthorised recording of the meeting is prohibited under our Governance Rules. However, you can access a copy of the official recording on our website after the meeting.

I would now like to recite the Pledge as a sign of our commitment: as Councillors, we carry out our responsibilities with diligence and integrity and make fair decisions of lasting value for the wellbeing of our community and environment.

We turn to apologies - we have no apologies for tonight's meeting.

Confirmation of minutes - can I please have a mover and a seconder to confirm the minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 December 2024? Moved by Councillor Phelps, seconded by Councillor Barker. Thank you. And all those in favour? Thank you, Councillors. That's carried unanimously.

Leave of absence requests - do we have any leave of absence requests?

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Mayor. I'll be away for mid April to mid May, so I will miss the April meeting.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Phelps. Can I please have a mover and a seconder for this leave of absence? Moved by Councillor Barker, seconded by Councillor Stapleton. Thank you. And all in favour? Thank you, Councillors. Carried unanimously.

Draft Transcript

Declarations of conflicts of interest. If a Councillor or an officer has a conflict of interest, they must declare it now and do so again just prior to the item being discussed. The Councillor and/or officer will be requested to leave chambers - or for those online, to be placed by the host in a virtual waiting room - while the matter is being considered. Once the matter is resolved, the Councillor and/or officer will be returned to the meeting. Are there any declarations of conflicts of interest in relation to tonight's agenda? No. Thank you, Councillors.

We turn to presentations. I have a brief presentation to make. Do any other Councillors have any presentations tonight? Thank you. Councillors, I want to take a moment to pay tribute to John Macca McKenzie, who died before Christmas. Macca was a long-time member of the Councillor's Anglesea River, or Kuarka Dorla, Working Group, a fishery scientist and a staunch advocate for a healthy Anglesea River. I honour Macca for his commitment to the place and people he loved. Thank you.

We now turn to public questions and submission time. The next agenda item is this public question time. Public question time is a time for community members to ask questions or make a submission at a Council meeting. We will always try to provide detailed answers to public questions. However, sometimes this can be difficult when a question relates to an item on the agenda where a decision has not yet been made. In these situations, you will still be invited to ask your question. However, it may be received by Council as a submission rather than as a question. I can also confirm that Councillors have been provided with copies of all questions and submissions ahead of the meeting.

Also, please be mindful that individual Councillors are not able to answer questions and any question or statement should be directed to Council as a whole through the Chair. Where your question relates to an item on the agenda, this will be debated shortly so you will be able to hear more from the Councillors during the debate.

We have 24 community members who have submitted 34 questions and submissions in total tonight and we turn to those questions now. The first question is from Mat Hines. Mat, please come forward and I invite you to ask your question.

Draft Transcript

MAT HINES: Okay. Thank you for the opportunity to ask this question tonight. The current Council plan strategy 1 states that Council will work with traditional owners to achieve reconciliation. Strategy 2 says Council ensures that decisions consider and respect traditional owner perspectives, culture and knowledge. The community vision states that the Council must engage and collaborate with traditional owners to ensure all actions respect the traditions, culture, health, social and other needs of Aboriginal communities.

Both the Council plan and the community vision were developed after extensive community consultation to guide the actions of Councillors. What is the purpose of Council working with the community to develop the Council plan and the community vision if Councillors are just going to try to override it through the lack of consideration, lack of consultation and disrespect for traditional owners and the broader community?

CR BODSWORTH: That's Mat's first question. So Mat, thanks for the question and thanks for taking an interest in tonight's agenda item. You've pointed out content from the 2021-25 Council plan and principle 10 of the community vision. We're in the fourth year of the Council plan and work is under way to develop and eventually adopt a new Council plan which includes a community engagement process currently under way. And Mat, I invite you to ask your second question, please.

MAT HINES: Okay. The recent consultation on the new Council plan asked community members about their experiences of discrimination in our community. Anyone who has engaged in local social media pages will have witnessed a rise in racism in our community, particularly towards our First Nations community, and attempts by some in our community to introduce divisive, Trumpian culture wars based on disinformation. What actions does Council plan to take to address the rise of racism and disinformation in our community?

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Mat. Throughout its history, Surf Coast Shire Council has promoted inclusion and equality and implemented antidiscrimination requirements. We'll continue to promote this through our work, which will include fair access to facilities, delivering new projects to meet accessibility requirements, addressing community perceptions of bias, and seeking to include people from all walks of life. Thanks, Mat, for your questions.

MAT HINES: Thank you.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Our next question is from Julie Dingle. I invite Julie to come forward.

JULIE DINGLE: Thank you. Question, Council has been engaged in a commitment to reconciliation since 2021, as detailed in its reconciliation plan, and dedication to this plan is to be applauded. What does Council anticipate the impact being to this important focus in supporting Wadawurrung-led Pilk Purriyn and other celebrations on the same day?

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Julie. Julie has two questions. I'll answer the first. Thanks for your question, Julie. Without assuming the potential impacts, the information report in tonight's agenda states Council has adopted a goal to work towards First Nations reconciliation and has adopted a Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation. If the proposed motion is carried, further work will be needed to understand the impact that this may have on Council's First Nations reconciliation work.

A strong theme of the consultation done in 2021 was that it is important for non-Aboriginal people to make decisions related to achieving reconciliation because the problems and sorrow have been caused by European colonisation. This was captured in the September 2021 Council meeting report. Julie, I invite you to ask your second question.

JULIE DINGLE: Thank you. Given the pain inherent in this day, is there an alternative way that Council could support some of those other groups at a different time?

CR BODSWORTH: So thanks, Julie. Yes, Council's First Nations reconciliation work can consider what support might be valued by groups at a different time. Thanks again, Julie.

JULIE DINGLE: Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Our next question is from George Richards. I invite George to come forward. Is George here? In that case, I'll read George's question.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: We might hold it over.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Okay, we'll hold George's - given the number of questions that we've got to get through, we'll hold George's question. George may turn up in the meantime.

So the next question is from John Foss. So John, I invite you to come forward and ask your question.

JOHN FOSS: Hello. Thank you, Mayor and Councillors. Firstly, I'd like to just introduce myself to some of the newer Councillors. My name is John Foss. I'm actually a former Councillor with the Surf Coast Shire, Torquay ward, and you can find my name up on the big board. One day you'll be up there. So - oh, first question?

CR BODSWORTH: Yes, please.

JOHN FOSS: Okay. Look, a bit of a history thing. Since 1938, Indigenous Elders across Australia have tried to raise with non-Indigenous people the whole question about Australia Day and what it means to First Nations people. I believe I sent an email to Councillors and forwarded with them a copy of what was called the Letter of Mourning written by William Cooper back in 1938 and it was one of the first times that Aboriginal nations really raised the question of Australia Day and how it impacted them in a negative way. Here we are 80 years later and Indigenous people, First Nations people, are still hurting from the painful memories of colonisation.

Now, in 2021, the Surf Coast Shire I believe showed great leadership by electing to stop celebrating events on Australia Day - I'm sorry, on 26 January. It was the right thing to do at that time and many, many of our people threw their support behind this particular initiative. Sorry, I've got paper.

So I'm going to condense my question, but the question relates to the rationale, I think point 3 in the Council agenda, and there's a statement by Councillor Bourke about how "celebrating Australia Day can offer numerous benefits for health, wellbeing and mental wellness. This is especially beneficial to families of all kinds".

So my question is to Council where is the evidence that supporting Australia Day, or celebrating Australia Day events on 26 January, has any sort of positive impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of our community? Where is the evidence that celebrating Australia Day has any

Draft Transcript

health, wellbeing or mental wellness benefits to a community that has been hurting from years of racial abuse and bias?

CR BODSWORTH: John, thank you. We're going to treat that as a submission.

JOHN FOSS: Mmm, okay.

CR BODSWORTH: I hope you understand that, because of what I referred to before with questions put more specifically to Councillors. Likewise, for your second question, which I believe you may be reframing more as a submission, I'd invite you to put that or --

JOHN FOSS: I can do that if you like.

CR BODSWORTH: -- leave it where you've got to.

JOHN FOSS: Okay. Look, I'll leave that as a submission, but just for the benefit of those in the gallery, I just raised questions about the community engagement process. There was a statement made on the Notice of Motion that there had been significant support for the change that was proposed by the motion and I'm just querying where is the evidence of that significant support. I'm happy to leave it there, thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, John. Thanks for reframing your questions as a submission, thank you.

So next is Corrina Eccles. I invite Corrina Eccles to come forward. So hi, Corrina. Thank you so much for coming in. If you don't mind, could you please read out both of your questions and we'll answer them both at the same time, thank you.

CORRINA ECCLES: Yes. Thanks for accepting my questions. So I am a proud Wadawurrung woman, a daughter of my father, a Wadawurrung Elder, stolen from his mother because of government acts and policies made about us without us. This trauma is felt in me and my children and one of them is present in the audience today. I live here in Doon Marn Warri, the place where the clouds and the sea country come together. I represent Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, who represent our family line. Wadawurrung Corporation has a strong working relationship with the Surf Coast Shire and it sees it as a local government leading in working with First

Draft Transcript

Nations mob. I work with 12 Councils. This is reflected in the Council plan and the important events like Pilk Purriyn.

Wadawurrung people only get to hold one event on Wadawurrung country and we chose to hold this event here in the Surf Coast Shire. Why? Because it was culturally safe. 26 January commemorates the raising of the British flag to proclaim British sovereignty over Aboriginal land. It symbolises devastating loss, sorrow and grief. Here, right here on this country, Wadawurrung people were almost wiped out. I sit here as one surviving blood line of Wadawurrung people living on this land and country.

Reinstating Australia Day celebrations on 26 January will cause deep hurt to Wadawurrung and all First Nations residents on the Surf Coast. Reinstating citizenship ceremonies hurts because it awards new citizenship on a day when we and many First Nations people symbolically lost so much and carry so much trauma.

Despite everything, Wadawurrung continues to invite all Councillors, all residents, all the community to Kolling wada-gnal, walk alongside us. Reflecting on my words, my question is will you choose to cause pain or continue to walk alongside us?

My second question: Surf Coast Shire is home to many First Nations residents who love this sea country and living here, the Shire for its commitment to First Nations people, Council's commitment is reflected in theme 1 of the Council plan the First Nations Reconciliation and in the community vision principle 10, respectful engagement and consultations with First Nations, with self-determination at the centre, we will strengthen relationships to collaboratively achieve meaningful change as we continue along the reconciliation journey. Surf Coast Shire must engage and collaborate with the appropriate Aboriginal representatives to ensure all actions respect the traditions, culture, health, social and other needs of the Aboriginal community.

We this Notice of Motion, Wadawurrung people have not been of the above, have not been spoken to, there has not been a consultation. This Notice of Motion's rationale suggests reinstating Australia Day celebrations will strengthen community unity, welcome new citizens and promote health and wellbeing. It will do the opposite. It will create division, alienate new citizens from First Nations experiences, and negatively impact our wellbeing as First Nations residents here on the Surf Coast.

Draft Transcript

My question: how can Council continue respectful engagement with First Nations mob if it chooses to reinstate Australia Day celebrations and citizenship ceremonies on 26 January? Does this community want to see 2,500 lie lows or do they want to see 2,500 people sitting deeply and listening to the longest history, stories and knowledge? Nyatne. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Corrina, thank you for joining us, thanks for your questions and thanks for all your work and leadership over many years on Wadawurrung country and beyond. We truly value the partnership we've worked with you and Wadawurrung on for many years. It is understanding that tonight's discussion and decision is very important and relates closely to Council's First Nations reconciliation goal. We want to be able to work with traditional owners and continue to be a trusted organisation for First Nations people whichever decision occurs tonight.

While I can't give a categoric answer to your questions, it is my deep and sincere hope we continue to work together and that Council plays a meaningful role in First Nations reconciliation. We know further work will be needed if the motion is carried to understand the impact that this may have on partnerships and Council's First Nations reconciliation work. Thanks for your question and for coming in tonight, Corrina.

Next we have a submission from Jordie Campbell. Is Jordie in the audience? Hi, Jordie. So Jordie, thanks so much for coming in. As you've put in a submission, we'll follow the same process as we have with the other submissions tonight and we'll receive your submission for us to consider when we consider the agenda item tonight. Please read out your submission when you're ready.

JORDIE CAMPBELL: Thanks. I stand here today not only representing myself, a proud palawa man, but also First Nations people from across this beautiful country and our ancestors that came before us. After deeply listening to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in 2021, the Surf Coast Shire made a commitment to reconciliation. You listened to the pain, the grief, the suffering 26 January leaves on our people. You understood that the date was a day of mourning as declared by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in 1938.

I felt such pride to be a resident of the Surf Coast Shire in that time. Not only were you listening to the original custodians of the lands, but you were also becoming leaders in reconciliation, being one of the first Councils to no longer

Draft Transcript

take any formal part in Australia Day celebrations. I felt listened to, I felt understood and I felt cared for.

14 October 2023, the Referendum. Grief is the only word to describe this date because we all felt immense loss, suffering as our nation voted no to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in Parliament. This led to a deep feeling of not being wanted on our own country, rejection at its worst.

Aunty Corrina Eccles sent me a message that day to remind me that I live, work and socialise on a special area. She informed me that all of the suburbs on Wadawurrung country on the Surf Coast Shire voted majority yes: Aireys Inlet, 76% yes; Anglesea, 71% yes; Torquay, 67% yes; Lorne, on Gadubanud country, 62% yes. This is only a few of the yes votes.

These numbers are irrefutable truths that the majority of the Surf Coast Shire residents listen in respect to First Nations people. Most importantly, residents in the Surf Coast Shire are united in a desire to walk together towards reconciliation.

26 January 2025, the morning of Pilk Purriyn, I sat on my own at Cosy Corner surrounded by allies all listening deeply to the truth being told. We had the largest attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to date, with the stage overflowing for the mob photo, despite Corrina identifying more and more faces in the crowd. You could feel the trust and pride from the mob towards the Surf Coast Shire this morning and I feel like it was a genuine step towards reconciliation.

We have been lied to countless times, had commitments, promises and events given us to be taken away too many times throughout history to remember, so naturally we have reservations to any support we are given. The sheer number of mob presence says more than words ever could. We are starting to believe that you wanted us, you wanted to walk with us and you were listening, the feeling of pride for this land I live on returning.

17 February 2025 I received a phone call that broke my heart, the motion that Council should support and participate in events celebrating Australia Day each year on 26 January or any further date by the Federal Government as Australia Day. How does this align with your commitment to reconciliation?

"Our Council acknowledges the past laws, the Government policies, actions, attitudes have caused great pain, grief and suffering for Aboriginal and Torres

Draft Transcript

Strait Islander people. We feel and express our deep sorrow for these actions and attitudes have occurred and we are determined to ensure that they are not repeated". Your website is plastered with this commitment and sentiment. Yet once again I am faced with the shadowing realisation that the commitment to reconciliation, to not repeat past actions that cause such pain, grief and suffering could all just be words.

I ask you, is this the commitment you want to make to my people, the legacy you want to leave behind? Do you want to be responsible for giving us hope that there is a future that we can walk together towards reconciliation, a future where we can be a healed country together or to be forever a source of the continued cycle of mistrust that emanates from celebrating 26 January, our declared day of mourning. If this is your vision of reconciliation, I can assure you the trust you have built since 2021 will be lost. Thank you for your consideration.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Jordie, for the submission. Our next public question is from Aleisja Henry. Aleisja, are you here? Thank you.

