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Draft Transcript

Surf Coast Shire Ordinary Council Meeting

Surf Coast Shire Civic Office

Council Chambers

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MAYOR STAPLETON: Good evening and welcome to our July Council Meeting. I'm Mayor Libby Stapleton and it's a pleasure to welcome everyone joining us tonight. This meeting is also being livestreamed, so a big welcome to those tuning in online, and, of course, welcome to all my fellow Councillors. Live captioning will accompany the livestream of this meeting and we hope that that assists those who may have hearing difficulties.

I would 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 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 any Aboriginal people attending or viewing this meeting tonight.

Some of my fellow Councillors will shortly be speaking about recent events happening across the Shire. But I would like to quickly just give a shout-out to the 16th annual Surf Coast Arts Trail, which is taking place this weekend. Featuring more than 300 artists, which is magnificent, across 64 venues, the Trail attracts thousands of visitors every year. This year the Trail also introduces a new element, which is the Arts Trail After Hours program, celebrating even more local talent through live music, performances and other things across the region. So I encourage everyone to start planning your weekend now. You can get online to surfcoastartstrail.com.au to download a map and plan out your journey or you can also pick up a printed program during the week from Council offices, our Visitor Information Centres and also over the weekend at the venues who are hosting the Arts Trail. My thanks also go to the volunteers with this event, whose dedication and hard work help to make this much-loved event a possibility every year.

Now on to our agenda for tonight. So a quick run through the process: 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 five minutes to open the debate and then a further two minutes to make a closing statement. Any other Councillor, including the seconder, may speak to a motion for no more than three 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.

Do we have any apologies for tonight's meeting? No. I'm not aware of any apologies. Can I please have a mover and a seconder to confirm the Minutes of the

Council Meeting held on 23 June 2026? Moved by Cr Schonfelder and seconded by Councillor Bodsworth. Thank you. And all those in favour? And against? And that's carried unanimously at the moment. Eight votes, thank you. Do we have any leave of absence requests from Councillors? No? OK.

Declarations of conflicts of interest. So 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. They will be requested to leave the meeting whilst the matter is being considered. Once the matter is resolved, they will be asked to return to the meeting. Are there any declarations of conflicts of interest in relation to tonight's agenda? Yes, CEO.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thank you, Mayor Stapleton. I'll be declaring a conflict in the closed section of the meeting later on this evening.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you. I will also be declaring a conflict of interest in item 4.6, which is SCS-022 Draft Events Policy. This arises as I am the licence holder of the Aireys Inlet Market, and while this is an indirect connection to the policy, given that the policy does not specifically apply to market licensees, but I have been advised that the policy may nonetheless inform certain Council requirements and processes that apply to licensees of markets on Council land. So I acknowledge that I attended the briefing for this item. However, markets were not discussed and I did not draw a connection at that time. While I have considered the exemption around remoteness of the conflict, I have determined that there could be a perceived conflict and, on that basis, I am choosing to remove myself from the decision-making, and Cr Phelps, as Deputy Mayor, will chair the meeting for that item. Do any other Councillors have conflicts that they would like to declare? No? And if any conflicts arise during the meeting, please make them known to me.

So now on to presentations. Tonight we will hear presentations from three of our Councillors - Cr Phelps, Cr Schonfelder and Cr Pattison - and in the interests of time, Councillors, I just ask if you could please keep your presentations brief to around a minute each. Cr Phelps, we will kick off with you.

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Mayor. I would just like to touch on - I have been to a couple of changeover dinners recently - the Winchelsea Lions Club and the Torquay Rotary Club. A changeover dinner is about reviewing the year, presenting awards and recognising special contributions. As we know, the Lions and Rotary Clubs do an awful lot of good stuff around our communities. So just a congratulations to the incoming Lions President, Murray Bennett, and his team, and thanks to the outgoing President, Graham Kenafacke and, likewise, the incoming Torquay Rotary President Linda Neale and her new time, and thanks to the outgoing President, Kelly Binyon. They do an awful lot of work that is really good for the community, as I say.

I was also honoured to represent Surf Coast Shire at the Good Friday Appeal Thank You event held at The Sands. So this reflects across Barwon South West all the funds that were raised as part of this year's Good Friday appeal. Winchelsea SES have a new area, Lea Kerry, and they raised about \$8,000. The Durrang Durrang

couple Doug and Laurel raised \$14,000, and the Torquay Lions raised a rather magnificent \$85,000, taking their lifetime funds raised to \$300,000. Now, these funds - we actually heard from someone from a children's hospital in Geelong to where the funds go. They go both to equipment and also, as importantly, towards training and capability. So it's great to see it's things like incubators but also training for nurses to increase the capability around the south-west. It's not just Melbourne anymore. They're spreading across the state. So it was a fabulous event to be at and to see how well regarded Surf Coast Shire is. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. And Cr Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you, Mayor. On 27 June, I had the great pleasure of attending the 150th birthday of the Winchelsea Football and Netball Club and there was an announcement at the birthday of the team of the last 25 years. Mayor, I wasn't actually included in that, unfortunately, but you would be very pleased to know that there was a special guest speaker, and that was an AFL star and former junior player and current Essendon player Darcy Parish. It was a wonderful event and Winchelsea has actually won the last nine games in a row and is second on the ladder, so it's looking very promising. The number one ticketholder was the late Shirley Leak, who was a life member, along with three other members of her family - she was the fourth life member of the club. We express our condolences on behalf of the Council to her family. Her son, Neil, was a stalwart of the club and I trained with his grandson, and his grandson was a wonderful footballer and I don't think I would describe myself in the same context, Mayor, but hopefully I'm a wonderful Councillor.

Secondly, last Friday, I had the incredible pleasure of listening to baritone James Emerson, a concert pianist Susan Goessling and a soprano Zinaida Champion in the concert at the Globe Theatre in Winchelsea. The repertoire ranged from Mozart to other composers, including The Messiah to The Merry Widow, as part of the Winchelsea music season, and upcoming this Saturday is Songman at the Mansion on 1 August and it's a First Nations person, Gundjitmara/Kokatha Songman, Uncle Dave, and that's at the Barwon Park mansion. I would encourage people to attend events as part of the Winchelsea music season, and I note some people in the audience who have been involved with that as well. So it's fantastic. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Schonfelder. And Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. I would like to highlight two positive developments for our community. Both are around investing in connection. Firstly, it's fantastic to see the continued investment in active transport across the Surf Coast. A great recent example is the new wombat crossing on Baines Crescent. I particularly like this because my kids often ride to school that way. It was one little blink that was still unsafe in getting from Jan Juc to the schools and kindergartens and child cares on Grossmans Road, so that's great to see. Projects like this seem small individually, but together they're creating a safer, more connected network for our community. They make it easier for kids to ride to school safely, encourage people to walk and cycle for everyday trips, and improve accessibility, and help us stay active. On the

way home, I saw a Spoonbill when I crossed down through the river and I was like: if I hadn't ridden to school with the kids, I would have totally missed that, and we just go about our day without those lovely interactions with the amazing place that we live.

I am also excited about the budget allocated for the Active Transport Officer because having someone whose role is there to identify opportunities, improve safety and continue building these connections means we will keep making steady progress towards a more walkable and rideable Surf Coast. And, secondly, wearing my hat as the Chair of the Geelong Regional Library Board, I would like to acknowledge an exciting milestone for our regional library service. On Friday, we announced the appointment of David Semmens as our new Chief Executive Officer. David has been Acting CEO since February and was appointed following a rigorous national recruitment process that attracted a strong field of highly experienced candidates and the quality of the applicants gave us, as the Board, great confidence that we've appointed a really outstanding leader for the organisation through its next chapter. Libraries remain at the heart of our community - as we know, our Torquay library, the library that visits along the Great Ocean Road, Airleys Inlet, Winchelsea and the like - they are really important in supporting literacy, learning, digital inclusion and social connection. I look forward to working with David as we continue to strengthen this important regional service. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Pattison.

CR BARKER: Chair, I've got one.

MAYOR STAPLETON: You've got one?

CR BARKER: Everyone's talking about stuff they've done. I've got an event that I attended.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. So I will give you that opportunity but normally Councillors put in a request because everybody's attending events all month and we try to allocate events according to those requests that come in. But if you would like to --

CR BARKER: I minimise my engagement in this hostile environment, Mayor. I'm doing my best. On 25 June I attended the Lions Club of Torquay changeover dinner. They raised tens of thousands of dollars for the local community. They do some excellent work. Previous President Ross Yapp is continuing but what I identified there is that the volunteer base that they work with is shrinking and ageing, and like all other community organisations like that, they're struggling, and we, as an organisation, have a direct part to play in that. So I would like us to make sure that we minimise the impact on organisations like that in the future.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Barker. We will now move on to Public Question Time, which is a time for community members to ask questions or make a submission at a Council Meeting, and tonight we have two community members who

have submitted two questions and made one submission. So I will start by calling Jenny Mathison up. Jenny has put in two questions around heating at the Globe Theatre in Winchelsea. And, Jenny, when you sit down, if I could just ask you to read both questions at once, which I'll be referring to our CEO to respond to.

JENNY MATHISON: Thank you. Hello, everyone, and thank you for this opportunity. For nine years, the Winchelsea Movie Club Committee has worked hard behind the scenes to bring a regular monthly event to our town. We continually talk up the Movie Club to new and current residents, and this year we were very proud when we exceeded 80 members after the slow restart following COVID, and we all remember the white ants in the floor episode.

On April 17th, we found the heating was not working. It was reported to the Shire, as we're pretty good at putting in CRMs. And in May we held a movie with no heating in the hall and three degrees outside when we were about to go home. Members will never forget that night and many will not come back until this heating is on. We chose to cancel the June and July movie nights because the heating was still not fixed. Imagine our delight when we were notified by a Shire Officer 10 days ago that the heating was repaired. August 20th looked like a festive return. Delight was short-lived. The heating is out again. Writing to our members each month, begging for patience and explaining why we needed to cancel again, has now run thin. There are 10 meetings in a year. We've already cancelled two and we froze on the third night. The majority of our members pay an annual subscription in February. How can we deliver in the current circumstances? We understand there are already many dollars spent on this equipment. We also understand the parts just don't come off the shelf in Bunnings. It is our concern that if a decision is made to replace the whole unit, then it will go into a different funding silo and we will wait and wait and wait. For the sake of the community and other users of the Globe, I beg you: please get it fixed and find the funding later.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Jenny, for those questions and I'll refer them to our CEO to respond to.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thanks, Jenny, for your questions, and we know what an important facility the Globe is and I've heard about what a wonderful event the movie nights are. Being in the Globe in winter without heating is not something that we would wish for any of you, and you're right, we did think we had the heating fixed. We've had specialist technicians out. We've had Mitsubishi out, looking at it, to determine what the problem was. They thought they had found the problem and fixed it. You're right - the fix didn't work. So we're still working with a specialist to really understand what is causing the issue - it's quite a complex problem - so that we can get it fixed. But we are keen to do that as quickly as possible, so I want to reassure you, we are working on it to try and get it done as quickly as possible, and that is our priority.

We know that you've got another movie night coming up on 20 August, I think, and so we will do what we can to try to have it fixed before then. If it's not fixed, then we'll make sure there is heating in the hall to ensure that you can proceed with your

event. So it might be temporary heating, but if it's looking like we still haven't got to the bottom of it and got it sorted, we will ensure there's temporary heating so that your Movie Club can still proceed with its event on the 20th of August. And we know it's really frustrating. We're frustrated too, and we're trying to get to the bottom of what the problem is so we can get it fixed. Thanks for your question.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Jenny. And Jane Bartier, if you'd like to come up, Jane. Jane, I understand you just have a submission to make.

JANE BARTIER: Yes, very short. And just before I go, I just want to off script for one minute, which is to also thank the Councillors and the Council staff that came to the Winchelsea Place Planning meeting last week, on Thursday. Over 50 people came during the day. We were unsure as to whether that would work or not, but there was great support from the Council staff. So I just wanted to go off submission.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Jane.

JANE BARTIER: Thank you. Growing Winchelsea strongly supports the Surf Coast Shire review of the 2024 Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan, which identified no unmet demand in Winchelsea predicted until 2029. The Council and Councillors have been responding to community members' great concerns and we trust that the review will support a stronger recognition of the growing demand for kindergarten places in this growing community. We also understand a review was undertaken last year, and due to community needs, we support a KISP review this year and the ongoing work to identify infrastructure planning in a timely approach. This is an example of the inevitable impact on different services as our community expands. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you so much for that, Jane. Thank you for your submission. Now, as we do not have any petitions or notices of motion for tonight's meeting, we can keep moving.

Before we begin our agenda this evening, I would like to make a few brief remarks, just around the expectations of meetings in the Chamber and the responsibilities we share as elected representatives. As a Councillor group, we spent time together last week undertaking our annual governance training. It was a timely reminder that our Governance Rules are not simply about meeting procedure. They provide the framework for respectful debate, informed decision making and maintaining public confidence in local government. We all come to the Chamber with different perspectives and robust debate is a healthy and essential part of local democracy. Our community expects us to test ideas, challenge one another respectfully and make decisions based on correct information.

As elected representatives, our words carry weight, both inside this Chamber and in the broader community. That is why each of us has a responsibility to ensure our contributions are accurate and consistent with our obligations as Councillors. Our governance training also highlighted the important role that points of order play in supporting fair, orderly and constructive debate, and reminded me of the importance

of clearly communicating the basis for procedural rulings from the Chair. I will endeavour to fully articulate those reasons and remain committed to ensuring the process for points of order is applied consistently and in accordance with our Governance Rules. Equally, points of order should be raised respectfully and in good faith. If a point of order is called, I ask that all Councillors support the process by remaining silent while the point is being considered. This will help ensure the matter can be heard and addressed appropriately.

Maintaining trust in this Council depends not on us always agreeing but on our shared commitment to accuracy, integrity and respectful debate, and I look forward to a constructive and productive meeting this evening.