ALEISJA HENRY: Thank you. My question is in relation to the community engagement and participation and the analysis of these results relating to the Notice of Motion for the future recognition of an Australia Day. I'd like to know detail on the following items: how were community cohorts analysed and segmented to ensure hard to reach population groups and directly impacted or sensitive population groups were equitably included; how were community reached and were barriers to participation considered; what mediums of communication were used to engage with community; how long was the engagement period open for; how have the engagement responses been analysed and considered as accurate data representations of the community; is this the only engagement that will take place before a decision is made; what model of best practice for public engagement and participation was followed during the engagement process? Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks for your question, Aleisja. I'm going to refer this question to the CEO to respond to.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Hi, Alicia. Thank you for your question. Because it's a Notice of Motion, Council hasn't undertaken any consultation on the Notice of Motion before it came to Council. But thanks for your question. Thank you.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Aleisja. The next question is from Sally Groom - Sally, if you're here.

SALLY GROOM: Thank you, everybody. My first question: why has the proposed motion regarding Council's official endorsement of celebrating 26 January been made in such haste? I could support the motion were it to be amended to include the words "once there is a change of date from 26 January to an alternative date", but while Invasion Day protests continue every year and while a part of Australia feels free to celebrate on what is a day of mourning for the majority of First Nations people and all of their non-Indigenous allies. That's the first one. Do you want the second one?

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Sally. So just to clarify, your questions are being taken as submissions tonight, so I'd invite you to go with the second one as well.

Sally Groom: Okay. How could the revision back to official Council support of a 26 January celebration promote truth telling and subsequent healing as per the Surf Coast Shire's reconciliation plan?

CR BODSWORTH: So, Sally, thanks for your questions and as I said, your questions are being taken as submissions tonight because Councillors will be shortly debating the matter which your questions refer to and answers will be clear through that debate, and also if you have any questions to follow up on that, you're welcome to reach out afterwards.

SALLY GROOM: Great. Thanks, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: So next is Prudence Dawson. Prudence, thanks for coming. So as with Sally before you, I'm going to ask that you read your question as a submission and once Council has debated and reached a decision on this, if you still have questions, feel free to reach out to us.

PRUDENCE GROOM: Okay, thank you. I'm a migrant here. My first question is citizenship ceremonies represent the formal welcoming of migrants into the Australian community. 26 January represents the date when dispossession of land and decimation of this country's First People started. How does Council believe that holding citizenship ceremonies on 26 January will lead to a harmonious community, where migrants can feel proud of their new country and its history?

Draft Transcript

My second question is Council is invited to consider how a perceived public insult to First Peoples and a potential deterioration in the relationships with this community might impact the tourism industry of the Surf Coast. How can we expect traditional owners to contribute to events such as the Rip Curl Pro and to perform welcome to country if the Shire overturns the policy associated with reconciliation, resulting in First Peoples feeling unwelcome in their own country?

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Prudence. Next we have Ebony Hickey. Ebony, would you like to come forward? Thanks, Ebony. Thanks for your submission and question and thanks for all your work and leadership on Eastern Maar country and beyond. Can you please read out what you've submitted?

EBONY HICKEY: Yes, nyatne, everyone, and thank you for allowing me to speak on Wadawurrung country, Corrina. My name is Ebony Hickey and I am a Gulidjan woman from the Surf Coast within Winchelsea Shire. I've had the privilege of meeting many of your Councillors over the years, but there's some new ones as well.

So, yes, for context and introductions, yes, live in Winchelsea, I work for Wadawurrung Aboriginal Co-op, I'm the chairperson of the regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee for the Barwon South West region and also the chairperson for the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group for the Barwon South West region and also the deputy chairperson for Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, which is one of the registered Aboriginal parties in your shire and also has determined native title for Gadubanud beyond Painkalac Creek.

So I've got extensive experience working in community development locally and I've only ever known our Aboriginal communities to champion unity, to be welcoming to all citizens to promote inclusion and equity, to work passionately to promote holistic health and wellbeing outcomes and participate in cultural exchanges.

Our ancestors' contribution to caring for country have contributed to the Surf Coast Shire being one of the most beautiful places to live, work and visit which gives us the biocultural landscape that is host to economic and social benefits the Surf Coast Shire and its residents continue to benefit substantially from. Our society and Council has worked towards fostering an inclusive community spirit where we can reflect our collective identity, shared aspirations and

Draft Transcript

ensuring we have a region that promotes meaningful respectful events and ceremonies that are inclusive for all.

For some of our newer Councillors that campaigned on getting back to basics, this seems like a substantial waste of money and resource, overturning decades of work done by locals for locals. Our Aboriginal community have committed clearly and consistently that we need to walk forward together and that this isn't possible on 26 January. We ask that you continue to walk with us. Is that something that's possible? Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you so much, Ebony, for joining us and asking your question. Next we have Andrew Vandenberg. Andrew, as you come forward, I would like to outline that yours is another one that we'll need to receive as a submission. If you could please read this out when you're ready. Thanks for joining us.

ANDREW VANDENBERG: I did intend this to be a submission, so thank you. I will also cut this submission short because the points I wanted to make about feelings of belonging, and so forth, have been very eloquently put by both Corinna and Jordie and Ebony. I can't put it any better than they can, certainly not.

What I can tell you about is my experience with the petition that you've seen before you. So when it was submitted, there were 555, 556 signatures, I think 400 from the Surf Coast. Two days ago there was 750 and this afternoon there's 1,500. Obviously some of you are thinking oh, but how many are from the Shire? I've downloaded all the details, I've sorted it by post code. I think there's about 1,000 ratepayers on that petition. This was done at very short notice. We only did this in two weeks.

This reinforces what Jordie was saying about the booth results in the Shire. I was a booth captain in this building here and there were 1,000 yes votes to 500 no votes. Those proportions were repeated the entire coast down to Lorne. That's a lot of thousands of people. Winchelsea, on the other hand, voted the same way as the country, but Winchelsea is an outlier within this Shire.

So those are the numbers you're facing, those are the numbers of people who respect Wadawurrung, First Nations people, and do not want the Council to start insulting people, start generating bad feelings. Two people here said

Draft Transcript

they're feeling sick, they did not want to be here tonight and I understand why. I was almost in tears listening to the way they were talking about things. This is serious, the harm that can be caused. It's not just pretend, it's not just talk. It's really meaningful to a lot of people.

So I urge you look at those numbers. The ratepayers here support this and respect the feelings of a significant number of people in your community. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Andrew, and the two petitions are on tonight's agenda for Councillors to consider as they look to the debate on the Notice of Motion tonight. Next is Jen De Neefe, representing Surf Coast for Reconciliation. Jen. Thanks for coming in tonight, Jen, and submitting your question.

JEN DE NEEFE: Bear with me. Currently there is a strong relationship between the Shire and Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar traditional owners. Residents support this relationship as demonstrated via strong majority vote in favour of yes within the Shire and the very large attendance at the Wadawurrung-led pre-dawn ceremony Pilk Purriyn. If community events are funded on 26 January, how will the Council manage the risk that this may fracture longstanding relationships between the Shire and traditional owners and undermine the Reconciliation Action Plan, which is central to Shire activities?

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Jen. We've done a great deal of work to strengthen partnerships with traditional owners over recent years. We have a level of optimism that this sets a solid foundation with an awareness that things can change. We know further work will be needed if the motion is carried to understand the impact that this may have on partnerships and Council's First Nations reconciliation work. Thanks again for your question, Jen, and thanks for coming in tonight.

JEN DE NEEFE: Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Next I'd invite Brent McGregor to come forward, representing Surf Coast for Reconciliation. Hi, Brent.

BRENT MCGREGOR: Hi. Citizenship ceremonies in the Shire are currently conducted four times a year. These ceremonies confer both formal legal rights and responsibilities and powerful symbolic recognition of belonging to the

Draft Transcript

Australian community. How does reverting to holding one of these ceremonies on 26 January promote wellbeing and belonging within the Surf Coast community when so many people in our Shire find the day divisive and distressing?

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Brent. I'm going to refer to the CEO for an answer to your question, Brent, so stay tuned.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: I can perhaps give you an answer to that question, Brent. We know citizenship ceremonies are really special events for the individuals and families involved in them and while we can't predict what will happen as part of tonight's debate, depending on what people's wishes are, we are able to find dates that are suitable that meet people's needs. So we understand the kind of intention of your question and we can accommodate people's wishes and needs through that process.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Brent. Next is Cormach Evans. Cormach, I'd invite you to come forward. So it doesn't look like Cormach is with us at the moment. So that brings us to the end of questions from people who are attending in person tonight. We do have some questions which were submitted on this topic from people who I've been advised weren't attending. I'm going to read out those names to check if any are here. So we have Linley Hurrell, Sue O'Shanassy and Darren Noyes-Brown. No, it looks like those - and Peter Rees. Peter, you're here? Okay. So I would invite you, Peter, to come forward and ask your question.

PETER REES: (Inaudible).

CR BODSWORTH: I'm happy to read out your question on your behalf if you'd like. Sorry?

PETER REES: Two questions.

CR BODSWORTH: Yes, I can do that. I have them here. Would you like me to read those out on your behalf?

PETER REES: Yes.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay. So Peter's first question: "There are about 40,000 residents in the Surf Coast Council region and there was never any professional polling carried out to determine their opinions about Council

Draft Transcript

cancelling Australia Day celebrations. About 250 of these residents identify as Aboriginal and Council assumed all these people have exactly the same opinion, which is racial stereotyping and demeaning. Apparently, Council only engaged with about a dozen Aboriginal people in determining to ban Australia Day celebrations. The Council totally ignored the opinions of non-Indigenous residents, 99.4%, where there was widespread offence taken. Polling in the Geelong Advertiser for the Geelong Council vote on Australia Day showed that 93% of residents wanted Australia Day restored and that would have included residents from Surf Coast Shire, so why did Council act on the opinion of a dozen people, rather than conducting a professional poll of all 40,000 Surf Coast residents to determine their opinions?"

So that is the only question that I have, Peter. So I'll answer that question. No, that's fine. I'm happy to answer the question from here.

The next - sorry, just referring to my notes here. So the answer to Peter's question is contained in Council's consideration of a flag policy and schedule in March 2021, when it was determined to undertake consultation with First Nations people when considering a flag flying schedule and the motion included ways Council can acknowledge 26 January. The resolution was supported seven votes to one. I will request officers reach out to Peter and direct him to that previous deliberation, which will provide him with the rationale from this Council decision. Thank you, Peter, for attending tonight and allowing us to read out your question.

Just excuse me while I go back to where I was. So with the ones who aren't attending tonight, we're going to proceed with all questions where the person asking is in attendance and we'll go back to the other ones. So our next question is from Geoff Lewtas, from Anglesea. I think I saw Geoff. Geoff, I'd invite you to come forward and ask your question. Thanks for coming in, Geoff.

GEOFF LEWTAS: Thank you. I have two questions. My questions concern the Anglesea Community Health Hub. The first one is given there is considerable opposition by many Anglesea residents and ratepayers to housing in the community precinct and Council have stated they are willing to explore other sites for affordable housing, why hasn't the Council engaged with Alcoa in good faith about the possibility of acquiring land they own for this purpose, land Alcoa has in their freehold master plan of 2018 labelled as being suitable for affordable housing?

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Geoff. I'm going to refer to the CEO to answer your first question and then we'll invite you to ask your second.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Hi, Geoff. Thank you for your questions tonight. So any process to reconsider the current Anglesea Futures Framework to facilitate standard residential housing on the Alcoa land would need to be led by the State Government with Alcoa. So Alcoa would need to seek that work to be redone and Council would then be involved in that. Council officers did meet with Alcoa in early February to discuss their progress and plans and at that meeting Alcoa remained focused on completing the rehab of the power station and mine sites, as opposed to exploring a review of the Anglesea Futures Framework. But thanks for your question.

GEOFF LEWTAS: Okay, I am aware of that, but question 2.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Geoff.

GEOFF LEWTAS: Question 2 refers to affordable housing. I have a little difficulty in understanding who will occupy this housing. Will Council conduct a comprehensive survey to establish who will occupy the housing, key worker, affordable and/or social recipients and whether they are agreeable to the location and what type of housing they require? I know that healthcare workers, teachers, bank workers do not require affordable housing. Hospitality key workers do, but most are on a casual basis and the housing is intended for permanent occupation.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Geoff. I'll refer that question to the CEO for a response.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: So Geoff, if Council is successful in gaining the - attracting the funding from this application once it's considered and supported by - if it's supported by Council, the intention would be to then seek a housing provider to work with and through that process, once the housing provider was onboard, we would look to see, in partnership with them, what is the approach for determining who's the most appropriate people to utilise that housing.

So you might be aware of the project we've got in Aireys Inlet, where we have a housing provider on board, and there's a whole kind of process that will happen around ensuring that we have the most suitable people that meet the

Draft Transcript

needs in terms of things like the worker accommodation needs for any project that we would then deliver in Anglesea.

GEOFF LEWTAS: Okay. I point out that that's different. The Aireys Inlet proposal is not in a community precinct like Anglesea's is, so it's completely different, from my point of view.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: I hear that, Geoff. I guess the process would be similar in the sense that we would work - our intention would be to work with the housing provider to determine who would be the most appropriate people to utilise any housing that we had in that community precinct and we've always had the intention that should we deliver a housing project there, it should be available particularly to support worker accommodation and that broader need within the community.

CR BODSWORTH: Geoff, thanks for joining us tonight and asking your questions. Our next question is from Andrew Smith.

CLAIRE NONTAPAN: I'm clearly not Andrew Smith. I'm sorry.

CR BODSWORTH: I was wondering.

CLAIRE NONTAPAN: I'm his wife, Clare Nontapan. Andrew took unwell in the carpark just before the meeting and it's probably because his brain rattled so hard on the trip down Ghazeepore Road.

I'd like to offer my respects to all First Nations people past, present and emerging and acknowledge that this is a really special night to be here and that my question pales into insignificance when compared to what we're all thinking about.

It is about Ghazeepore Road. I have some title plans here. I'm sure that Councillors have seen them, are aware of them. As per our title plan TP8690509Y, part of our property shows a section of Ghazeepore Road being in our ownership. Can the Shire please work with us - this has been going on for years - to rectify the anomalies seen on the above mentioned plan? My first question.

CR BODSWORTH: I'll refer this question to the CEO for a response. Thanks.

Draft Transcript

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thank you for coming in and please give our best wishes to Andrew. I hope he's feeling better soon. I understand one of our property officers had a conversation with Andrew and we are committed to working with you to resolve that issue.

CLAIRE NONTAPAN: I hope so. We have tried several times and it is quite a difficult situation and of course we have considered closing the road on many occasions, particularly at the moment when the upkeep of the road seems to have fallen behind.

My second question, with the increased use of the road by unsuitable vehicles, large trucks - I won't name any companies - rubbish dumping and poor grading materials, and that's really important, what does the shire intend to do about the future safety and maintenance of Ghazeepore Road, particularly between Dickens and Coombes?

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. I'll refer the second question to the CEO as well.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thank you for your second question and if there are ever - when there are issues with the surface of the road, we really encourage you to let us know so that our maintenance teams can get on to doing any grading that might be needed on our roads. Particularly in dry weather, the roads can deteriorate quite quickly, so we really value and appreciate when our community members let us know.

But over the last little while, Council has undertaken a number of initiatives along various sections of the road to lift the safety and performance of the road. So we've undertaken the intersection improvements at Coombes and Blackgate and Dickens through intersection ceiling and the guardrail installation. We're also looking for funding opportunities to further do some intersection sealing at Dickens Road with some possible speed reductions as well in that space.

But our maintenance crews at Council continue to inspect the road. We know that there's higher levels of utilisation. I wasn't aware that there's high levels of truck utilisation and so we're committed to completing that maintenance work in line with our road management plan. So if you are concerned that the road is deteriorating, please let us know because our maintenance team will come out and have a look and, where needed, will schedule the grading or improvement of the road.

Draft Transcript

CLAIRE NONTAPAN: Okay, and like a broken record, I've been doing it every day for many years and it's the worst it's ever been at the moment. It's really bad.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Yes.