So now on to item 4.1 on the agenda, which is the Geelong Regional Library Corporation Model Transition. And the purpose of this report is to seek Council's commitment to transition to the shared regional library service to a company limited by guarantee which will succeed the Geelong Regional Library Corporation, otherwise known as GRLC, and to confirm continued participation in the final stages of the transition process. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move the motion? Cr Pattison, as per the recommendation?

CR PATTISON: Yes.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Do we have a seconder for that item? Cr Schonfelder? Thank you. And, Cr Pattison, would you like to speak to the item?

CR PATTISON: Yes, definitely, thank you. So this is a very significant decision for our Council, a governance decision for our Council this year. While on the surface this motion is about changing the legal structure of the Geelong Regional Library Corporation, what we're really deciding tonight is whether we continue backing a regional model that has served our community exceptionally well for three decades. The Local Government Act means the current Library Corporation has to be wound up before 2031, so doing nothing isn't an option. The real decision is whether we continue working together with our regional Councils to continue to deliver an exceptional service or whether each Council starts trying to go it alone.

Public Libraries Victoria rank the Geelong Regional Library Corporation at at least number one, number two, for the last 10 or more years, so we in our region are currently receiving an amazing library service, and regional collaboration has delivered a library service that the Surf Coast could not provide on its own for the same value. Our residents benefit from a larger collection, greater digital access, specialist staff, shared technology, innovative programs and efficiencies that naturally come from working together, not to mention some wonderful public speakers and the like that attend the events at all of our libraries. I also want to acknowledge the enormous amount of work that's gone into reaching this point by the Library Board, the executive steering committee, Council Officers across the five member Councils and the library staff.

Importantly, tonight's recommendation strikes the right balance. We're not being

asked to sign a constitution. We're not approving a final funding model. We're not committing to detailed governance documents. Those matters will all come back to Council. Instead, the motion is seeking my fellow Councillors to support the continued shared regional model, with all of that detailed work to come in the next year or so.

The report is also transparent and the Surf Coast contribution is expected to increase once the financial modelling is completed. The contribution is needed to increase, irrespective of the way we deliver our library services for the community, so that's not part of this decision tonight but it's just an important one that we're all aware of. As such, I don't see that as a reason to stop the work that we are doing and I see it as something we will need to examine carefully when the detailed figures return.

As Councillors, our role isn't simply to look at the cost. It's to look at the value. But, as I said earlier, a shared service model is the most financially sustainable model as well. If we're investing community money, we should expect excellent community outcomes, strong governance and financial transparency. This motion provides for that into the future for libraries in our region and I particularly welcome the proposed Service Level Agreements which provide clearer governance responsibilities and improved accountability.

Libraries today are so much more than places to borrow books. They are community hubs where children discover reading, people learn digital skills, job seekers access technology, and older residents stay connected. You can even play chess in the Torquay Library. There's puzzles, chess boards. There's a whole lot of things. I was at the Bial-a library in Armstrong Creek, which is where - all members of the Torquay Library - and I was really touched by their English language conversation classes they have. There are a lot of residents of the area that come together and they have created their own community and they share stories across different cultures and improve their English language. To them, that's the highlight of their week. That's the sort of thing libraries provide for us in our region.

Tonight isn't simply about changing a legal entity. It's about protecting a successful regional partnership while ensuring it's fit for the future. I'll be supporting the recommendation and look forward to the detailed governance and financial reports returning to Council. I encourage my fellow Councillors to support this motion to ensure we continue to deliver cost-effective, well-delivered and, most importantly, much-treasured library services for our community. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Pattison. Cr Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you, Mayor. I would like to congratulate the new CEO of the Geelong Regional Library Corporation and have had the pleasure of attending briefings that he presented at and I would also like to amplify the comments made by Cr Pattison pertaining to the importance of libraries. I know recently the mobile library was in Winchelsea and I borrowed some books and spoke to the staff member from the Library Corporation. He told me that I think over 70 borrowings

took place, and that was on a Friday afternoon, so there's obviously a demand for the library services, and Councillor Patterson touched on that, referring to the Torquay Library, which in future the capacity would have to be made a larger facility.

I do believe in Winchelsea it's inevitable for a library to be built, and that is something that will happen in the future, I imagine, and I also know that my mention to Cr Pattison that I was in Melbourne and I was walking past a library and I saw a sign on the side of the library and it said 'Libraries Change Lives', and it's so true. With the different tasks performed, the library - I know myself, I had Apple devices and I was applying for a visa, and according to the country I was visiting, you were unable to apply for it on an Apple device, so I actually went to the library that was closest, which was the Waurin Ponds Library at the time, and I was able to apply for the visa online with their computer. But I've also been in Melbourne and had to attend briefings online and I've actually gone to a library and booked a room and used a library because I didn't want to be in a car. So they have many purposes. The importance of the library service is immeasurable. I believe - I know in the closing statement - Cr Pattison might be able to help me out - that the Geelong Regional Library, I think, is the most effective library in Victoria. There's key performance indicators that speak glowingly of the library. So I must say, very proud to be a part of the library and hope for the best in the future and I will be supporting this recommendation. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Schonfelder. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: Yes, I would just like to say I'm very highly supportive of libraries and the library service as well. It's a service that's valued by users. I would encourage everyone to make use of it. As Cr Pattison and Cr Schonfelder have just said, they're so much more than books now. So I do agree Surf Coast Shire should commit to continuing to a shared service and drawing up the full details. I would also like to congratulate David Semmens on his appointment as CEO. But I do look forward to seeing the new constitution and the agreement in due course in full details and we will assess them then.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. Any other Councillors? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: The current Library Corporation model must change, that's clear, but it doesn't mean that Council must support the first replacement model put in front of us. The report admits that Surf Coast's annual contribution will increase but it also admits the financial modelling needed to calculate that increase has not been completed. Council is being asked to continue a transition before knowing what ratepayers will pay, what control Council will retain or what minimum service standards will apply. Apparently, the number is important enough to calculate later but not important enough for Councillors to know before voting tonight.

No community consultation has been undertaken. Officers say it is because legal structure must change, but that confuses two different issues. The law may require the old structure to end. It doesn't require the community to be excluded from

decisions about the newer structure that will affect them.

I support libraries, and the few times that I've needed it, I've paid for the services that they provide but not the full cost because they're run under a socialist model. That's exactly why I will not casually improve an incomplete transition. Bring back the financial model, the proposed constitution member voting rights, withdrawal provisions and service agreement. Until then, supporting this recommendation as it sits asks Council to approve a direction while the price and important conditions remain unknown. I won't be supporting the motion.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. And would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you. Thank you, Mayor. This is an important one for the future of library services in our region, and we know that the Regional Library Corporation model must transition to a new governance model to ensure these services that everyone values continues, and, again, tonight we're not approving the final legal or governance arrangements. We're simply being asked whether we support continuing a shared regional library service through a proposed company limited by guarantee. This proposed model was chosen by the Board on the GRLC and Councillors from each member Council on the Board, and all representing their different and shared interests, and that was chosen as the preferred future governance model for our library service, which is an essential part of community life and the largest library service in Victoria and delivers a scale of services that seems to be unmatched anywhere else in the state.

The evidence shows the shared library models are more efficient and provide better value than standalone, with a larger collection, better programming, a specialist staff and better movement of library resources. But in the new model, what our communities value will not change - the library services, the customer experience and the day-to-day service delivery and collections. So what will change is the legal structure and governance framework, and any risk that comes with change can be managed through the governance arrangements and service level agreements and the ongoing Council oversight via a committee. So the greatest risk, I think, would be losing the benefits that come from working together. So I support this step in the journey where we commit to continuing the shared regional library approach with a new model and ensure our community has continued to receive really good quality library services that strengthen learning, connection and wellbeing.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Crockett. Any other Councillors? Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you. No doubt we all support libraries, noting that Local Government Act of 2020 requires library corporations to be wound up before July 2031, and this is the step in doing so. Libraries improve wellbeing and drive connections, not just at large libraries but also in more remote communities down the coast of Aireys Inlet, Lorne and Deans Marsh with mobile libraries. The connection is real. Geelong Regional Library Corporation has been consistently recognised as one of Victoria's highest performing public library services. It's a significant

community service supporting literacy, lifelong learning, digital inclusion, social connection and community wellbeing. The proposed transition aims to retain the same library service, while undertaking governance changes in a new model. We had four briefings outlining the transition options over the last year. The proposed model indicates libraries to remain substantially unchanged in the service model, with Councils retaining responsibility for determining strategic direction, service levels including any changes and financial contributions. Service levels will be formalised by an agreement approved by member Councils, providing greater transparency and accountability. Although it may be beneficial to see the funding and costs associated with this transition, most Councils are currently now as of tonight reviewing the proposal, so this transition will come at a later date with these details, as outlined. Councils are not currently being asked to approve the final legal and governance documentation tonight. Rather, the present decision relates to whether councils wish to commit to a shared regional library service model through the proposed company limited by guarantee. Detailed constitution, financial and governance arrangements will then be finalised and be presented to Councils for future consideration. I see this as a step forward for the future of our library services and I'll be supporting it. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Walker. Any other Councillors? Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: Thanks, Mayor. I'll support committing to become a member of the new regional library governance model, purely because the shared service delivers clear benefits through economies of scale. I note the report foreshadows increasing Council contributions over time. While I support this governance transition, I'll be looking for the full review of the library service, I'll be looking for the full review of the library service to consider opportunities to diversify revenue through optional subscription memberships, payment of premium services or other appropriate cost recovery measures. Doing so could help maintain high-quality library services while reducing pressure on ratepayers over the longer term.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Grist. And any closing comment? Oh, sorry, Cr Bodsworth. CR BODSWORTH: Just briefly to thank other Councillors for their remarks. I also support the recommendation and I just want to state my appreciation for the hard work that Cr Pattison has done as Chair of the Board and the hard work of everyone involved in this transition. As Cr Walker said, we've had several briefings on this so I think we've been well informed. We're in a really good position to head to this decision, so I fully support it.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Councillor Bodsworth. Any closing comments, Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Yes, thank you. Thank you, Cr Bodsworth. A lot of work has gone into it, both from the Board and the executive steering committee. And obviously soon to be - current Acting and will be CEO in a few more days to get us to this position. Further to Cr Schonfelder's comments earlier, independent benchmarking identifies GRLC as one of the highest performing public library services of Victoria, consistently achieving strong results across service provision, efficiency, community

usage and customer satisfaction measures. As many Councillors have already identified, the motion seeks Councillors to consider a commitment to a new entity in a shared service model and there will be further decisions coming to Council around the specific financial model, governance documents and the like. And I would like to finish on pointing out that there is strong evidence, including the Victoria Auditor-General's findings, which demonstrates Regional Library Corporations are more efficient than standalone Council-operated library services, so we're in good hands moving forward with the proposed motion, so I encourage my fellow Councillors to support it. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. We will now put that motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 8-1. Thank you, Councillors.

Next up we have item 4.2, which is the proposed discontinuance of a portion of Kuwarrk Lane in Torquay, and the purpose of the report is to advise Council of the outcome of community engagement for this discontinuance of a 12.5 square metre portion of Kuwarrk Lane in Torquay, in accordance with detailed car parking and road plans for the Wurdi Baierr Aquatic and Recreation Centre. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Crockett, thank you. As per the recommendation?

CR CROCKETT: As per the recommendation, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: And do we have a seconder for that? Cr Schonfelder, thank you. And, Cr Crockett, would you like to speak to the item?

CR CROCKETT: Sure. So we are here to decide on the discontinuance of a road. You might be thinking: why are we making a decision on such a small amount of road? But the decision does affect public rights, as the road is public space, so it's a matter of requiring a formal Council decision. The reason for this is due to the development of the Aquatic and Recreation Centre, the new infrastructure location and parking plans and road plans, which have now all been developed as part of the process. So Wadawurrung Way will now connect Kuwarrk Lane with the Surf Coast Highway, so this 12.5 metre square metre portion of road will no longer be required for road infrastructure. I'm satisfied that the road is no longer reasonably required for public purposes, and I think so are the locals, as public notice was advertised for the intention to discontinue the road and no submissions were received by the closing date. So I'm open to supporting the recommendation.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Crockett. Cr Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: I don't wish to speak.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: This appears to be a practical correction involving a small patch of

Kuwarrk Lane. The relevant services have been consulted. No public submissions were received. I'm not opposed to the physical outcome. But a straightforward report should tell Councillors and the community what the decision costs. Page 17 says the cost will be funded through the Aquatic Centre budget. It doesn't state the costs or whether the budget already contains a specific allowance. Now, why does that matter? It matters because this project has already involved substantial public expenditure. But in the project budget is not a dollar figure. Those who follow Councils will know that the Local Government Act 2020 is the overarching legislative framework that we operate under. The report should explain clearly why sections of the Local Government Act 1989 continue to govern this process. The legal reference is correct, but leaving it to Councillors and residents to work that out is poor public communication. I would like to say I'm surprised, but that would be a lie.

I can support discontinuing this small portion if Officers confirm the full legal, surveying, registration and construction costs before the vote. Council should not develop a habit of treating small emissions as acceptable. Many large governance failures begin as small details that nobody bothered to question.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Sorry, Cr Barker, have you finished or are you just taking a break?

CR BARKER: I'm finished.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. I can ask that question for you, just to clarify perhaps through the CEO. Do we have those costs available?

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: We do, Cr Barker.

CR BARKER: Why weren't they shared?

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: I can share them now. They were \$2,500, which includes both staff time and the work we needed to do with State Government agencies.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Hopefully that helps to clarify. Thank you. And would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? No. And, Cr Crockett, did you have any closing comments?

CR CROCKETT: No, that's all from me. Just to thank the staff for the transparency in this and the information provided for us to make the decision.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Crockett. So we will put that item to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And that item is carried 8-1. Thank you, Councillors.