CLAIRE NONTAPAN: People are now driving outside the road. They're driving on the nature strips just because their cars can't do it.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: We will follow that up with our maintenance teams tomorrow. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you for joining us and asking the questions.

That brings us to the end of public questions where we have been notified that the person asking is in attendance. I'll just make sure that I haven't missed anyone else who is here in person, so when I read out these names, please raise your hand if you're here - Howard Taylor, Colin McDonald, Matthew Vincent, Dean Hurlston. Thank you.

We were missing George Richards before. Has George joined us in the meantime?

I know that public question time has been longer than usual tonight, we've had a very large number of questions, but it's important that we've taken this time to listen to the community. We do have more questions from people who aren't attending in person, but have still submitted their question in advance. I'm going to read out a summary of the questions and a summarised answer for brevity. These summaries will be included in the meeting minutes and officers will also provide a more detailed written response where this is needed.

The next question is from Sue O'Shanassy. In summary, Sue is requesting that Council engage in community consultation prior to making further decisions on 26 January. Sue's question will have an answer at the completion of agenda item 3.1. I'll request that officers reach out to Sue after a decision has been made.

The next question is from Linley Hurrell. Linley is asking about Council's current commitment to reconciliation. This question is quite similar to several

Draft Transcript

others that we've received tonight. However, I will also ask that officers reach out to Linley following the meeting.

Our next question is from Darren Noyes-Brown. Darren's question relates to 26 January also and is quite similar to many of the others that we've heard. Darren is requesting that Council consult with traditional owners prior to decision making on this and also requests that Councillors undertake further training in this space. While this is another one that relates to the debate tonight, Council will consider the comments and questions as part of their decision making. I can confirm that all Councillors have been provided with the full questions and submissions.

The next question is from Howard Taylor and relates to the Anglesea Community and Health Hub expressing opposition to the provision of housing at the hub and questioning whether Council will continue to pursue housing in its plan for the hub. I'm going to ask if the CEO can respond to this one.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Sure. Hi, Howard. I hope you're watching from home. Council obviously tonight is considering whether to make an application for the next stage of the design in item 4.2 of the agenda tonight and this is based on the concept plan adopted in the July 2024 meeting, which included affordable rental housing for workers.

In terms of possible funding streams for that, we do understand that there's strong bipartisan commitment at both a State and a Federal Government level of government to increase the supply of housing and we do anticipate that funding will continue to be available through various programs.

On the matter relating to community views, this is covered in - in terms of community views and perspectives on the work that was done around the hub, this was covered in the July 2024 Council report, so it would be worth having a look at that report because that goes into some detail in terms of the different perspectives and views community brought to the concept design at that point. Thanks, Howard.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks for the question, Howard, and thanks to the CEO for the answer.

I'm going to go back to George Richards' question because George was expected tonight, but hasn't made it. George has made a submission. I'm going to read that out on George's behalf: "As a relatively long-time resident

Draft Transcript

of the Surf Coast Shire, I wish to express my support for the motion to reinstate Australia Day to a celebration of all residents. The change back in September 2021 to discontinue traditional celebrations in favour of First Nations (mourning) was a dark day for the Shire and all Australians, new and old. There is no reason why the day cannot be multifaceted with appealing to all residents. I can tell you that out in the coalface, golf clubs, bowls clubs, the RSL and service clubs there is a significant movement to return to the Australia Day celebrations flying our flag, not some conjured up marketing facsimile coupled with a welcome to country ceremony devised for a television program written by John Clark. I do hope that you can see your way forward to represent all residents, not just those with prejudice."

So thanks to George for his submission. There are a couple more questions and then we're done with questions, so thanks for your patience. We've done --

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Colin.

CR BODSWORTH: We've done Colin?

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: No, we're up to Colin.

CR BODSWORTH: We haven't done Colin. Sorry, I'm losing my place in all the excitement. We have a question from Colin McDonald. Colin is requesting evidence of need for key worker housing in Anglesea. I'm going to ask the CEO to respond to this one also.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thanks, Colin, for your question. Council declared a key worker accommodation crisis in 2021 and since that time, further information and data that supports that position Council took at that time has come from two business needs surveys in 2021 and 2024, inquiries and referrals that we've received here at Council around need for housing, also the Housing Challenge 3230 Group we've had referrals and they've also collected stories about housing needs in Anglesea and the region, plus the housing demand data provided by the Victorian Housing Register for the Anglesea area. Colin, thank you for your question.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Colin, and thanks, CEO, for the response.

Next we received two questions from - we have two questions to go. Next we received two questions from Matthew Vincent. The first question is requesting

Draft Transcript

information about how much money Council spends in Lorne and the second question is requesting information around the process for Lorne to become a separate municipality. I'll pass these over to the CEO to respond.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Hi, Matthew. I hope you're joining us online. In relation to your first question, Council delivers a range of services across the Shire, some of which benefit the whole of the Shire rather than associated with individual wards or towns.

In addition, not all data in relation to Council's operating services, such as library services, child and family health and youth services, is classified by township. Because of this, it's actually a significant amount of work to try and work out what the cost would be just for Lorne in that, so I am not able to give you our expenditure and budgets on that in relation to Lorne specifically.

However, Council - it's easier to do that on a project basis, so our project works are classified by a ward or whole of shire, so some of those benefit is derived across the municipality. So that can be tricky to then say the benefit for Lorne, but from these classifications, Lorne projects have been identified as having expenditure of about \$1.2 million so far this year. These projects have included the Stripling Reserve Stadium work that we're doing, the Lorne Transfer Station upgrade, traffic management improvements and road safety works.

Matthew, in relation to your second question, this is not a decision that gets made regularly and it's more a topic for the Minister for Local Government as this is not something that we at Council would be involved in. But if you want some advice around how to pursue that through the local government minister, then perhaps get in touch with council and we can give you some advice around how you might explore that opportunity.

CR BODSWORTH: So thanks, Matthew, for the questions and to the CEO for those responses.

Our final question is from Dean Hurlston and Dean is asking how much we spend each Council meeting on meals and refreshments for Council staff. If the CEO could please respond to this.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Hi, Dean. We spend approximately \$150 in total at each meeting to support our Councillors as part of the delivery of the meeting.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, CEO. And thanks, everybody, for your patience during our public question time, a very extensive public question time, and thanks to people who've engaged with us with questions and submissions.

We move on to petitions. There are two petitions for tonight's meeting. Officers have requested I note that to support the community in the preparation of petitions, a petition template is available on Council's website. Until recently, this template has included Council's logo on it. I have been asked to advise that following some community feedback, the template has been updated to remove this logo to avoid any perception that Council is affiliated with the petitions it receives.

The first petition on our agenda is item 2.1, Receipt of Petition Titled 'Surf Coast for Australia Day'. As this petition relates to an agenda item for this Council meeting, the recommendation includes for us to agree to consider this petition as part of our deliberations on the agenda item. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Barker.

CR BARKER: As per the recommendation.

CR BODSWORTH: As per the recommendation, thank you. And do we have a seconder? Thank you, Councillor Grist. Councillor Barker, I'd invite you to speak to the motion.

CR BARKER: Thanks. I'll just be brief. I understand this petition was handed out around the Shire. They've got signatures from both within and from outside of the Shire. It's conforming to the Governance Rules and was submitted before the due date for this meeting.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Barker. Councillor Grist?

CR GRIST: Nothing. Councillor Barker has covered it pretty well.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this motion? Thank you, Councillors. We'll now put the motion to the vote. All those in favour. Thanks and the motion is carried unanimously.

The second petition on our agenda is item 2.2, Receipt of Petition Titled '26 January in Surf Coast Shire'. As this petition also relates to an agenda item for this Council meeting, the recommendation includes for us to agree to consider

Draft Transcript

this petition as part of our deliberations on that agenda item. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Pattison - as per the recommendation?

CR PATTISON: Yes, it is.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. And do we have a seconder? Thank you, Councillor Walker. Councillor Pattison, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR PATTISON: Just briefly. I think it's really important that we receive this petition. It's in the spirit of democracy that we receive all petitions so that voices of the community can be heard irrespective of whether there may be close - how close they are to our Council meeting. As long as they can be included in the agenda and it's not holding up the distribution of the agenda, it makes sense, so that's in the spirit of local democracy that we really want to hear from our community. So I commend the people in the community for putting their time to sign the petition.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Pattison. Councillor Walker?

CR WALKER: No, I think Liz covered that well.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this motion? Councillor Barker?

CR BARKER: Thanks, Mayor. In the November 2023 meeting and plenty of other times, I've raised concerns about non-conforming petitions. If you want to know why the community trust in the organisation is deteriorating, it's because of this and many other actions that show me that the organisation treats the community with contempt. By having inconsistent application of rules, it sets this foundation. It seldom learns from its mistakes, rarely can be questioned, and I see more and more examples of conflicts of interest and political bias of people within the organisation.

Additionally, this petition was submitted after the date that petitions are accepted for Council meetings, but in our Governance Rules, Governance Rule 23.4, this allows the inclusion after the closing date. But I do wonder if the petition at agenda item 2.1 would have been accepted under this condition.

When it comes to the conformity within the Governance Rules, I don't particularly like rules myself, but if we're going to have rules, we need to make

Draft Transcript

sure that they're consistently applied. If you want to have your say, I'd encourage you to follow the Governance Rules as they're set out because in that way, it puts you on a level platform. By running things outside of the Governance Rules, you just create this divide where some people have to jump through the hurdles and others don't. So if you want to make your best foot forward, please follow the guidance that Council provides and we'll all be able to be on the same page.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Barker. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Thanks, Councillor Stapleton.

CR STAPLETON: Thanks, Mayor. If you read the Governance Rules thoroughly, they actually do allow for petitions outside of the conforming requirements to be accepted, so accepting this petition actually is within the bounds of our Governance Rules and it is an essential function of democracy to provide our community with every opportunity to engage with Council and provide feedback on important issues such as the one we are shortly debating.

Although the Governance Rules do stipulate certain formats to be followed for petitions, we also know that digital and online petitions have become commonplace and therefore Council traditionally, at least over the last few years, has accepted these petitions, despite the fact that they are in specifically a non-conforming format. This is something that Council address when the Governance Rules come up for review, which I think will be happening later this year or definitely during this Council term.

We know that this petition relates to a significant and really important issue for many in our community and given we are all concerned about reflecting the views across our community, it would not be in the spirit of democracy, good decision making and listening to reject either of the petitions before us here tonight. So I encourage all Councillors to support the receipt of this petition.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to this motion? No. Thank you, Councillors. And do we have any closing comments from Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Only to say that I just had a quick look and there's 1,607 signatures online.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillors. We'll now put that motion to the vote. All those in favour. And against? Thank you, Councillors. The vote is carried 8-1.

We now move to Notices of Motion. There is one Notice of Motion for tonight's meeting which relates to the future recognition of Australia Day. Councillor Bourke, you submitted this Notice of Motion. Would you like to move the motion? Thank you. And do we have a seconder for this motion? Thank you, Councillor Grist. Excuse me while I take a sec to fill out the paperwork. And Councillor Bourke, I'd invite you to speak to the motion.

CR BOURKE: Thank you, Mayor. "I, Councillor Rebecca Bourke, give notice of my intention to move" --

CR BODSWORTH: Sorry, thanks.

CR BOURKE: "I, Councillor Rebecca Bourke, give notice of my intention to move the following motion today, 25 February, namely, that Council: 1. Supports and participates in events celebrating Australia Day each year, on 26 January or any future date gazetted by our Federal Government as Australia Day, 1.1 Designating Australia Day as a tier 1 event in all future event calenders, for the purpose of supporting community groups or organisations with Australia Day events which are open to the general public; and 1.2 Conducting citizenship ceremonies on Australia Day as gazetted each year. 2. For the purpose of implementation clarity, confirms that this resolution does not alter Council's position as stated in points 1 and 6 of the Council resolution on agenda item 6.3, dated 28 September 2021, which is currently implemented through Council's Flag Policy and the delivery of the Pilk Purriyn event."

CR BODSWORTH: You have extra time to speak to the motion if you like.

CR BOURKE: I won't be taking much time. The purpose of this motion is to work towards bringing our community together with kindness and respect. This motion honours and respects the need for mourning, truth telling and gathering. This motion honours the Aboriginal flag being flown at half mast. In symbolism with these sentiments, this motion additionally aims to bring our wider community together on a day that is gazetted by our Federal Government, therefore potentially allowing a change of date in the future. The potential of this motion to be healing, inclusive and successful in community unity, gathering, understanding in all respects is significant.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Bourke. Councillor Grist?

CR GRIST: Thank you, Mayor. Firstly, I'd like to congratulate Councillor Bourke on delivery of a very clear and precise motion. It has a thoughtful rationale that will lead to a fair and balanced outcome if endorsed by Council.

My issue with Council's current position as it relates specifically to the formal celebration of Australia Day is that from the information provided to Councillors from the responsible officers, the community were not broadly consulted on their views before the 2021 resolution was implemented.

If Councillors also consider that recent petitions and independent local commercial polling emphatically support this motion, that the community supported the election of three Surf Coast Councillors who specifically campaigned on supporting this motion, the recent statements from both major parties' federal leaders and deputy leaders that we should celebrate Australia Day, and a growing level of community angst that the Council's position does not reflect their own on this issue, then it is quite obvious that the previous Council got the 2021 resolution very wrong, with an outcome that does not provide a balanced approach for all of the community's wishes.

Councillor Bourke's specialist skills in mediation are very much on display in this motion so that whether you see Australia Day as a day of grievance or celebration, both positions are catered for in this resolution amendment. Allowing both to occur with equal standing will hopefully see community events gel to a day of reflection, a celebration of all we have achieved as a nation and a toast to the promise of a prosperous future together. I commend this motion and will happily vote in favour of it.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Grist. Do any other Councillors wish to speak? Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. Before I speak to the motion, I'd like to foreshadow an alternative motion that sets in train good governance and a considered approach to very important issues of how we can respectfully engage on 26 January. Can Governance please put my motion on the screen?

CR BODSWORTH: Yes, thank you. Please display the foreshadowed alternative.

Draft Transcript

CR PATTISON: It has been circulated to Councillors.

CR BODSWORTH: So for Councillors and public benefit, I'll just outline the procedure in this case. With an alternate motion having been foreshadowed during the debate, under section 34 of our Governance Rules - thanks, Councillor Pattison - if the NoM isn't - if the Notice of Motion is not successful --

CR PATTISON: Sorry, Governance has put the wrong motion up.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay. We'll just have a short pause while we get the correct one up. I'll go back to just explaining the process. So when an alternate motion is foreshadowed during the debate, the Councillor foreshadowing an alternate motion gets to move that motion if the substantive motion, which in this case is Councillor Bourke's motion, is unsuccessful. If that motion is unsuccessful, then Councillor Pattison would be invited to move the motion that she's now foreshadowing. So is that the correct motion now on the board?

CR PATTISON: That's the correct motion, yes.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks for that to the governance team. Councillors I know have had an opportunity to look at that motion, so that's foreshadowed now. We'll continue with the substantive debate. So far Councillors Bourke and Grist have spoken to the motion. Councillor Pattison, do you wish to speak to the motion?

CR PATTISON: Yes, please, that would be good, thank you. I'd like to start saying that I am so sorry for the hurt that this NoM is causing our community. By not supporting this NoM, my fellow Councillors, we can take time to understand the views and values of our community and this pain doesn't need to be inflicted on many of our community.

Fellow Councillors, we have a responsibility to be fully informed about the impacts of our decisions. For the new Councillors, there has not yet been an opportunity to complete cultural awareness training, nor engage directly with local traditional owner groups, and that's been expressed as something that's really concerning by people that have put submissions in today.