Next up we have the Audit and Risk Committee Biannual Activity Report. The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the activities, findings and recommendations of the Audit and Risk Committee for the past six months as required by section 54(5) of the Local Government Act 2020. We do have a

recommendation before us. Would anyone like to move a motion? Cr Grist. As per the recommendation? Thanks, Cr Grist. And a seconder? Cr Bodsworth. Thank you. Would you like to speak to the item, Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: I will, thanks, Mayor. First of all, thanks to the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, Mr Ulbrick, for this report. It is clear from both the report and the Committee's work plan that a significant amount of work has been done over the past six months across governance, financial management, risk, internal audit and compliance. My quick summary of the report would be governance is on track; financial management on track; external audit, no significant concerns recorded; internal audit program progressing with reviews completed and recommendations being monitored; risk management, active oversight continuing; legislative compliance, ongoing monitoring with no major issues highlighted. So overall that paints a positive picture. I note Councillors' feedback this morning that this report generally tells you what ARC considered but not explicitly how well Council is performing. I'll pass on that feedback, but perhaps a simple dashboard or summary table showing the status of key governance areas, the number of internal audits completed, any overdue audit recommendations or any emerging risks and whether any matters require Councillors' attention would be helpful in making the report even more accessible and allow Councillors and the community to more easily track Council's progress over time. So thanks to the Chair and independent members for their work and I look forward to another busy and productive six months on the committee.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Great. Thanks, Cr Grist. And Cr Bodsworth? CR BODSWORTH: I don't have much to add to that. Cr Grist and myself are both on the committee. I'd just like to shout out the committee members. In addition to Mick Ulbrick, the Chair, that Cr Grist mentioned, Paul Robson, Jeff Rigby, Dom Isola, who has joined recently - so thanks to them for their expertise and for their contributions that I always find pretty mind blowing. I often sit there and feel a bit of imposter syndrome because we've got such an amazing level of people around the table, and when we were recruiting for the new committee member recently, Dom was, from memory, one of many, many applicants for the position on the committee, so we were really spoilt for choice, and even the shortlist were very high-quality people. So we're really lucky to have the calibre of people that we have. I know that Cr Phelps was at the last ARC meeting, and for any Councillors who wish to attend, that's possible and it's always a really great learning experience. So really appreciate the work that the committee does.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Any other Councillors? Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. I'd like to thank both the independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Officers and our two Councillors that are on it from Surf Coast Council. Good governance often goes unnoticed because it prevents problems before they arise, and while I was on the Audit and Risk Committee from '24 to '25, it was evident the value of the Audit and Risk Committee, and especially, as well as obviously the other Councillor - Cr Grist was on it when I was on it as well - but also the external eyes, the fresh eyes, of the independent members and

the way they can challenge and interrogate the reports that come to the Audit and Risk Committee. The committee report gives Council confidence that risks are being identified early and managed appropriately, rather than becoming issues down the track, and from this report we can see that consideration has been taken around risks associated with cyber security, financial controls and legislative compliance, and I'm pleased to support the recommendation.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Pattison. Any other Councillors? Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: As Cr Bodsworth mentioned, I did attend my first Audit and Risk Committee finally. I also was very impressed with the expertise and the experience of the independent committee members. I would just like to touch on the particular value that they bring, which is the comparison of Surf Coast Shire to other Councils. Clearly this is our Council that we're familiar with but perhaps not so much with other Councils. A couple of quotes I would like to pull out from the report: on financial management, the committee expressed its appreciation for the Finance Department's efforts in delivering comprehensive and high-quality reporting. And from external audit: the committee commended the positive outcomes reflected in the audit results. So these people are very good at what they do, very experienced. While such matters are ultimately the responsibility of all us Councillors, it is standard practice to enlist the expert opinion and it provides confidence in matters we may not be deeply across, so I'm happy to note this half-year report. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. There were a couple of other Councillors. Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you, Mayor. The Audit and Risk Committee is one of several Advisory Committees at Council that bring so much value to this organisation. Tonight we are just noting and receiving this report which provides an update on the findings and recommendations of the committee for the period about five months, where the committee convened on two occasions, in April and May. I was able to sit and observe at the May meeting and, like the other Councillor, I was very impressed by the calibre of committee members and how thorough and thoughtful the ongoing approach is to audit and risk from the committee. So today we're noting the report, and this process ensures that Council and the public remain updated on key risks and matters pertaining to audit and risk. So I would like to support the recommendation to note the report and thank the committee for their ongoing work.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Crockett. Would any other Councillors like to speak? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: Council is legally required to receive this report so I won't oppose receiving it. However, receiving the report is not the same as managing the risks inside it. The attachment identifies a high-risk finding in lease and licence management but also records meeting risk recommendations involving privacy, third party management, financial controls and other systems. The public isn't told what the high-risk failure was, how long it existed, who is responsible for fixing it or when it

will be resolved. That's not useful accountability. It's a list of car warning lights with the dashboard covered.

The report also provides no costs for operating the committee, commissioning internal reports or implementing recommendations. Now, while those things can be found elsewhere, if the community is reading the agenda as it stands, they can't see that information. Past Council meetings show Councillors being warned when strong criticism might undermine confidence in the organisation. Confidence should not be protected by restraining criticism. It should be earned by disclosing problems and fixing them. Using a lot of words without accurate reporting of the problems and genuine apologies where saying sorry is necessary is a sure way to reduce trust. I will note the report because the law requires it but I just ask that future reports include every high and medium risk finding, the responsible Officers, the due dates, current status, overdue actions and implementation costs.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. And would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? No. Cr Grist, did you have any closing comments? We'll put the item to a vote. All those in favour? And that report is carried unanimously - that motion is carried unanimously. Thank you.

Next up we have item 4.4, which is the Strategic Asset Management Policy, SCS-005, and the purpose of this report is to seek Council's adoption of the policy. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Bodsworth, is that as per the recommendation? CR BODSWORTH: It's a different version to what is in the recommendation in the Council meeting agenda, Mayor, and I note the Governance team have that ready to display. There are a couple of changes that I'm keen to talk about from the recommendation.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Can we ask Governance to put the proposed motion up, thank you. CR BODSWORTH: The motion that I'm moving is that one.

MAYOR STAPLETON: OK. So I'll just give Councillors a moment to read it and then I will call for a seconder. (Pause). Has everyone had an opportunity to look at that? Do we have a seconder for that? Cr Walker. As per the amendment?

CR WALKER: Yes, as per the amendment.

MAYOR STAPLETON: So, Cr Bodsworth, would you like to speak to that item? CR BODSWORTH: Yes, thanks, Mayor. So I've got a few general comments on the policy and then I'll go to those changes that are now part of the motion. So great strategic asset management is super-important because asset upkeep and renewal makes up such a large part of our budget. We've recently passed our latest budget and we know that asset renewal and asset costs are a huge part of it. Assets are so important to community life, to liveability, to environment, and to local character and the local economy. We need to optimise spending on assets across their whole life cycle, which is a big theme in the policy, and we also need to ensure accurate asset renewal and maintenance allocations are built into our long-term financial plan because we know that it's a pretty common theme in local government for Councils

to run into financial trouble because of inadequate allocations to asset renewal and management.

This policy reflects a strong focus on asset management in our Council Plan and builds on excellent recent asset modelling work and strengthening of asset data sets. I feel really grateful and proud that our Council has such an excellent asset management team and system. The proposed asset management steering committee is an important addition to this policy to sharpen focus, combine diverse Officer perspectives and ensure continuous improvement.

The inclusion of Section F equity, access and inclusion - it is not only about fairness. It also ensures best value for money by maximising the usability of assets, and there's one example we can look at the Spring Creek change rooms which have become more usable to a wider range of people and, therefore, provide higher public value. So I strongly support what's in the policy.

There were a couple of things that I wanted to see emphasised and that's the basis for the modified motion that I have put tonight. So the first one - these are both aspects around fit for purpose that I think can be emphasised in the policy. So when the purpose and context of assets change, it can be appropriate for the assets themselves to change; hence, the change that was up on the screen to add 4.3.3, 'Council will assess the purpose of assets through their life cycle, including considering whether changing needs require a change to their scope or design when being renewed', and there's a couple of examples of that that I want to call out. One is Barwon Terrace in Winch, where the development of the Winchelsea swimming pool, the adventure playground, the picnic areas and the mud hut have combined to really create a precinct where having a plain asphalt road running right through it with an unmodified 50 kilometre an hour default speed limit is a much different proposition to what it was before those changes. It is now a precinct which is full of life, full of people, full of people of all ages and abilities. So that's an example where the purpose of Barwon Terrace is different now to what it was before, and I think it's really appropriate for our asset renewal to recognise when the context changes and where asset renewal should incorporate a different style or different size of asset.

Another example that came up recently were some pathways in Anglesea where pathways were being renewed in recognition of the strategic objectives in our Council Plan around supporting walking and cycling. It was recognised that those pathways should not be replaced like for like at their previous width but should be widened. That's not that big a deal but these things, when they're repeated multiple times, are really setting the municipality up for the kind of future that's set out in our Council Plan. That's about that change.

The other change is around the aesthetic or character component of fit for purpose. So that's to fit well within a landscape or town character context, recognising that assets play a big role in defining local character and can enhance uniqueness or diminish it. So hence the change adding 4.3.4, 'Council will consider context, including local character, landscape and scenery, when designing, renewing and managing assets'. So I'm not going to go on with that one because it's pretty

self-explanatory.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Cr Walker, would you like to speak to this item?

CR WALKER: Yes, I would, thank you. The Strategic Asset Management Policy outlines Council's commitment and intention to undertake the management of physical assets. This assists Councils to sustainably acquire, maintain, renew and dispose of the assets under its control in an efficient, financially responsible, environmentally friendly and transparent manner. From the draft, we have heard from the Disability Advisory Committee, which I was part of over the years, and highlighted the absence of accessibility universal design, recommending that these be clearly included, particularly in relation to asset safety and renewal. It has been added, which is great, with ensuring building and infrastructure renewal works ensure accessibility is improved to the greatest extent possible. So it's great to see that included.

I want to reflect on the vision, purpose and the strategic direction in the Council Plan. Council will provide and maintain assets in a manner that they will meet service levels, support the organisation to deliver effective outcomes, are fit and safe for purpose, are replaced as required, minimise detrimental impact on the natural environment, and incorporating and implementing climate adaption and also circular economy principles, which is great, are committed to ensuring that public assets are planned, delivered and maintained in a way that supports equity, access and inclusion, and are financially sustainable.

Now, if we reflect on the Council Plan, we also acknowledge priority within the assets, which is privatised investment in maintenance and renewal of assets, review service strategies and intervention levels to best balance community expectations and expenditure, and, lastly, within that priority, asset renewal anticipates and adapts to future impacts, including changing usage patterns and the need for greater climate resilience. So I think that is where this amendment comes into place. The Council will assess the purpose of assets through their life cycle, including considering whether changing needs require a change to the scope of design when being renewed.

Now, from that amendment, this highlights the future needs of not just building like for like but building back better. Cr Bodsworth highlighted the need for wider footpaths, which come up with accessibility issues in Torquay. If we look back five or ten years ago, there were less bikes on the road. E-bikes weren't even in existence. So when you look at that now with e-bikes coming in, how would you support that? Better pathways like what they have up north - it would be better pathways to be considered when building these sort of things in the future. And also reflect on building better bridges and pathways that are being impacted by weather. We've got issues which are not necessarily our assets, but down the road in Lorne, where we had two-metre wide bridges that got washed away, now require five-metre wide bridges down to storm surges and the floods that we had down there. So not just building them wider but also to survive storm surges, so we've got to consider that.

So like for like doesn't fit sometimes. Therefore, this amendment highlights needs for considering future needs for that sort of thing.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Walker. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: Asset management should be one of Council's most important responsibilities - focussing on the basics. This report manages to turn that simple duty into an exercise in contradictions. Consultation either began on 22 April or 22 May, depending on which page we believe. Paragraph 30 shows the Audit and Risk Committee apparently met on 26 November 2026, which hasn't happened yet. Fortune-telling. The consultation produced eight completed surveys, and Council's own attachment admits they reflected a very narrow view of the community. Most concerning, the engagement response, as Council's predictive modelling, is not accessible to the community. Council is asking residents to trust asset decisions while withholding the tool used to help make them.

The report claims there are no new financial impacts, while adding assessment obligations and guiding renewal expenditure, rising to more than \$21 million. Officer time is still a cost, even when it's hidden inside wages. Now, the last-minute amendment, as you have just seen put on the screen, adds to my concern because it incorporates subjective assessment criteria that will make it more difficult for Officers to implement. I'm also recorded as absent from the private Councillor briefing on this and many other topics. I'm not attending private briefing because years of sustained governance problems over many years have left me feeling unsafe in closed Council environments. In my experience, the organisation has failed to resolve these problems. The policy should be deferred until the desired last-minute amendment is clear in its ability to be implemented, its dates are corrected, modelling is disclosed to the community and implementation costs are provided.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. Would any other Councillors like to speak? Cr Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you, Mayor. I believe that as one gets older - and hopefully I'm not too old and not as old as some of the assets we have, even though I'm very fond of many of them, including the Globe Theatre - you are continuously learning in life, and tonight - I have heard this expression before - but Cr Walker talking about 'building back better'. I think that really does sum up a lot of the asset management, particularly given the example from Cr Bodsworth about the footpath being wider because people use electronic scooters and electronic wheelchairs as well.

Drainage is also a very important issue, and every Thursday, when I can, I do listen to ABC Radio, the AM program, and it interviews Mayors from across Victoria. It's interesting - for the last I'd say best part of a decade, drainage has really become such a very important issue, and it was highlighted by the references in relation to the flood activity in Lorne that happened recently. I know that we do undertake

audits of assets, but when it comes to drainage in particular, unless there's a blockage, you don't always know that if there is a problem there, and I know with the amendments, the amendment does address - instead of like for like replacement of an existing asset, because of changes in climate activity and storm activity, for example, drainage most likely would have to be enlarged and the capacity of a drain increase. But I've also spoken about this matter in relation to wildlife, and we all are aware of Neil the Seal that's visited Tasmania and I think he's a hero and I think he actually has every right to visit Tasmania and I think he's a wonderful inspiration and I actually think with drainage and the like, wildlife corridors with kangaroos and other type of animals that do frequent our communities, their rights should also be considered as well, and green essential assets as well. That's so important. So that's points that I wish to emphasise tonight. I will be supporting this item and the amendments. Thank you, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Schonfelder. Would any other Councillors like to speak? Cr Grist and then Cr Crockett?