Some of you, and great work to those that have, have actually taken the time to engage with some of our traditional owners and that shows good

Draft Transcript

governance and good decision making and I commend you on that. For those that haven't, the foreshadowed motion tonight provides you the opportunity to take a breath, listen and learn and then choose down the track if you want to progress with this further.

26 January 2026 is still 11 months away. We do not need to make divisive decisions tonight without all the information and understanding at hand. That is not good governance.

I do not see how this motion can be supported and uphold our commitment to good governance, respect and leadership. It is for these reasons that I have foreshadowed an alternative motion. My motion that was on the screen earlier enables what is missing, good governance, time to engage and learn. What does 26 January mean to First Nations people and their allies and why is it important to them?

It creates a clear path to advocate around changing the date. It shows respect to all those that are impacted by the decisions and that is the minimum that our community deserves from their leaders. Is there a need to rush this motion through tonight?

This matter is obviously so important to so many people. In the four and a half years that I have had the privilege of being a Councillor at the Surf Coast Shire, we have never had this many people in the gallery. That speaks volumes to how important this is to so many people.

To make an informed decision, we need to allow officers time to fully investigate both sides of the issue, prepare a report and brief Councillors on the impacts and things to consider before a change to an existing policy occurs. The overwhelming feedback that is being received through the submissions tonight and by Councillors via emails over the last week focus on the impacts and understanding that decisions should not be made in a rushed manner. They are seeking Councillors to please take time to understand what you are doing and the impacts of your decision and there's the simple question of have you engaged with our traditional owners?

I want all Councillors to have an opportunity to undertake cultural awareness training. I want a fulsome investigation by officers on impacts, both positive and negative, around reinstating official celebrations on 26 January. I want to allow time for consideration prior to 26 January 2026. Remember there is still 11 months before this decision needs to be made. I want to allow time for

Draft Transcript

relationships to develop between Councillors and not drive a wedge between the Councillor group at such an early stage in our term.

I just have two more sentences, if that's alright, sorry. The Mayor recited the Pledge at the start of the meeting and it said, "As Councillors, we carry out our responsibilities with diligence and integrity and make fair decisions of lasting value for the wellbeing of our community and environment". If you support this NoM, fellow Councillors, and the rushed approach to decision making, can you honestly say that you are fulfilling your commitment to the Surf Coast Shire pledging diligence and integrity in the decisions that you are making?

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Pattison. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to this motion? Councillor Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: With deep care and respect, I acknowledge First Nations people and the reflections that are held nationwide, such as Pilk Purriyn. I was a member of the Geelong and District Australia Day Committee in 1993 and 1994. I have always supported celebrating Australia Day as a person who is very proud of the modern-day multicultural society we enjoy. There are many places where no protesting is allowed overseas, so we should cherish the freedoms we enjoy. I thank Councillor Bourke for her motion.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Schonfelder. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Councillor Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor. Thanks to everyone who has come here tonight and will continue to express your values. It's a highly emotive topic and shows the passion from the community to what Australia means to all. Petitions with mixed messages, we all need to strive to find common ground.

After tonight, regardless of the outcome, we have some work to do as a community and as a new Council moving forward with meaningful consultation and cultural awareness with traditional owners and community as a whole. Please treat everyone with respect and continue to listen and have conversation in person and not on divisive social media feeds. We're so lucky to live here and have a voice compared to what is happening around the world.

Talking to the motion, Surf Coast Shire adopted a Reconciliation Action Plan with traditional owners with some clear directions and the date of 26 January is not celebrated by everyone, it is only recognised as a day of mourning since the 30s and was only gazetted as a nationwide public holiday in the 1990s.

Draft Transcript

As a society, a day we can all come together to celebrate and acknowledge Australia's value and culture is one outcome. 26 January may not be that day. There is already community events held on the long weekend - markets, truth telling, music, breakfast and barbecues. These are already supported by community and don't necessarily need financial support from Surf Coast Shire as a tier 1 event.

In 2023, the Federal Government revised the requirements for citizenship ceremonies to be held on Australia Day. The current requirements now allow for these ceremonies to be conducted between 23 and 29 January and other ceremonies to be scheduled throughout the year as required. To hold citizenship ceremonies on this day would be a contradiction to the Reconciliation Action Plan as well as a financial and timely burden to the Surf Coast Shire being on a public holiday.

Moving on, Council isn't telling you as individuals how to acknowledge Australia Day or the long weekend and please remember this when you're moving forward within your community. Start the conversation with open arms. In representing the needs of the community, we cannot assume community consultation has taken place. We must consult with all the community so we can all come together on the journey of what it means to be Australia and reconciliation. As a new Councillor group, we need to work towards this through cultural awareness, education, listening and working with all the community. We must all walk together.

Further to this, I'm excited for the upcoming Council plan and the next four years where we can concentrate our efforts on making real tangible outcomes that can make real difference to ratepayers and community. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Walker. Councillor Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Yes, thank you, Mayor. I'd like to thank all those who did write in to me and to us on both sides of this issue. There's that important word "sides" that is at the core of this issue. There are people that want support for the day that celebrates our nation as it is today - multicultural, independent, free speech, democracy, celebrating as it is, warts and all, knowing that there's more to do.

There are those people who oppose the support, that support for Australia Day, based only on the date that has been allocated by the Federal

Draft Transcript

Government. Most of the people that I have heard from are okay with Australia Day in itself as an event.

So 26 January 1788 is a historical marker. It's the date British soldiers landed on a Sydney beach and planted a British flag in the ground. I agree that it marks the beginning of the end for First Nations society. In the 200-plus years since, much of First Nations culture has been desecrated and lost. The Surf Coast Shire has an enviable track record in pursuing reconciliation and I look forward to that continuing.

I believe the intent of this motion is not to stop, redirect or slow that reconciliation journey in any way. The intent is to provide equal support to those that want and need a positive recognition of the great country that we live in. It was a past Prime Minister that formally assigned a nationwide public holiday to Australia Day of 26 January. It is for today's Prime Minister to make a change and fix this issue for us all.

So I say let's join together to change that date to a day, make Australia Day always a long weekend in January without a specific date, and I ask everyone to put the pressure where it really truly is needed, which is on the Prime Minister to change that date to a day and to fix this issue for us.

Now, given the foreshadowed alternative motion, I will vote against this motion and I'll explain why should this alternate motion get up.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Phelps. Councillor Barker?

CR BARKER: Thanks, Mayor. Firstly, it is a federal issue. It started out in 2021 with Council making a move that I think - and this is the issue, the disrespect. We've got a society where free speech is generally valued, but the little murmurs and interruptions that I've seen from some in the gallery today show that there's a level of disrespect and if you - again, there it is. If you want --

NEW SPEAKER: Sorry, would you like me to take my son outside?

CR BARKER: If you want to influence people to support your view --

NEW SPEAKER: You work for us. You work for us.

NEW SPEAKER: You're disrespecting us.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: So, thanks, I just ask members of the gallery to hear Councillor Barker out. I appreciate that everybody has been fantastically well behaved so far. We'll hear Councillor Barker out, thanks very much.

CR BARKER: I work for the whole municipality. Now, as has been stated before, there was no broad community consultation in 2021 before the changes were made. Now all the public commentary that I've seen on the issue, whether it's been initiated by those that support one side or the other, has resulted in a large amount of the community supporting a return to traditional support of Australia Day. Now, this if the Notice of Motion gets up will simply bring balance back to where it was before that motion was made.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Barker.

CR BARKER: I'm not yet done, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay, sorry.

CR SCHONFELDER: Excuse me, Mayor, can I ask you to direct people in the gallery who are acting disrespectfully to excuse themselves from the gallery?

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks for the suggestion, Councillor Schonfelder, but as the chair, I have asked members of the gallery to hear Councillors out respectfully and silently and that's my expectation and please cooperate with that and we'll get through the debate. Thank you. And Councillor Barker, I invite you to continue.

CR BARKER: Thanks, Mayor. I'd rather we not be focusing on this matter, but the reality is that the Greens and Labor elements of the previous Council ran through these changes. Now, current Federal Government policy is to support Australia Day on 26 January. I'm yet to see credible alternative dates being proposed by advocates who call on Australia Day to be changed and I feel that the erosion of civic pride is happening, rather than a genuine effort to include Aboriginal Australians with all Australians in any meaningful change. This is a classic Marxist view where in a capitalist society division needs to be sowed based on race.

Now, both the genuine hurt Aboriginal Australians feel and this division can exist at the same time, but I don't want to allow a motion to overrule a respectful dialogue each way. I look forward to engaging with all Aussies in

Draft Transcript

the years ahead to develop an environment that genuinely seeks to balance the wrongs of the past with celebrations of what people in Australia have achieved.

There's a lot more I'd like to talk about on this issue, but with 3 minutes, it's very difficult, but there's other issues that we need to consider at play - the division history and how it all came about, Council responsibilities in this space, the pathway forward where no one is treated differently. There's been a lack of consensus within the Aboriginal community on this issue. Politics is a battle of ideas and it's important that we share these ideas in a voluntarily respectful way. There's differences between the referendum and Australia Day, but I do think it's excellent that people have the capacity to advocate for issues that they care about.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Barker. Do any other - Councillor Stapleton, thank you.

CR STAPLETON: Thank you, Mayor. I'd just like to start by acknowledging that tonight's discussion must be very difficult for many people here tonight, so thank you for coming and I'm really sorry for the pain that this discussion is obviously causing.

I understand that some people see this motion as a fair and balanced way to cater for everyone on 26 January, but the outcome of this motion would not be fair and not be balanced. I believe it would cause great suffering to some in our community and I cannot make a decision to proactively support any event that we know causes pain to others.

Maintaining Council's existing position on the way we acknowledge 26 January does not deliberately cause anyone any harm. I'm not against the idea of Australia Day or celebrating the wonderful things our country and our community have to be grateful for, but I know that this could occur on a different date that isn't so divisive.

We know that 26 January represents a date that Europeans settled in this country and commenced the decimation of First Nations ancestors and culture. How can we make a commitment to reconciliation without acknowledging this truth? Council's approach to 26 January underpins the integrity of our reconciliation efforts.

Draft Transcript

Regardless of your personal view on this issue, the way we make decisions as Councillors, as leaders in our community, is critical. When considering any decision, let alone one as significant as this, Councillors must first consider their role and responsibilities and what is meant by good governance.

Council decision making must be guided by policy, plans and evidence, not on the whim of personal preferences or popularism. We must take every opportunity to ensure that we are making fully informed decisions. This is articulated in the Local Government Act and required through the Model Code of Conduct. It takes time to make good decisions on complex issues.

There are various ways Councillors could achieve greater understanding to assist with their decision making, such as seeking briefings from officers, reading reports and existing strategies, undertaking specific training, seeking input from subject matter experts, asking questions via the Councillor portal, talking to fellow Councillors about their experience, and seeking feedback, importantly, from those likely to be directly impacted by a decision of Council.

Let's also consider the Council plan, which sets out the strategic direction for Surf Coast Shire from September 2021 to 2025 and should be used to guide our decision making. This plan is still current and makes a clear commitment to reconciliation via two strategies, including the need to ensure that Council decisions consider and respect traditional owner perspectives, culture and knowledge. I ask all Councillors to consider whether you have had ample time and opportunity to gather the information, insights and understanding needed to make a fully informed decision on this issue.

I have one more line. There is no strategic justification to support this motion. I'm hopeful that in future we as a Council, in partnership with our community, might be able to work together to genuinely bring about positive outcomes and find a path that continues to move us forward on the journey of reconciliation, not takes us backwards.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. In a minute, Councillor Bourke will have a chance for some closing comments.

Our Governance Rules provide the chair with a right to speak. To be able to speak - it's under section 42 of our Governance Rules. To be able to speak, the chair must vacate the chair. I now have to vacate the chair. I also wish to speak to this motion briefly and so I invite Deputy Mayor Libby Stapleton to come to the chair, we'll swap.

Draft Transcript

Councillors, I appreciate the opportunity to step out of the chair and speak to this motion. I love Australia and am a proud Australian. Having a national day of celebration is important to me, as I believe it is to most Aussies, but celebrating Australia on a painful and polarising date prevents the day from being the wholehearted and joyous celebration it should be.

That's my own perspective and I understand it's a perspective held by local traditional owners. Respect for local traditional owners' perspectives was at the heart of Council's 2021 resolution to stop participating in celebratory events on Australia Day, a resolution that of course left others free to celebrate as they chose.

Respect for local traditional owners is central to our commitment to reconciliation. I see a decision to restore Council celebrations on 26 January as incompatible with that commitment and deeply hypocritical. While I can see that this motion has been sensitively prepared, it lacks that local traditional owner perspective. I also believe many of the outcomes sought from this proposal are achievable through other less problematic means, events and programs that foster connectedness and celebrate shared values and experiences.

I fear that local traditional owners and other local Aboriginal people could take this decision as a deliberate closing of the safe space that was created through Council's 2021 resolution. In reality, that space and the true commitment to reconciliation that it demonstrated has added enormously to the richness of January 26 on the Surf Coast. Far from being diminished, the day now offers richer opportunities for commemoration and civic connection than it did before, including freedom for individuals and groups to mark the day as they wish.

For those reasons, and because I don't believe Councillors have had an opportunity to fully understand the impacts of these proposed changes, I don't support this motion.

I'll now go back to the chair and invite Councillor Bourke to offer closing comments.

CR BOURKE: Thank you, Mayor. During this process, my mind is often turned to our servicemen and women who've given up everything for our extraordinary country's freedom and to every man and woman who's worked

Draft Transcript

hard to be part of what we are today. I'm acutely aware of the honour to be part of this Council and to have always fragile and hard fought for freedom to contest ideas with other incredible people.
Thank you to each and every one of you for your freedom of ideas, passion and expression.

With the date itself being the main issue and also out of our Council's control, being able to advocate for a change of date I can see is important in moving this issue forward. In the meantime, until then, and after that time, it's my hope that we continue to gather together, learn together, grow together, reflect together and celebrate together as one extraordinary group of Australians with dignity and respect for one another. So I implore my fellow Councillors to vote and support this all-inclusive forward-focused motion.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. Thank you, Councillor Bourke. We'll now put the motion to the vote. All those in favour? Thank you, Councillors. And against? Thank you, Councillors. The vote is lost 5-4 --

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: 4-5.

CR BODSWORTH: 4-5. Thank you. So that being the case, I now invite Councillor Pattison to move the foreshadowed motion. Councillor Pattison.

CR PATTISON: Thank you, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: I need to call for a seconder for the motion.

CR PATTISON: That's right, yes.

CR BODSWORTH: Councillor Walker.

CR SCHONFELDER: Excuse me, Mayor, I have an amendment to that motion, so do you want to hear it first or after?

CR BODSWORTH: I'd like to hear your amendment, please, Councillor Schonfelder.

CR SCHONFELDER: It is that - it reads after point 1, "advocates to the Federal Government to formally change the date of Australia Day to the last Friday of January", so "to the last Friday of January" is just added on to the first sentence.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Schonfelder.

CR PATTISON: I think the Governance Rules you ask the mover and seconder and I don't agree with that amendment.

CR BODSWORTH: So under the Governance Rules, I do need to ask if the mover and seconder of the motion agree to the proposed amendment.

CR PATTISON: I don't agree to that amendment.

CR BODSWORTH: The mover doesn't agree and the seconder doesn't agree either. Therefore the proposed amendment lapses and we'll continue with the debate on the alternate motion. Thanks, Councillor Pattison.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. Thank you to my fellow Councillors for allowing this motion to proceed and if you do support this motion, you're allowing our officers to fully investigate both sides of the issue, prepare a report and brief Councillors on the impacts and things to consider before such a significant change to an existing policy occurs. Most importantly, it will allow the opportunity for our new Councillors in particular to deeply listen and learn to First Nations people and perspectives and, importantly, to undertake cultural awareness training.