CR GRIST: Thanks, Mayor. I appreciate the strong emphasis in this policy on life cycle planning, financial sustainability and maintaining the assets we already have before creating new obligations. One small observation is that within the policy, it states at item 7 that there is no related procedure applicable. My reading of that is that either no internal procedure manual exists or it's incorrectly not referencing the asset management plan, yet throughout the policy we're told Council will use detailed processes to prioritise and manage its assets. I would hope those operational decision-making methodologies exist and are documented somewhere, and I think cross-referencing those documents would assist Councillors to understand how renewable priorities, service levels and investment decisions are actually determined. So subject to assurance from the CEO that those more procedural documents exist to take out the subjectivity of decision making, as Cr Barker touched on earlier, I'll support the policy.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Grist. Would you like me to put that question to the CEO?

CR GRIST: Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Is that something you are able to assist with?

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Cr Grist, we do have a range of methods and procedures that we use to determine our allocation of budget and our management and maintenance of our assets, ranging from our maintenance plans and as well as our asset management plan, as you talk about. But perhaps the GM of Place Making and Environment or the GM of Community Life might like to talk to some of the specifics for you.

OFFICER: Thanks, CEO. Yes, there's a substantial number of associated plans and procedures that guide the work of that particular team. Examples I can give you, aside from those already mentioned by the CEO, are a number of asset category

specific plans that outline the existing service levels for those particular assets and the manner by which their renewal is considered. Perhaps another point of assurance for Councillors would be that Council's approach to asset management is one of those parts of Council that is subject to internal audit and scrutiny. I think the last one was done in 2025. Actually, the adoption of an updated Strategic Asset Management Policy is one of those outstanding actions for the completion of the follow-ups from the findings of that review, and that review found that largely Council's approach to asset management was in good order.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you for that.

OFFICER: I can probably just add on the maintenance side, Mayor, through you, that key plans that we have in place that guide our maintenance work are our Road Management Plan and our civil operations and open space service levels agreement. So we have a proactive inspection program on our assets that go out to check their conditions regularly, and if they exceed the intervention levels in those plans, we address them with a maintenance intervention at the time, with different time frames for different categories. So they're probably the key documents that guide our maintenance programming.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you for providing that additional clarification. Did you have a question?

CR GRIST: Should that be entered in that item 7 then to assure us - can we make an amendment to the policy?

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: We could. I think what you're talking about is a hierarchy of policies, plans and procedures. I'm not sure of the value that it would add to the policy to do that. If Councillors really wanted to do that, we could look at that, but I'm not clear on how that would benefit and direct the policy.

CR PATTISON: Could I make an observation?

MAYOR STAPLETON: An observation probably isn't appropriate, but if you would like to speak to the item, Cr Pattison, that would be great, thank you.

CR PATTISON: So it's been raised already by many of the Councillors - one of Council's biggest responsibilities is managing infrastructure that we've already built, and this asset management policy sets out those management approaches. I think it's important when we're talking about things like the Road Management Plan and the like - they are included in Section 8 under References, so although they're not specifically set as a related procedure, they're definitely listed within the policy under section 8. It goes into asset renewal funding strategy, long-term financial plan, road management plan, asset register. So I think some of the conversations that have gone around should they be linked in their under item 7, I think they're reference documents and I would imagine our Officers would relate to those and use those in the decision making, as identified in that Council policy.

That was what I wanted to draw people's attention to, but also just in general - now that I've got the floor, I may as well talk more broadly on the policy - and so I think when we're thinking about asset management, we need to consider that every new asset becomes tomorrow's maintenance responsibility. So whether we're talking about roads, footpaths, sporting facilities or community buildings, good asset management means making decisions based on long-term value rather than simply the lowest upfront cost, so that's good governance and that's good financial management. I come from a background of engineering and asset management, and understanding asset management modelling and the like is quite complex, and so I think it would be less around Council choosing not to be transparent in its modelling but it's not something that can be easily interpreted, as we can see. Although I love asset management, I don't know that our community love it so much. They like the footpaths to be in working order but they don't necessarily want to comment when we put our policy out for evaluation and feedback. So I think our community expects us to have a thorough, robust asset management policy and they expect our Officers to understand asset modelling and maintenance and ensure that they are planned appropriately, and this policy sets that out and I think that's probably the level that community want. If people are deeply interested in asset management, I am sure they can come and ask a question at Council or they can speak to Officers to find out more around the detail of our asset modelling, asset management and the like. So I encourage my fellow Councillors to support this policy as it sits. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. And Cr Crockett, apologies. I think I said that you were next earlier and I overlooked you. So over to you.

CR CROCKETT: That's OK. All great input. Thank you, Councillors. It's so important to have a key guide on how we acquire and maintain and renew or even say goodbye to all of our different assets in a responsible and sustainable way. I would like to thank the few community members who did take the time to review and provide feedback on the policy. The input is really valuable, particularly regarding accessibility and universal design, and these things have been included and strengthened the policy. I would also like to thank Cr Bodsworth for the proposed amendment that was circulated to all Councillors in advance for consideration and discussed with staff as well. I think it seems to strengthen the policy by ensuring Council not only applies current standard and guidelines when assessing assets but also considers whether change is in context or community needs or current purpose warrant a redesign. So I like that place-based approach in considering the surrounding context and landscape and scenery, and reflecting local character. So for these reasons, I support the recommendation and amendment.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Crockett. And Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: As we've heard and as Cr Barker has stated, this is a significant policy for Surf Coast Shire. It covers overall the whole-of-life treatment of assets, so just a quote: 'it assists Council to sustainably acquire, maintain, renew and dispose of the assets under its control in an efficient, financially responsible and transparent manner'. I think the policy reads quite well in that regard. I do like Cr Bodsworth's

amendments to consider the vibe of an asset where practical and possible, to reflect the local character, and it is also great to see the changes for accessibility considerations, so I encourage adoption of this policy as amended. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. Cr Bodsworth, did you have any closing comments? CR BODSWORTH: Nothing to add. I just thank Councillors for the diverse contributions.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. So we'll put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 7-2. Thank you, Councillors.

Moving on to item 4.5, the Infrastructure Special Rates and Charges Scheme Policy, SCS-009. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's adoption of that policy. We do have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Phelps, as per the recommendation?

CR PHELPS: As per the recommendation, thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: And do we have a seconder? Cr Pattison, thank you.

CR SCHONFELDER: Mayor, I did have a question.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Yes, Cr Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Just on page 68, it just had 'pathways' in red. That was an omission or why is that red?