As I've outlined already, the overwhelming feedback that has come through to Councillors and from the submissions I've heard today is the importance of listening to our traditional owners and not making rash decisions, so I really commend the Councillors that have allowed this motion to proceed. It shows good governance and it shows that you are considered and really taking seriously the responsibility of being a Councillor and the leadership that that brings to our community.

Once again, I'm glad we've had the opportunity to move past the original NoM and you can see the relief on the faces of the people here today that this NoM, that divisive NoM, did not happen. It's very unfortunate the timing that the NoM came to the first meeting of the year and it could be grandstanding, it could be raising political agendas, I'm not aware of the motivations, but I'm really glad that we can move past this and it gives me comfort that a majority of Councillors are focused on good governance, not grandstanding and want to work together. There is a lot of common ground amongst our Councillors and I

Draft Transcript

know that if we focus on that, even though we have differences, we can make good decisions for the lasting value of our community.
And I'll leave it there, thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Councillor Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor. As a new Councillor, it's very important that we take these steps to listen to First Nations and educate us all on cultural awareness and look to the future of reconciliation, how we can make it all work for all our community to come together. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Walker. Councillor Barker?

CR BARKER: Thanks, Mayor. The hypocrisy here when you're - the hypocrisy here when you're happy to listen to one side of an argument for community consultation, but not another. In 2021, when there wasn't broad community consultation, to now be happy to focus on community consultation for a specific group just creates a further divide in the community.

Now, there's lots of passionate people in the room that have one particular position on the matter and there's a wide range of people out in the community who have another.

NEW SPEAKER: Where are they?

NEW SPEAKER: They're on Facebook.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, everyone. We need to hear Councillor Barker out respectfully, please.

CR BARKER: People are elected at multiple levels of government with a whole range of different ideas. If you want to participate in that decision making, I encourage you to run as a candidate for whatever level suits your fancy, but if there's going to be continual interruptions, you're just losing any sort of positive influence in changing someone's mind.

Now, going back to the proposed motion, it touches on advocating to the Federal Government to do a job that the Federal Government is responsible for. We have federal members of Parliament that we can advocate to to do that and if the issue is federal, we should take it to federal.

Draft Transcript

Right now we are spending a lot of time for some of us to try to rebalance what was done a few years ago and for others to push forward with another agenda.

I won't be supporting this motion because I don't think it's an alternative motion, I think it's totally different, but the chair has got the call and that's that.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Barker. I have been advised that procedurally Councillor Schonfelder proposed an amendment to which neither the mover nor the seconder agreed. There is a procedure in our Governance Rules for that. So just bear with me while I record where we're up to in the debate on the alternate motion and I'll ask Councillor Schonfelder to please repeat his proposed amendment.

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you, Mayor. That for the point number 1, we add on from "advocates to the Federal Government to formally change the date of Australia Day", adding "to the last Friday of January".

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. To clarify, that's an amendment to Councillor Pattison's alternate motion. So is that what's being displayed now, Governance? Thank you. So I now look for a seconder for Councillor Schonfelder's proposed amendment. Councillor Barker. Thank you.

So just bear with me while I make sure I've got the governance situation right. So can I just seek some advice from the Governance team on the procedure in this case?

OFFICER: So this one will be debated, so its own debate within the main debate, so it will be timed per normal debate.

CR BODSWORTH: So we now debate the proposed amendment.

OFFICER: Yes.

CR BODSWORTH: At the conclusion of that, we revert to the debate on the alternate motion?

OFFICER: That's correct, and just no closing comments for the mover of the amendment.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Okay, thanks. So I now invite Councillor Schonfelder to speak to the proposed amendment.

CR SCHONFELDER: I realise, Mayor, that tonight has been very emotional and I understand that some people are offended. My brother married a member of the Stolen Generations and I have a niece and three nephews who are First Nations people and they support changing the date of Australia Day and they understand how I feel about Australia Day and the fact that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition both support celebrating Australia Day. I'm not sure how all First Nations people feel about having the last Friday --

CR PATTISON: Point of order, please. Can we focus on the amendment and not the debate around Australia Day?

CR BODSWORTH: We need to focus on the amendment and the reasons for the amendment.

CR SCHONFELDER: Well, I was just adding, Mayor, that I'm not sure how First Nations, all First Nations people feel about the last Friday of January, but it is not necessarily a set date, being 26 January. I have spoken to people and they have said to me that they seem to be inclined to support that option --

NEW SPEAKER: The last Friday in January 2029 is 26 January.

CR SCHONFELDER: Is this a member of Council speaking, Mayor, or not?

CR BODSWORTH: Councillor Schonfelder - thanks to members of the gallery. If you can please just let Councillors speak respectfully. I know it's been quite a long night so far and everybody has been fantastic, so please hang in there and let Councillors speak. Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder.

CR SCHONFELDER: I don't have anything else further to add, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay, thanks. So Councillor Barker is the seconder to the proposed amendment. Would you like to speak to it?

CR BARKER: I won't be supporting it, but in the interests of democracy, I'm happy to support the amendment getting up. I don't think there's been sufficient time to consider what this means, but where there's been discussion about trying to work with each other, I've been experiencing four years of just

Draft Transcript

about totality of being ignored. I'll support this amendment to get up, but I'm very disappointed in what I'm seeing around the table.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Barker. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the amendment? Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: Yeah, look, I'm supportive of advocating for a change of date, but I don't think it's wise for us to suggest what that alternate date would be without further understanding of the complexities around what different dates mean.

As far as I know, you know, there are other dates that have been proposed for different reasons that should become a future Australia Day. For example, in December 1965, the Queensland Parliament passed the Elections Act Amendment Bill to extend voting rights to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. This Bill came into effect on 1 February 1966, signifying the first time all states of Australia were aligned in allowing Indigenous Australians to participate in state elections. Effectively, it is the date that all Australians were treated equally in elections across the country. Perhaps that is a date worth celebrating. Or how about 31 March 1973, when the White Australia Policy was officially ended?

I'm not here to convince anyone of an appropriate date and I don't think that it's Council's role to do that, so I will not be supporting this amendment.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the proposed amendment? Councillor Phelps.

CR PHELPS: I'd just like to reiterate what Councillor Stapleton has said. I don't think it's our position to advocate for a specific date or day. I am under instructions to get the last Monday of January as a public holiday because that's when schools go back and they get one more day. But aside from that, I think it is a much better solution to advocate for a change of date without being too prescriptive, so accordingly I won't support that either.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Phelps. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the proposed amendment? No. So we'll now put the proposed amendment to the vote. All those in favour? And against? Thank you, Councillors. And the proposed amendment is lost 8-1.

Draft Transcript

We now revert to the debate on the alternate motion. So far, and I'm looking for correction if I'm wrong, we've heard from Councillor Pattison and Councillor Barker --

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: And Councillor Walker.

CR BODSWORTH: And Councillor Walker - thanks, CEO. So I'd invite any other Councillors who wish to speak to the alternate motion. Councillor Phelps?

CR PHELPS: I've already commented on why I support the original motion, but in the interests of good governance, our community should expect all Councillors to be aware of the full range of aspect and impacts of important and highly charged decisions such as this one. So accordingly, I'm okay with a deferral to a future Council meeting to allow that good governance to happen and to be seen to happen.

I will add that reconciliation is a journey of togetherness and I would like to see efforts made to understand the intent of this motion and good faith acceptance that it takes two to tango, with compromise an essential part of making progress. There is a world of difference between the word reconciliation and the word capitulation. It is our personal choice to be offended by something and our personal choice how we behave in response. I encourage everyone involved to seek a solution and not a roadblock and I look forward to this motion returning to Council in the near future to a fully informed decision by Councillors at that time. I sincerely hope that by then Australia Day has in fact been moved away from 26 January, so accordingly I'm in favour of this motion.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Phelps. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the alternate motion? Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: Thank you, Mayor. I also support this motion because it provides an appropriate pathway for Councillors to be able to make an informed decision on this important issue. Undertaking cultural awareness training during the last term of Council was so significant for me. It requires deep listening and provides an authentic way for us to understand more about the perspective of traditional owners and to learn more about impacts and complexities of colonisation and how this continues to affect First Nations people in our community.

Draft Transcript

It is essential that we receive a report from the CEO that advises us on the potential impacts and outcomes, both positive and negative, if Surf Coast Shire Council was to reinstate celebrations on Australia Day, including citizenship ceremonies. The current position of Council not to celebrate on 26 January was a decision we came to after almost one year on Council. As I said previously, it takes time to make good decisions on complex issues. Leading up to this decision were a number of key steps to help in our education and our understanding.

In February 2021, Council registered with Reconciliation Australia to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan. In May 2021, Council adopted a Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation, pledging to walk together and work together with traditional custodians of the land while growing understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. In September 2021, Council made the significant decision to respectfully step away from celebrations on 26 January knowing the traumatic effect these events can have on our First Nations community.

Despite suggestions that community was not consulted on our decision of 2021, I want to reassure everyone that a representative community panel was engaged for months that year to provide input into our four-year Council plan, spending countless hours deliberating over priorities for the Surf Coast on behalf of all of us. Together they identified First Nations reconciliation as a key theme in the current Council plan.

Since that time, Council has worked hard to build trusted relationships and partnerships with our local traditional owner groups, the Wadawurrung, Gadubanud, and Gulidjan people, who are the traditional custodians of the land we now know as Surf Coast Shire. For the past few years, we have been on a positive path toward reconciliation, but this is not a journey that comes easily or without challenging conversations and truth telling.

As thousands of people in our community have attested to, the introduction of Pilk Purriyn in 2023 has provided a meaningful and important opportunity to hear directly from First Nations people so we can better understand and reflect on their experiences and think about how we want to show up and genuinely participate in our commitment to reconciliation.

I also support advocacy to change the date of Australia so there is greater opportunity for our community to come together. I appreciate that simply changing the date won't resolve all the issues and impacts faced by First

Draft Transcript

Nations people, but it is an important first step in recognising that 26 January is not a date for celebration. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the alternate motion? Thanks, Councillor Grist.

CR GRIST: I'll be extremely brief. I think the report that's been requested should have already been done before the previous Council made their decision, so it should have already been available and that's my biggest concern with where we've got to this point. Thanks.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Grist. Do any other Councillors wish to speak? Councillor Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Mayor, I'd like to say that the comments that Councillor Stapleton made about 1 February I think are very valid, I was unaware of that, and that's obviously another alternative that can be made possibly in the future. But the gazetting of Australia Day is a federal issue and it takes the federal leadership to determine which date it could possibly change to, so I'd just like to highlight that point.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the alternate motion? No. Thank you. I'd now invite the mover to offer any closing comments.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. This motion is seeking Councillors to hear a balanced report from Council officers around the impacts of any change to the way 26 January is acknowledged in the Surf Coast Shire. I'm really grateful for the opportunity, if this motion passes, for our Councillor group to learn and show good governance in our decision making. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. We'll now put that alternate motion to the vote. All those in favour? Thanks, Councillors. And against? That motion is carried 7-2. Thanks, Councillors.

That concludes our lengthy debate on 26 January Australia Day. I'd like to thank Councillors and thank members of the gallery for your participation tonight and for a respectful approach to this debate. Thank you.

I now call for a mover to suspend standing orders so that we can take a break. Moved Councillor Pattison, seconded Councillor Stapleton. All in favour?

Draft Transcript

Thank you. Unanimously. We now suspend standing orders for 15 minutes for a break.

(Short break)

CR BODSWORTH: Councillor Barker I presume will be back in in a minute, so can I have a mover to resume standing orders and we'll resume the meeting? Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Secunder? Councillor Stapleton. All in favour? Thanks. Councillor Grist, are you in favour? Thank you. So that motion is carried. We now resume standing orders and proceed with the meeting.

Bringing us to item 4.1, Quarterly Budget Report - December 2024. The purpose of this report is to present the Quarterly Budget Report - December 2024 to council. This includes the Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows, Statement of Changes in Equity and Statement of Capital Works. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Pattison, thanks. And do we have a seconder? Councillor Phelps, thank you. Councillor Pattison, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR PATTISON: Sure. So this is very important business of Council, approving quarterly reports and budgets. Don't get me wrong, I think Council has a really important role in being leaders for our community. However, we must clearly understand also that a key role of Councillors is to ensure the financial viability of the Surf Coast Shire.

So this Quarterly Budget Report clearly outlays rates paid to date, interest earned on investments, capital works, spend, et cetera, and if you're interested in how the Council is tracking against the budget for the year, then have a look at the Quarterly Report. It is all laid out and transparent for the community to see and there's plenty of notes at the bottom of the different tables explaining the variances, and the like, both positive and negative, so you can get a good understanding of where our Council is sitting financially. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Councillor Phelps?

CR PHELPS: I'd just like to also reiterate that I appreciate the transparency and the detail provided, including the notes. I think the Council is doing a great thing, a great job on publicising the finances.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Phelps. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to this motion? Councillor Barker?

CR BARKER: Thanks, Mayor. The variance notes show the unfavourable levels of revenue from parking infringements are evident. It's both awesome and troublesome. We shouldn't be relying on parking fines and if there are none or there are few, it indicates that people are moving through the timed parking areas well, allowing others to share this beautiful coast that we inhabit.

I think the reduction in user charges is indicative of the broader economic climate that we're in. I've publicly warned of the recession that we've been in for around two years. Now, economic forecasts are going to be worse than expected as time goes on until the country gets back on its feet on all levels of government, including us, and that requires us to all tighten our belts and focus only on core services.

The way we're operating at the moment is akin to running a household with a leaky roof, a broken driveway and weed-infested garden while we go out on the town drinking and partying the night away. I accept that the report is accurate, but some of the assumptions and the forecasts are going to need to be much tighter than what they are at the moment.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Barker. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the item? No. Thank you. Councillor Pattison, any closing remarks? No, thanks. We now put the motion to the vote. All in favour? Thanks, Councillors. The motion is carried unanimously.

Item 4.2, Anglesea Community and Health Hub - Regional Precincts & Partnerships Program Grant Application. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to submit an application to the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program for the Anglesea Community and Health Hub - design development. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Stapleton. Is that as per the recommendation?

CR STAPLETON: It is as per the recommendation, but for the sake of clarity, I'd like to include the words "as per the adopted concept plan" after "Anglesea Community and Health Hub" so that we're all clear that the intent of this motion and funding application is based on the agreed concept plan for the Anglesea Community and Health Hub that was approved by Council in July

Draft Transcript

2024. It's implied in the report, but I just think adding those words makes it explicit that that's the funding that we're actually applying for.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. So the motion is on the board in front of Councillors. Do we a seconder for that motion? Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Councillor Stapleton, do you wish to speak to the motion?

CR STAPLETON: I would like to, thank you, Mayor. So the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program - it's a mouthful, isn't it - presents a timely and important opportunity for Council to apply for funding that will enable design work to proceed for the Anglesea Community and Health Hub. This project is vitally important for the Anglesea and Aireys Inlet communities. It presents an opportunity for a true community health and housing hub that provides a shared, sustainable space for multiple community groups with improved integration of services, enhanced landscaping and better services for our community.

The proposed design work would include schematic designs for the entire precinct as well as detailed design for the Community Hub component, given this element is the first priority of Council and pivotal in terms of how the whole site redevelopment is to be sequenced.

The proposal provides a staged approach for the entire project to be realised over coming decades to benefit current and future generations through improved community services and activities and to create a more vibrant precinct. The concept plan was approved by Council last year after extensive community engagement, which demonstrated strong support for the vision and design principles and significant support for most other elements.

Although we are not here tonight to repropose that decision, I will acknowledge again that there were mixed views on the affordable housing component, which is included in the concept plan to provide accommodation for key workers in the precinct and possibly neighbouring coastal townships.

It's also important to note that we heard from those opposing housing for this project that most are not against affordable housing, they would just prefer Council to provide it elsewhere. For those who may not be aware, in recent years, Council reviewed around 200 public land parcels across the Surf Coast Shire, including five sites in Anglesea. Few were deemed suitable due to issues such as incompatible zoning, environmental overlays and bushfire risk. However, that doesn't prevent our community from continuing to explore other

Draft Transcript

housing options, which they are currently doing. I expect that if any successful housing sites are realised, these would be in addition to, rather than instead of, affordable housing at the McMillan Street site.

But coming back to the decision before us tonight, we know that the entire Anglesea hub precinct is home to many user groups and agencies that deliver a range of services primarily for the communities of Anglesea and Aireys Inlet. I think it's important to acknowledge that all user groups and key partners in this project were engaged in the development of the concept plan, including Barwon Health, the Department of Education, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corporation, Ambulance Victoria, Anglesea Community House, Anglesea Kindergarten, the Anglesea and District Historical Society at Rangi Marie House, ANGAIR, the Community Garden, Housing Challenge 3230, the Anglesea Community Network and the Preserve Anglesea Community Hub group, otherwise known as PACH, as well as local traders and residents. So clearly there has been extensive engagement on this issue.

Each group has different needs and perspectives and the overall concept plan aims to deliver an accessible and integrated and intergenerational precinct for our community to enjoy for many decades to come, with a landscaped green heart at its centre, a new community building that connects key services, including child care and kindergarten, as well as improved healthcare infrastructure.

If supported, this motion will enable Council to apply for funding to progress important design work that is needed to make this project a reality. It will also provide an opportunity for the next phase of community engagement to be undertaken so that the existing concept plan can progress to a more detailed design where questions around carparking, landscaping and buildings can be addressed more fully and we can see what's possible for a contemporary, fit-for-purpose community precinct designed for intergenerational use and enjoyment.

We know that the Anglesea hub project is well aligned with the goals of the Regional Precincts Partnership Program and it would be remiss of Council not to apply for this funding stream now while it's available to us. Thank you, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton.

CR SCHONFELDER: Mayor, I wanted to move an amendment to this item.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: What is your amendment, Councillor Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: The amendment is to exclude housing from this application.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. So under our Governance Rules, a proposed amendment must propose a substantially similar outcome to the motion upon which it's moved. Given that excluding housing would amount to quite a significant rescoping of the project, I can't allow that as an amendment. You do have the option of proposing - foreshadowing an alternate motion if you wish.

CR SCHONFELDER: I wish to do that, please, Mayor, and I assume that with your ruling, that is at your discretion, you decide whether it's --

CR BODSWORTH: That's correct, but the Governance Rules are clear on that matter.

CR SCHONFELDER: I wish to propose an alternative motion.

CR BODSWORTH: What is your alternate motion?

CR SCHONFELDER: Governance have that and I believe that they would provide that to my colleagues on the large screen.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. Thanks, Governance.

Councillors, so we have an alternate motion before us. As per the alternate motion that we considered earlier tonight, Councillor Schonfelder, I remind you that if the substantive motion is not successful, you'll have an opportunity to move the alternate motion after the debate on the substantive motion. So thank you for that. I would invite Councillor Pattison, as the seconder, to speak to the motion.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. So the motion that we have at hand is around developing a staged principle-based precinct with schematic designs for the whole site which takes into consideration timing to have a vibrant precinct and having detailed designs of the Community Hub as this is Council's priority and the first part of the staged work that would progress.

Draft Transcript

I want to make it clear that seeking this funding, and if we are successful in getting this funding, it's about designs, it's about going through the process, it's about understanding the opportunities for this site. It is not a green light to construct and change the hub. It's one step towards a better understanding of what the precinct can offer for our community into the future.

So I think it makes a lot of sense. As we've already talked about, it's good governance. We have an opportunity to do these designs and better understand the opportunities for the precinct.

The report breaks down the basis for the costing assumptions and the budget that's been worked up and there's some opportunities that aren't always there. At the moment we have this significant funding stream and it makes sense that we would make the most of that.

I think we as Councillors need to think big picture about how we want this precinct to be in 20, 50 years. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to plan ahead around how to reinvigorate the precinct and once again, there are further hurdles that need to be passed before construction happens. This is just about a staged precinct design and then detailed design for the Anglesea hub. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to this motion? Councillor Barker?

CR BARKER: It's not good governance to rely on three quarters of a million dollars of federal funding on a project that's likely going to have the rug pulled out from under its feet. We rely far too heavily in this organisation on grant funding from other levels of government. Doing so just creates the economic phenomenon of externalities being shifted on to taxpayers in other areas of the state and the country and that is something that I will not be supporting.

When it comes to supporting housing on Council land, I don't support that either. The ramifications from this will be terrible if it goes ahead. Ignoring the strong community opposition to this proposal will further divide us.

Now, trying to squeeze this in as we come into a federal election is super cheeky at best. If it does go ahead and it's successful and then the incoming government changes things, you're going to get the hopes of people up that support the project that are then going to be disappointed if it all goes away.

Draft Transcript

I won't be supporting the motion in its current form. I'm happy to hear other reasons as to why I should.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Barker. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Councillor Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Mayor, I did actually have a question and it's quite concerning and it's in relation to the user groups in the hub and the fact that we're looking to plan ahead, as Councillor Pattison spoke about, the big-picture vision. Those user groups like Barwon Health-owned property within the precinct, if they wish to expand, I'd just like a little bit of clarity because wouldn't the housing restrict their possible expansion in the future?

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. I'll refer that question to the CEO.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thank you, Councillor Schonfelder, for your question. Part of the work that's been done with the user groups is really understanding both their current and their future needs. So the work that our team have done with Barwon Health is really with a view to what might be needed now and in 10, 20, 30 years' time.

So the footprint that is currently proposed for the health hub is based on that advice that Barwon Health have said are likely to be their needs now and into the future, plus the input that's come in from the GP clinic around the space and capacity they're likely to need now and into the future. So I think that's not something that I'm concerned about based on the input that we've had to date and in the design of what that health hub would look like.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, CEO.

CR SCHONFELDER: I would like to speak.

CR BODSWORTH: You'd like to speak to the motion? Please go ahead.

CR SCHONFELDER: And I'd like to say that I voted in favour of declaring an emergency in relation to housing and key worker housing in particular and I believe the community are aware of the fact of density done well and the fact that the State Government has been advocating for more housing to be built and recently, Mayor, there's been media reports about the State Government

Draft Transcript

taking over planning areas. That's how seriously the State Government is taking housing.

I would like to say, as someone who was born in Geelong but has lived in the Surf Coast my whole life, that a lot of change has taken place in my 50 years of living and with the density, one thing I'm very concerned about is the fact that public space will be possibly at jeopardy and the population has increased substantially and I am very concerned about the areas of public space available to the community. In relation to the Anglesea hub, the fact that the neighbours, all neighbours are opposed to the housing part of it and I feel as though their voices are valid and they do matter.

In relation to this application as well, it is very hotly contested and I think the points brought up by Councillor Barker - if there is a change of government, it could actually be abolished, this program could be abolished, but I realise that prior to caretaker mode or when caretaker is declared that we are able to apply for grants.

I know that it's worth touching on the fact that Mrs Filkins was the original owner of where the housing area is dedicated, which is now a carpark used for popular twilight summer markets. In her older age, she was moved against her will, apparently, by the former shire of Barrabool to more suitable accommodation. It is believed that she had no close relatives and it was her wish that the land be used for the benefit of the general public and I'd just like to reiterate to the new Councillors that the fact that the housing will be used for personal accommodation and not for the public, the general public, I'm quite concerned about that and I do believe that we could speak with Alcoa, even with the State Government and look at other alternatives.

So for the first time I will be voting against applying for a grant and I feel - a part of me feels quite emotional about that because I like to advocate to benefit the Shire and the community. So for the first time in five years I will be voting, and I was a Councillor previously two years in 1993 and 1994 and I never voted against a grant application. Thank you, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Councillor Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Yes, I'd just like to say that the Anglesea Community Hub concept plan is an exciting and as Councillor Pattison said a generational development. Coming in as a new Councillor, I did have concerns around the

Draft Transcript

location of housing at the rear of public space and also given the economic situation at state and federal levels, some concern around the likelihood of obtaining delivery funding. But I'm confident that the layout has been exhaustively investigated and covered and it's the best compromise layout solution given the circumstances.

Financially, if this is to happen, I do think it needs to be now. Regional support for such programs does remain relatively strong and accordingly, I'm happy to support this as recommended.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Phelps. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Councillor Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor. If this funding application is successful, we'll have to work with our precinct user groups to design the phase, which I believe is the resolved space allocation layout and fitout.

The detailed design will bring the concept into reality for the future, not just now, but looking for 30, 40, 50 years in advance, which we've got to keep our mind set on that. We'll need to be able to work with community to ensure the design reflects community aspirations.

In regards to affordable accommodation, moving forward on top of this there's really a need to further categorise the use of affordable housing for essential workers, who is it for and how this will be managed, which will help alleviate some of the concerns from the community.

Use for long-term, affordable rentals for essential workers is essential to live and work in the community. On top of this, looking at other locations, this is something we need to work on as a whole for all affordable accommodation in the Surf Coast and could be a good basis to form that for other sites for use too.

So I think it's the next steps to bring this to fruition and keeping in mind we need to really work with community to make sure the design reflects the community aspirations and needs of all the community.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Walker. Councillor Grist?

CR GRIST: Thanks, Mayor. Before becoming a Councillor, I attended the Community Hub forum in Anglesea and have since reviewed the community

engagement feedback report and the Surf Coast Shire Affordable Accommodation Action Plan Report and I watched the archive video of the February 2024 ordinary council meeting, where both question time and an agenda item addressed this issue.

It is evident from ongoing community dissatisfaction with this project, the engagement feedback results and the questions and discussions raised by Councillors at the February 2024 meeting that key concerns remain unresolved.

According to the engagement report, barely over 50% of respondents supported incorporating affordable housing into this development, far from what I would consider a strong mandate, which in my mind would be around 75% or more approval.

I remain unconvinced that allocating the only available public land which could serve future yet unforeseen community needs for housing that benefits only a select few is the best decision for Anglesea. There are still no clear guidelines on who would qualify for this proposed accommodation or what would happen to tenants if they no longer meet the key worker criteria. Additionally, the Surf Coast Shire Affordable Accommodation Action Plan makes a flawed assumption that community input into the Council plan and the health and wellbeing plan amounts to endorsement of Council as a provider of housing.

In my view, the responses simply reflect a desire for Council to action to reduce housing costs, increase supply and diversify housing options, not necessarily take on a direct role in development. For these reasons, I cannot support further expenditure of ratepayer and taxpayer funds or continued use of Council resources on a project that lacks strong community backing for all of its proposed components.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Grist. Any other Councillors? No? Thank you. So do we have any closing comments, Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: Sure, thank you, Mayor. Again, grants are an essential part of Council's financial viability and it wouldn't be possible to build the important infrastructure we need for our communities without these grants from Federal and State Government.

On the housing, yes, the engagement, the community engagement on housing did show just over 50% support for housing, but that was across all age groups. We do know that when these results were more closely unpacked and

Draft Transcript

analysed, there was significant support - I can't say it was 75%, but perhaps one of the officers could check that for me - from younger cohorts, as in those under 50, I believe, were very much in favour of providing affordable housing, and when we're thinking about a precinct that is for future generations as well as those of us now, it's really important to consider the preferences of those younger age groups, particularly those sort of in the, you know, 20 to 50 bracket.

We also know that many local businesses are still struggling to attract the staff they need due to a lack of affordable housing, but it's not just local businesses, it's also healthcare workers, kinder and childcare staff and others who keep these important community services running. I'm hopeful that the inclusion of well-designed, appropriate and affordable housing on this site will help ensure that these services remain viable well into the future for the benefit and wellbeing of our community.

And finally, just a couple of things. A change of government doesn't mean that other funding streams won't be available and in fact we know that there have been strong commitments from both sides of government at state and federal levels to support more housing in our communities and based on history, it's reasonable to assume that even if it's not this specific funding stream, that grants from Federal and State Government will continue to be made available for important community infrastructure.

I don't believe that any public space will be lost in the proposed redevelopment. It will certainly be reallocated and this next design stage will demonstrate how it can bring greater benefits to our local community. So I think it's really important to support this funding application and enable the project to proceed to that stage. Thank you, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. We'll now put the motion to the vote. All those in favour? Thanks, Councillors. And against? Thank you. And the motion is carried 5-4. Thanks, Councillors.

The next item on the agenda is 4.3, Road Safety Strategy Funding Application. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's ratification of a grant application under the Australian Government's Safe Roads and Infrastructure Fund. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Barker. Is that as per the recommendation?

CR BARKER: An alternate motion with 1.2 being removed.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: So does Governance have that? Yes. So the motion - Governance is working on putting it up on the board. I'll wait for that. Thanks for that.

So Councillor Barker's - the motion that he's moving is as per what we see on the screen, with 1.2 removed. Do we have a seconder for that motion? Councillor Grist. Thank you. Councillor Barker, do you wish to speak to the motion?

CR BARKER: Thanks, Mayor. I wasn't going to support the motion in its original form, but can just as it's laid out here.

While 1.1 is a little cheeky as it takes 40 cents from every Victorian taxpayer - well, no, every Victorian, man, woman, child - most of them will never see the road, let alone use it. But I'm willing to bend a little bit and support this application given that some people from the state, from outside the Shire, use it.

I couldn't support 1.2 because it takes 2 cents off every Australian, man, woman and child. When you multiply that through the thousands of projects that are happening around the country, all you end up with is a massive net loss. Every dollar that is spent far from the tax source has a part of it skimmed off through tax churn. That's where the bureaucracies take their cut in doing all the work that they do. Now, this perpetual cycle needs to stop. That's why I'm making this motion as it is.

I know there's some people that view these grants as simply us getting our taxes that we've paid back, but we have more than enough wealth in this region to look after ourselves. While we rely on money coming from people that are doing it tough in Western Sydney, outer Adelaide and other lower socioeconomic areas, it's not fair for them to be funding this sort of project.

CR PATTISON: Mayor, could I just foreshadow an alternate motion?

CR BODSWORTH: Before you do, Councillor Pattison - sorry to interrupt you - given that point 1.2 is referenced in point 2, the motion would need to be further modified, if Governance can - well, if I can actually ask the CEO to clarify how the motion would be different given that the removal of 1.2 has implications also for point 2.

Draft Transcript

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: It does, so we would need to look at allocating half a million dollars from within our broader capital budget in order to meet this is my assumption. Is that what you are - because we'd need that to be clear, I think, in this motion.

CR BARKER: I'm happy with that, yes.

MR CHRIS PIKE: So if I can complement what the CEO is saying, because this recommendation is to ratify an application, the application has been made, so the application has been made on that basis and so I'd have a level of confidence that the 500,000 that Councillor Barker is talking about in 1.2 is seen as a council contribution in addition to that mentioned in 1.3 and in order for that application to properly be considered by the funding body and to follow through on that if it were successful, then Council would need 500,000 from another source.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay, so thanks for the clarification. We'll continue the debate on the substantive motion, which is the motion moved by Councillor Barker, and Councillor Pattison, you were saying that you wish to foreshadow an alternate motion.

CR PATTISON: I'd like to foreshadow an alternative motion that we revert to the motion in our agenda if this motion is lost.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. So with that foreshadowed as an alternative motion, we'll continue with the debate on the substantive motion. So we've heard so far from Councillor Barker. Councillor Grist, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR GRIST: No, thanks, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay, thank you. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion?

CR SCHONFELDER: Mayor, I'm happy to.

CR BODSWORTH: I'll go with Councillor Stapleton and then come to you, Councillor Schonfelder.

CR STAPLETON: Yes, I just would like to add that I think it would be irresponsible for us not to apply for the \$500,000 from the Australian

Draft Transcript

Government's Roads to Recovery program allocation given the financial situation we know our Council is in to take half a million dollars from other capital projects and try to reallocate that when we know that the Federal Government makes this Roads to Recovery funding stream available because local councils are not in a position to fund significant road upgrades such as this. So, no, I won't be supporting the motion that's being proposed.

CR BODSWORTH: Sorry, just one sec, Councillors. I just want to ask - refer to the CEO for clarification on the Roads to Recovery funding program to help Councillors understand how that program works.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Sorry, Councillor Barker, I should have been clear about this as well earlier. We receive the Roads to Recovery money. So whether it's part of this application that it allows that money or not, we will have it in our bank account to be used in a roads context. So whether it's as part of delivering this project or some other project, we will be utilising that money because we'll be receiving it. So I just wanted to be clear about that for you in relation to this alternate motion.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks for the clarification, CEO. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion?

CR SCHONFELDER: I just had a question, Mayor, whether the mover of the motion - given the information furnished to us from the CEO, whether the mover would like to reconsider the change in this item.

CR BODSWORTH: The motion is the motion, Councillor Schonfelder, so we'll continue the debate on the motion.

CR SCHONFELDER: I understand - thank you, Mayor. I understand where Councillor Barker is coming from, but given that we already have the money, I cannot support this change in this item and I'd just like to also add that residents of the Surf Coast Shire, those who are working pay income tax and that would be, I imagine - I don't know how much it would be, but it would be a substantial amount of money. So in effect we're getting that money back. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Councillor Pattison?

Draft Transcript

CR PATTISON: I just think this amendment or the motion that's been put forward has been ill thought through. It's clear that Councillor Barker doesn't understand the basis of the funding arrangements, the money that's in the bank or not, and has flippantly proposed an alternate motion without due consideration, hasn't put this forward to Councillors prior to the meeting and is flippantly thinking that we can fund this \$500,000 from some other source within our budget when we already know that our budget is strained. It's terrible financial management and I really would be horrified to think that this motion would get up and I really hope people think about and consider that and so we can move forward with the motion that has been foreshadowed.

Also, it's 8.50. It would be great if we could just get on with the business of Council because I'm not sure if people realise, but there's 16 items on the agenda tonight and this is only the third. So perhaps we could get on with the business of Council.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Thank you. Any closing comments, Councillor Barker?

CR BARKER: This motion is to ratify an application that's been made. I'm not happy to ratify that amount of funds coming from federal accounts. I'm doing what I can to bend and work with others and if others don't want to reciprocate, that's their choice.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Barker. We'll now put the motion to the vote. All those in favour. And against? Thank you. And the motion is lost 8-1 - 1-8. So an alternate motion as per the recommendation has been proposed by Councillor Pattison. Councillor Pattison, I invite you to move that.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. Let's get on with the business of Council. So this funding application, which we are ratifying, is for a \$3.075 million application, with a \$115,000 allocation from our Council sealed roads budget --

CR BODSWORTH: Sorry, can you pause, please?

CR PATTISON: Sure. There's someone being rude in our Councillor meeting.

CR BARKER: Yes, there was, wasn't there?

CR BODSWORTH: Sorry, Councillor Schonfelder?

Draft Transcript

CR SCHONFELDER: I would like to second the item, please.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay. I'm so sorry. I didn't ask for a seconder.

CR PATTISON: That's alright.

CR BODSWORTH: Poor form. Thank you, Councillor Schonfelder.

CR PATTISON: I'm happy to continue, or would you like me to wait further?

CR BODSWORTH: No, no, you're welcome to continue.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. So this is for a funding application that's been ratified. The works to be undertaken in this project are construction of sealed road shoulders, strengthening of the substandard pavement, raising the road level to protect the road from flooding, improved signage and line marking and installation of guard railing. This work is to occur along a 8km section of road to bring it up to speed with other sections of the road. It's an important piece of work and that has had safety concerns, so I really encourage people to make the sensible decision to move this motion - to support this motion, thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Councillor Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: And briefly, Mayor, I'd like to thank Councillor Pattison for moving this item and just add that there have been fatalities on this road and Cape Otway Road is a road of regional significance. We have a road the Great Ocean Road of international significance, Princes Highway is of national significance, but there's a lot of traffic that flows to Cape Otway, Lorne, other coastal areas. It's an inland route, so I think it's wonderful the Council is prioritising Cape Otway Road.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to this motion? Councillor Phelps?

CR PHELPS: I'd just like to say my Wurdale CFA Brigade, this is in our patch, this stretch of road. We do regularly turn out to accidents on this stretch of road, including as Councillor --

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Schonfelder.

Draft Transcript

CR PHELPS: -- Schonfelder, it's getting late - including as Councillor Schonfelder says, so I'm sure all of my brigade, all the nearby regular users, regular drivers on this stretch of road and the residents who live along it will be very happy to see this project proceed.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Phelps. Councillor Walker?

CR WALKER: I second that to Councillors Phelps and Schonfelder around this road needs work on and there's fatalities as early as January just been and December too, so it's productive to get it going and prioritise it, so thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Walker. Do any other Councillors wish to come in? Any closing comments, Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: No, thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: We'll now put the motion to the vote. All those in favour? Thanks, Councillors. And the motion is carried unanimously.

Item 4.4, Funding Opportunity - Regional Community Sports Infrastructure Fund. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement to submit a funding application to deliver the Banyul-Warri Fields Cricket Training Facility. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Pattison - as per the recommendation?

CR PATTISON: Yes, as per the recommendation.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. Do we have a seconder? Councillor Stapleton, thank you. Councillor Pattison, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR PATTISON: Yes, I'm really glad to see that we are supporting through this funding application cricket nets at Banyul-Warri Fields. It's something that the Surf Coast Suns Cricket Club have been advocating for and whilst I was Mayor I met with them when they spoke about the importance of this in helping their club to progress, enabling them to be able to have facilities to bring on younger players, to support the women's team, and I think this is really important for the broader community to have access to these cricket nets.

So the project scope includes the construction of a new four-pitch, fully enclosed cricket training facility between two existing ovals and it's wonderful

Draft Transcript

that the Surf Coast Suns Cricket Club will be providing a contribution of \$40,000 and Council contribution of \$100,000 and the remainder through, hopefully, a successful application. So I really encourage people to support this application.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: Yes, look, I'll just add very quickly that this is a great example of Council applying its approach to enabling communities, working with a local community club on infrastructure that it needs to grow the club to attract juniors and female cricketers and to provide, I guess, a pathway for the community to be able to realise its goals. So fully support it, thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Councillor Grist?

CR GRIST: Thank you, Mayor. While I'm a strong advocate for community support and its vital role in fostering social connections, I do not believe this project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds. Spending \$650,000 on training infrastructure for a club that, according to its own website, has only 50 members is simply unjustifiable. It equates to \$13,000 per player, a significant public investment for a limited benefit.

The club's website, surfcoastcricketclub.com, indicates they already have portable steel fabricated cricket nets for training and given the dire financial state of our government, State Government, I suggest they continue using these rather than contributing to further debt by funding this project.

Additionally, the club has a GoFundMe campaign to raise money for these cricket nets and that has only one contribution of \$25 in the 12 months it's been open. This suggests no real broader community support for this project. I would encourage Councillors to do the prudent thing not the popular thing on this occasion and not support this grant application.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Grist.

CR SCHONFELDER: Can I ask a very quick question, Mayor, and that is let's say this motion is lost, are we able to apply for another application for this fund or we don't have the time to do so?

CR BODSWORTH: I'll put that question to the CEO.

Draft Transcript

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: I think that would be - we wouldn't have the time because we'd need to bring it back to Council or we would need to ratify. Once it's in, I don't - and we don't have another application that's readily prepared, unless the GM of Placemaking and Environment has an alternative perspective on that.

MR CHRIS PIKE: Through you, Mayor, I think that's a similar assumption. Invariably these are time bound, these applications, and so the process to consider another project may well put us outside the window for an application this time around.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay, thanks for the question and the responses. Councillor Schonfelder, do you wish to speak to the motion?

CR SCHONFELDER: Yes, please. I am still deciding, still deliberating and I'm wondering how my other colleagues feel about it because I do feel that Councillor Grist has really brought up a pertinent point about finances, although I am reminded, Mayor, of you advocating for active transport and saying to me a Roman saying that "build it and they will come" and I feel that building this infrastructure would in fact entice more members and more participation.

I am also quite aware of the sad reality that in many communities, and I won't name them because I don't want to discriminate, but not within our own Shire, but there is a drug problem in some areas and I feel that sport, there's a statistic that 1 in 4 children that if they play organised sport, they have a less likelihood of being involved with drugs and I think that's a very serious matter. And also the fact that our community, we have so many volunteers and the volunteers, their contribution is enormous and that's something we welcome and we need to partner with.

So I don't know if other Councillors wish to speak on this because I actually - I'm still deliberating on this matter. Thank you, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Schonfelder. Do any other Councillors want to speak? Thanks, Councillor Phelps.

CR PHELPS: I'd just like to say I share Councillor Grist's reservations regarding the high price for four cricket nets which are to be placed in a sporting precinct that is already very well endowed with facilities and more on

Draft Transcript

the way. I do feel this club concerned really hasn't demonstrated that they are able to contribute the amount that's being requested, the 40,000, as I understand, is coming from Cricket Australia, not from the club. \$25 is not a great representation of club involvement in this. So I'm going to vote against it.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Phelps. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Thank you, Councillors. So Councillor Pattison, do you have any closing comments?

CR PATTISON: Yes, I do. So I really want to stress that this is not a quick last-minute decision to pop something through for a funding application because it's available. These cricket nets were part of the Banyul-Warri Fields Land Use Plan in 2022 and that included inclusion of these cricket nets and the club has been really regularly meeting and pushing this issue of the importance of having these cricket nets to enable their club to grow and evolve and not having those nets is the reason that they can't provide sessions for younger players and women, and the like, and therefore it's limited the ability of the club to be able to access more members and therefore generate more funds and the like.

I think when you think about - it's very easy to say these nets could be built cheaper and the costs are disproportionate to what's being built. We operate within the lens of local government. These nets are priced on similar projects that have occurred in other local government areas managed by Council and that is the envelope that we work in. We may not be happy with that, but that is the reality.

There are certain risk assessments, work health and safety requirements, et cetera, that need to be met and that would impact the types of contractors that can bid for these projects, as well as these nets need to be constructed to be able to withstand vandalism and meet the requirements and durability that's expected of a utility-type facility that's built in the local government area.

So I think new Councillors need to be very wary of making rash decisions to decide that these are too expensive, I'm not supporting them, this is ill thought through. Our officers spend a lot of time prioritising the projects that come before us for funding applications. There are lots of clubs that are seeking funding for lots of different facilities, and the like, and they are prioritised on their merit.

Draft Transcript

So I really think we have had a briefing on this and we really need to be considered when we decide not to accept these funding applications. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. We'll now put the motion to the vote. All those in favour. And against? Thanks, Councillors. And the motion is carried --

CR PATTISON: No.

CR BODSWORTH: No? Sorry, can we see that again, please? 4 - oh, sorry, we've lost Councillor Barker, that's right. Sorry, my maths was falling down.

CR PATTISON: You have the casting vote.

CR BODSWORTH: So I have the casting vote in that case, the vote being tied 4-4, so I'm going to vote for and put a second vote for. So the motion is carried, what is that, 5-4, effectively. Thanks, Councillors.

So item 4.5 is Motions for ALGA Conference and MAV State Council Meeting. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of motions to be tabled at the Australian Local Government Association 2025 National General Assembly, which will be held in June, and the Municipal Association of Victoria State Council Meeting to be held in May this year. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Thanks, Councillor Stapleton - as per the recommendation?

CR STAPLETON: As per the recommendation, thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. And a seconder? Councillor Schonfelder, thanks. Councillor Stapleton.

CR STAPLETON: Thank you. I'm happy to recommend this motion to Council knowing that both ALGA and MAV provide important opportunities for Council to enlist support from peak bodies for advocacy on matters of significance to our community. ALGA, which is the national association of councils, and MAV, which is the association representing Victorian councils, are both organisations that offer an opportunity for Council to provide input on issues that should be taken to State and Federal Government as part of their advocacy programs.

Draft Transcript

The recommended motions that we have here before us not only support Surf Coast priorities, but also align with national and state strategies and are relevant to the broader local government sector.

In the case of ALGA, the Australian Local Government Association, the proposed motion is asking the Federal Government to introduce a grant program specifically dedicated to drainage infrastructure. While the Federal Government currently provides funding streams for important community infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, there is nothing specifically for drainage. We know that the cost to improve or repair our drainage network is often beyond the means of local councils.

In recent years here on the Surf Coast we've witnessed the damage caused by an ageing drainage network that is now much less effective against increased rainfall and more extreme weather events, such as storm surge and coastal flooding. The officer's report outlines some of the cost implications in relation to extreme weather events and the importance of pre-emptive investment to reduce overall social and financial impacts of events like flooding.

We also know that most government investment is spent on disaster recovery and relief and only a fraction of this is allocated to building resilience into our infrastructure. Having a grant stream specifically dedicated to drainage infrastructure would enable us to build this important resilience into our own drainage network.

The second motion proposed to be tabled for the MAV State Council Meeting is to advocate for the Victorian Government to implement strategies identified by Recycling Victoria to improve the resilience and competitiveness of the recycling and waste market. We know that so many people in our community make such great efforts to recycle, but unfortunately the Victorian recycling and waste sector is struggling to provide a competitive and sustainable market. So this motion is seeking support from MAV to advocate for better outcomes in this space.

With Victorians now relying on only two major recycling providers, we are in a vulnerable position and there is a need for greater investment to help create a more stable recycling market. We don't need to reinvent the wheel, recycling Victoria has developed a strategy to address this, and we are simply asking that the Victorian Government gives these recommendations high priority and pursues the various actions that have already been proposed.

Draft Transcript

Each one of these motions for ALGA and MAV provide an opportunity for Surf Coast, at no additional cost, to influence better outcomes for our community. So I strongly encourage everyone to support this motion. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. Councillor Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Mayor, I concur with Councillor Stapleton and I congratulate the organisation on helping with this motion because I know from listening to radio programs and seeing what has been advocated by different mayors and different members of the municipal sector that drainage has become an issue that Graham Richardson would say has traction, an issue that has become more dominant due to the fact of storm activities and erratic rainfall, the fact that the population has grown so substantially as well, runoff, and also the lessons that we've learnt dealing with the Karaaf Wetlands also. So I look forward to that motion going to ALGA. I had the privilege of attending ALGA with Councillor Stapleton and Councillor Pattison and I noted that the different workshops they had and advocating on behalf of our municipality in certain areas was a lot of hard work and the advocacy is so important and it's what our community expect.

Also, when it comes to recycling, I'm quite a very strong advocate for glass because wildlife cannot eat glass. The plastic that's affecting the wildlife and livestock also, I might add, in the agricultural sector is a terrible problem and I would even go as far as to say as far as environmentally I think it's the worst environmental problem that we have, plastic pollution, particularly in the marine environment. So that's something that I also welcome.

I also feel that Councillor Stapleton mentioned about the fact that there was a possible duopoly of recycling providers, which is quite serious as well. So it's an area that does need to be looked at. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. Do any other Councillors want to speak to the motion? Councillor Grist?

CR GRIST: Just a question. Am I able to speak on behalf of Councillor Barker? I've got his notes.

CR BODSWORTH: That's an interesting question. Can I refer that to the Governance team for advice, please?

Draft Transcript

OFFICER: Not directly, but you're welcome to read whatever notes you like during your debate.

CR GRIST: I see. Okay.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you.

CR GRIST: "I oppose both of these motions as they call on governments to do something. The reality is that most harms in society are borne from governments doing something. I'd rather we seek ALGA to advocate for cost shifting on the Councils to be outlawed and for MAV to do the same or make amendments to the EPA Act that remove the causal factors that are requiring us to close our landfill. This closure of our landfill is likely going to have one of the biggest impacts to council costs in the future and will increase our carbon footprint as our waste management operation will depend heavily on massive trucks that will both burn a lot of diesel and clog up our roads out of the shire."

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Grist. Do any other Councillors want to speak to the motion? Thank you. Any closing remarks, Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: Oh, look, I'd just add quickly that the proposal for MAV and ALGA to advocate on I think it was cost shifting or financial implications for local government wouldn't be consistent with the way that Councils develop motions for both MAV and ALGA requires that they're not motions that have already been considered the previous year or existing motions that are priorities of both those organisations. So that sort of question of cost shifting and financial viability is already definitely a position for both MAV and ALGA, so it wouldn't be appropriate for Surf Coast to be advocating to table those motions at the next Council meetings.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. We'll now put the motion to the vote. All those in favour? Thanks, Councillors, the motion is carried unanimously.

Item 4.6, SCS-006 Community Houses Policy. The purpose of this report is for Council to consider adopting the updated Community Houses Policy. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Phelps - as per the recommendation?

CR PHELPS: As per the recommendation, thank you.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Phelps. A seconder? Councillor Pattison. Thank you, Councillor Phelps, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR PHELPS: Oh, just quickly. They're relatively small changes and it's continuing the policy that has been going for a while, so all good.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Phelps. Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Sure. This confirms the Shire's commitment to supporting and collaborating with community houses in our Shire to support and meet the needs of our community, so in the 24/25 budget Council allocated \$6,000 annual contribution to each of the five community houses and also a \$1,500 annual contribution to Neighbourhood Houses Barwon and that continues, this policy doesn't change that.

Council also provides and maintains facility for the five houses to operate from and community houses provide so much good for our community. Focusing on things like community houses is what really brings our community together and helps with mental health and wellbeing. They're welcoming places for all and strengthen the social fabric of our shire. From community lunches, chatty cafes, colouring competitions, art classes, music groups, the list goes on. If you aren't yet involved in your local community house, I encourage you to get involved. Community houses are welcoming, safe and inclusive spaces that enhance social connection and belonging.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? No. Thank you. We'll put the motion to the vote. All those in favour? Thanks, Councillors, the motion is carried unanimously.

Item 4.7, SCS-049 Community Development Policy. The purpose of this report is to consider adopting the updated Community Development Policy. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Stapleton - as per the recommendation?

CR STAPLETON: Yes, thanks, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. And a seconder? Councillor Pattison. Thank you. Councillor Stapleton, do you wish to - sorry, Councillor Walker. I'm sorry, I didn't see your hand. We'll put Councillor Walker down as the seconder. Thank you.

Draft Transcript

CR STAPLETON: So the Community Development Policy is presented to us for adoption following an update by officers as part of a scheduled review. It's a really important policy for Council and supports our position to enable communities to act on issues that are important to them. It recognises that people are experts in their own lives and communities and that Council has a role to play to support community members and help them to participate and contribute to community life.

The key changes to this policy update include updates to descriptions, to policy principles and Council's approach to collaborating with community. There are also changes to improve clarity and reduce jargon to help ensure the policy is easy to understand, which is obviously very important.

In terms of the policy itself, it's been in operation at Council since 2020 and sets the scene for community-led action. We've seen many examples of this during the last Council term and it's a really empowering and cost-effective way for communities to achieve their goals. Whether that's by accessing Council's grants program, submitting ideas for consideration by the community projects team, or participating in local community groups, there are many ways that this policy provides the framework for communities to participate in social, civic and economic life.

Council's aim is to remove barriers so that with community we can achieve better outcomes. Anyone familiar with the bike path project at Bob Pettitt Reserve a few years back understands what this means in practical terms for our residents.

There are many other great examples where community has taken the lead in recent years, such as murals in many of our townships, the Yellow Gums performance space at Jan Juc, and the multipurpose pavilion at Deans Marsh and the upgrade of the playground by residents at Ocean Views Reserve.

We've also seen community plans created in Winchelsea and Moriac and I'm looking forward to seeing this take place in Anglesea, which I believe is coming up next. It's a great approach and I'm very supportive of this policy. Thanks to officers for reviewing and recommending to us this new and improved version.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. Councillor Walker? Okay, do any other Councillors want to speak to the motion? Councillor Phelps?

Draft Transcript

CR PHELPS: I just made a comment that, yes, community development allows Council and community to work together to get it right, so I heartily support this policy.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Phelps. Do any other Councillors want to speak to the motion? Thanks, we'll put the motion to the vote. All in favour? Thanks, Councillors, it's carried unanimously.

4.8, Award of Contracts by the Chief Executive Officer under Pre-Authorisation. The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the award of three contracts by the Chief Executive Officer as authorised at the 27 August 2024 Council meeting. This preauthorisation enabled Council business to proceed during a period when the Council meeting schedule was impacted by the local government elections and the Christmas period. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Stapleton, thank you. A seconder? Councillor Phelps, thanks. Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: So this motion supports good governance and transparency by reporting back to Council on a number of contracts that were awarded by the CEO after receiving preauthorisation from Council ahead of the recent caretaker period. Providing preauthorisation enables the CEO to award and execute contracts within agreed budgets so that Council can get on with important business and, in some instances, meet grant milestone obligations at a time when Council meetings were not being held either due to the elections or Christmas.

During this most recent period, contracts were awarded for the much-needed renewal of the Anglesea netball courts, the multiarts centre, or MAC, refurbishment, and the widening and roundabout for Coombes Road. Most Councillors recently had the good fortune to visit each of these sites and learn more about the projects under way. Personally, I really appreciated the opportunity to get this additional insight into important Council projects and thank officers for taking the time to show us these.

There is nothing additional to approve with this motion. It is simply acknowledging and noting that the contracts have been awarded. It is also noted that the Torquay hockey pitch at Banyul-Warri Fields was also included as part of the CEO's preauthorisation, but a report on this contract will be provided upon finalisation. Thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. Councillor Phelps?

Draft Transcript

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Mayor. Nothing further to add to Councillor Stapleton's words.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Thank you. We'll go to the vote. All in favour? Thanks, Councillors. That's carried unanimously.

4.9, Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Activity Report. The purpose of this report is for Council to consider noting the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee from 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024 as prescribed by section 54(5) of the Local Government Act 2020. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Pattison, thank you - as per the recommendation? Thanks. And a seconder? Councillor Phelps, thanks. Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Yes, thank you. So the Audit and Risk Committee prepares every six months or biannual report that describes the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee and includes its findings and recommendations. This report is part of the agenda and we all have access to have a read of that and it includes the annual work program. Myself and Councillor Grist are the members for Council as of this new term. However, this report relates to the prior six months of the Audit and Risk Committee's work.

So some of the things that are covered off in this report for those that are interested, it's the committee has during this period endorsed the financial reports, looked at and evaluated the external audit and also the internal audits that are undertaken and there's ongoing monitoring of risks and internal controls, so it goes through what's happened over the last six months. So I encourage you to support the motion.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. Councillor Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Oh, just to note that the Audit and Risk Committee that Surf Coast Shire has, I feel very confident in who they are and what they do, a well-appointed committee, so I'm happy to support this.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. Do any other Councillors want to speak to the motion? Thanks. We'll put the motion - oh, sorry, any closing comments, Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: No.

CR BODSWORTH: I feel like I missed that on the last item.

CR PATTISON: That's alright.

CR BODSWORTH: We'll put the motion to the vote. All in favour? Thanks, that's carried unanimously.

Item 4.10, Audit and Risk Committee Annual Assessment. The purpose of this report is to present the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Assessment to Council for noting. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Thanks, Councillor Pattison.

CR PATTISON: As per the recommendation.

CR BODSWORTH: As per the recommendation, thank you. And a seconder? Councillor Walker, thanks. Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Certainly. So the results of the annual assessment of the committee are positive with the majority of responses showing that the committee has the skills and resources to fulfil its role. There are improvement opportunities captured in the assessment relating to helping the community access training and administration improvements.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Councillor Walker, do you want to speak to the motion?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor. It's great to see a report tabled and made public. It shows transparency with what we're doing as a Council, so thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Thank you. We'll put the motion to the vote. All in favour? Thank you. And the motion is carried unanimously, noting that Councillor Phelps had left the room and missed the vote.

4.11, Appointment of Audit and Risk Committee Member. The purpose of this report is for Council to consider appointing one independent member to the Audit and Risk Committee for the period 1 March 2025 to 28 February 2029. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion?

Draft Transcript

Councillor Pattison, thanks. As per the recommendation? Thank you. A seconder? Councillor Walker, thanks. Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. I'd like to acknowledge the valuable contribution and commitment of outgoing committee member Robert Tommasini for his four-year term and sincerely thank him for his contribution for his time and his efforts. So over the years, it was clear in the one meeting that I was with Rob that he was very committed to diligence and really thoroughly evaluating the reports at hand and providing really considered and thoughtful feedback. He was obviously very committed and paid very close attention to the reports and provided valuable insights and questions to officers for the betterment of our Shire. So once again, thank you, Rob, for your commitment and time.

Also, the second point of this motion is also very exciting. I'd like to appoint Geoffrey Rigby as an independent member of the Audit and Risk, if this motion gets up, for the period commencing 1 March 2025 to 28 February 2029. I had the pleasure of being part of the interview panel to select Geoff for the Audit and Risk Committee and we're very grateful to him for putting his hand up and the contribution that he will make going forward. It was very clear in the interview process that he's a really committed community member living locally and really wants to contribute to our Audit and Risk Committee and I'm really excited about working with him on that committee.

I want to point out that it was an amazingly strong field, with 40 very talented applications, and it was an extremely hard decision. I know people often say that and you wonder if they mean it or not, but to be honest, it was amazing applicants. So as a Shire, we should be really grateful for the commitment that people within our community and more broadly have in being part of our Audit and Risk Committee. So thank you to both Rob Tommasini and Geoff Rigby.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Before I pass to Councillor Walker, I'll just say to Councillor Phelps that we're on item 4.11, if you hadn't worked that out already. Councillor Walker?

CR WALKER: No, that's all, thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks. Do any other Councillors want to speak to the motion? Thank you. We'll put the motion to the vote. Sorry, no closing?

CR PATTISON: That's fine, put it to the vote, yes.

CR BODSWORTH: All in favour? Thanks, the motion is carried unanimously.

4.12, Audit and Risk Committee Charter 2025 Review. The purpose of this report is for Council to consider adopting the reviewed Audit and Risk Committee Charter. We have a recommendation. Do we have a mover? Thanks, Councillor Pattison. As per the recommendation?

CR PATTISON: That's right.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks. And a seconder? Councillor Stapleton. Thanks. Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Sure. So Council is required to approve an Audit and Risk Committee Charter that specifies the functions and responsibilities of the Audit and Risk Committee. The current Audit and Risk Committee Charter outlines that the document must be reviewed annually by the committee and recommended to Council for adoption. It outlines the roles, responsibilities, terms of office, roles for the chair, those sorts of important things, basically the governance structure that the Audit and Risk Committee operate within. There have been minor changes from prior charters, but it's all available for people to see in the agenda.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Pattison. Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: Yes, nothing further to add, thanks, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks. Do any other Councillors wish to speak? Thank you. Any closing comments?

CR PATTISON: No.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks. We'll put the motion to the vote. All in favour? Thanks, Councillors. And against? Thanks, Councillors. So the motion is carried 7-1. Thanks.

Item 4.13, Project Budget Adjustments and Cash Reserve Transfers - February 2025. This report contains proposed project budget adjustments and cash reserve transfers for Council approval. The report presents adjustments including existing projects requiring adjustment, project closures, new projects to be initiated, CEO-approved transfers under delegation, or corrections to

Draft Transcript

prior reports presented to Council. We have a recommendation. Do we have a mover? Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder - as per the recommendation? Thank you. And a seconder? Thanks, Councillor Stapleton. Councillor Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Yes, I did have a question to ask because the CEO earlier this evening mentioned to me about the fire that occurred a few days ago in Gnarwarre and I just wondered with Pollocksford Bridge, a brief update of what's happening with the bridge. I note the funding arrangements in the item.

CR BODSWORTH: If it's going to be really brief, I'm happy to permit that. Otherwise we can take that offline and get an update for you. But I'll look to the CEO for how long that might take.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Just very briefly, we are absolutely committed to having a solution to deliver the work that's required to reopen the bridge and we've been working on the design and we're hoping to go out to tender shortly.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. I invite you to speak to the motion.

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you, and I must say I'm very impressed with the fact that the CEO was concerned about the fire that happened and I know that with the Pollocksford Bridge, it is half owned by the Surf Coast Shire and half owned by the Golden Plains Shire, so it is a bit of a challenge when you half own an asset when it comes to dealing with maintenance and upgrading of that asset, so that's my understanding anyway. This item just highlights different areas where the Council have had changes with funding, that's my understanding. So that's all I wish to say, thank you, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: Yes, look, I don't intend to speak about any specific items in the table, but just to I guess reiterate what Councillor Schonfelder said around transparency to show various funding sources that come into Council, but also to add that it identifies where funds need to be moved from one reserve to another or from - you know, to close out various projects. So it just provides the community with access to information around the financial movements, I guess, between budgets.

Draft Transcript

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? No, thanks. Thank you. And no closing comments. So we'll put the motion to the vote. All in favour? Thanks, the motion is carried unanimously.

Item 4.14, Councillor Expenses and Attendance at Meetings - October to December 2024. The purpose of this report is to present the Councillor allowances, expenses and attendance at meetings for the December 2024 quarter. Officers have advised that due to an administrative error, the Councillor attendance attachment as presented in the report is incorrect and have requested that as this item is not time critical, it be deferred to the next Council meeting to enable the report to be corrected.

I will now ask officers to display an updated recommendation on the screen, please. Thank you. So do I have a mover of a motion? Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. Is that as per the recommendation that we're looking at?

CR SCHONFELDER: To defer.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. And a seconder? Thanks, Councillor Phelps. I'd invite Councillor Schonfelder to speak to that.

CR SCHONFELDER: So we're simply just deferring this item a month, so I'm happy to move.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks. And Councillor Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Nothing to add, thanks, Mayor.

CR BODSWORTH: And does anyone else wish to speak to it? No? Thanks, Councillors. No closing comments, I presume? Thanks. We'll put that to the vote. All in favour? Thanks, Councillors, that's carried unanimously.

4.15, Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation - Planning and Environment Act 1987. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's appointment of authorised officers under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 through the updated Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation. This instrument requires updating due to recent staff changes.

We have a recommendation. Do we have a mover of a motion? Thank you, Councillor Phelps. Is that as per the recommendation?

Draft Transcript

CR PHELPS: As per the recommendation, thanks.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. And a seconder? Councillor Stapleton, thanks.
Councillor Phelps?

CR PHELPS: No comments, thanks.

CR BODSWORTH: No? Thank you. Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: All good.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to this motion? Thank you. We'll put the motion to the vote. All in favour? Thanks, it's carried unanimously.

4.16, Conflict of Interest Records. The purpose of this report is to present conflict of interest records received since the previous Council meeting. We have a recommendation. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Thanks, Councillor Schonfelder. As per the recommendation? Thank you. A seconder? Thanks, Councillor Grist. Councillor Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: I'll reserve my right, thank you.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay, thank you. Councillor Grist?

CR GRIST: No.

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks. Do any other Councillors wish to speak to the motion? Thanks, Councillors. We'll put that motion to the vote. All in favour? Thank you. That's carried unanimously.

That brings us to the end of the reports and the closed section, which we don't have tonight. There's no urgent business for tonight and therefore we are able to close the meeting. I declare the meeting closed at 9.38pm and thanks very much, Councillors, and thanks, officers, for a very constructive meeting.
Thanks.