MAYOR STAPLETON: I think you might be looking at the tracked changes version of the policy, Cr Schonfelder. So there's a clean version, but Officers always upload the tracked changes so that you can see where changes have come through as a result of the community consultation or so on.

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: That's OK. No problem. So, Cr Phelps, would you like to speak to the item?

CR PHELPS: Thank you. It's an infrequently used process for Councils, available for where improvements are desired on Council property, and the properties affected will receive special benefit. So this policy allows some or all cost recovery by Council. I think again this policy is written quite well. It provides for fairness and equity in the cases of where there is a special charge, and we have the new addition - let me just - sorry, I'm just losing my place - the special rate and charge scheme policy which allows a slight variation on that where people would like to take on voluntarily a project and pay for it. So I think, as I say, it's written quite well. It does provide for fairness and equity and even hardship in terms of paying because it can become a mandatory payment if the area where the project happens goes ahead and then one or two people aren't able to pay upfront. So, as I say, it's a

well-written policy and I would support the adoption of this policy.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. And Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. So this policy is really about fairness and consistency. Where particular properties receive a direct benefit from infrastructure, it's appropriate that Council has a clear framework for determining contributions. Probably the most significant policy change in the document we're considering tonight is that residents can voluntarily contribute. For example, if a new road or drainage project primarily benefits a small group of properties, it's important everyone understands from the outset how those costs may be shared and how those decisions are made. So this is really a governance policy document and it's not about any individual projects, and I encourage fellow Councillors to support the motion.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. And would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: This policy is a mechanism for making selective property owners pay for infrastructure after they have already paid their rates. Sometimes a special charge may be justified where there is a clear and measurable private benefit, but the burden of proof must rest with Council. Page 54 estimates around \$50,000 in Officer time for one scheme but says Council may need to contribute further funding. The total cost remains unknown until each proposal appears. But more troubling is the suggestion that payment arrangements of up to 10 years should not be included in the public policy and should instead be considered on a case-by-case basis. If discretion affects how much people pay and how long they have to pay it, that discretion should be governed by published public criteria. Otherwise, similar residents may receive different treatment behind closed doors, and that's neither fair nor balanced.

The legal review is not attached. The operational procedure is not attached. Councils are therefore being asked to approve the public shell while important rules remain elsewhere. I support the voluntary resident agreement option because people who freely agree should be able to fund improvement. I cannot support coercive schemes without clear benefit tests, public hardship rules, full cost recovery information and protection for owners who receive little or no genuine benefit. As it's written, I cannot support it.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. Would any other Councillors like to speak? Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor. The special rates and charges scheme is a statutory mechanism available to Council to fund infrastructure projects where property owners who directly benefit from the scheme contribute to these costs. I thank the community for their feedback, which helped change some of the language and clarified some of the definitions in the policy. Feedback highlighted a strong view that special charges should only apply where benefits are direct, localised and

clearly attributed to the properties being charged and not projects that are considered core Council responsibility, broader community assets or infrastructure that the wider community or community businesses use. The scheme terms needed to be clearer, with more clarity around the terms, which are the affected property owner and benefitting property.

I welcome clarification around the resident agreement process, an alternative mechanism to a special rates and charges scheme enabling residents who benefit from the project to voluntarily fund works through direct financial contributions without requiring participation by property owners who do not wish or are not financially able to participate in the scheme. So the voluntary side of things is good. In an ideal world, different types of infrastructure would be covered by other sources, but this may not be the case. Therefore, this policy is required when such a scheme may be required. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Walker. Would any other Councillors like to speak? Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: Thanks, Mayor. I think the policy is generally sound, particularly given it has undergone independent legal review. I still have some reservations about the new resident agreement mechanism. The community consultation responses also support my view that the issue isn't the concept itself but confidence in how it will work. More than half of respondents disagreed with this section of the policy, yet more than half also indicated they wouldn't consider participating. To me that says people want greater clarity and stronger safeguards, and I'm not entirely confident that that's been addressed within this document.

The consultation feedback also reflects a sentiment many of us are hearing from the community: people want Council focused on its core responsibilities. They accept there may be circumstances where local contributions are appropriate but they also want confidence that essential public infrastructure won't gradually become something residents are expected to fund in addition to their rates just because Council budgets are under pressure from funding non-core activities. So it may be that much of the operational detail for this funding sits in a supporting management framework document. If that's the case, that's probably adequate. But without seeing that framework, it's difficult to be fully satisfied that the governance around these new resident agreements is complete and that ratepayers have the assurance they deserve about cost shifting. I support the general direction of the policy but I think it would be stronger if those matters were clarified.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Grist. And would any other - Cr Bodsworth, thank you. CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Mayor. I also support the policy. I think some really important issues have been raised around equity and fairness, and I feel - I have read the ministerial guidelines around special rates and charges as well and I feel like the policy hits the right spot on equity and fairness. I think it's really around individual project design and implementation. I've seen a few of these schemes enacted during my time as a Councillor and you can certainly see, as Cr Phelps said first up, why it's an important ability for a Councillor to have and it can

work well. From what I've seen, it's all about the scheme design, and the policy implementation part of the policy notes the steps which I think are really important for us to enact really diligently and carefully to make sure that these individual schemes do turn out to be equitable and fair. So I'm just going to run through those.

A special rate and charge scheme process may be initiated by Council Officers either on Council's own initiative or in response to a request. The steps involved in the process are: assessment of level of support for the scheme, both by community and Council priorities; confirmation of the scope of work benefitting properties and cost apportionment; Council resolution of its intention to declare the scheme; opportunity for public submissions and objections; Council resolution to either declare or abandon the scheme; and, finally, opportunity for affected property owners to appeal to VCAT. So there are quite a few steps in the process that allow for review and objection and reconsideration of the scheme and to make sure that equity and fairness is at the heart of all those steps. So that is written into the policy but, obviously, it's the implementation of the policy by the organisation that really brings those things to life. I've never seen anything to make me doubt that, but there's no doubt that we need to use this tool really carefully and with equity and fairness front of mind.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. And would any other Councillors like to speak? Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you. Yes, if we accept this recommendation, the updated policy will establish what I think is a good framework for the delivery of these schemes and does support consistent and transparent decision making and also provide an additional pathway for delivering community infrastructure projects, so like these schemes provide Council with a funding mechanism for infrastructure projects that might otherwise not proceed, and if a specific group of properties receives a direct and measurable benefit from an improvement, it makes sense that they contribute and a special charge scheme can bring forward improvements that residents and businesses particularly want and spread costs between Council and beneficiaries and deliver outcomes sooner than waiting for competing demands on general rate revenue.

I also think the key change of the introduction of a resident agreement option as an alternative is great, as it allows residents to come together to voluntarily fund works through direct financial contributions if they do have the means, but it doesn't require participation by everyone involved. So I'm happy to support the policy as it is now and thank the public for their input and acknowledge that people value transparency and equity in this process and that that will be followed.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Crockett. And any other Councillors wanting to speak? Before I go to Cr Phelps for closing comments, I might just, through the CEO, see if one of our GMs is able to provide some clarity around the questions that were asked in relation to the management procedure that sits behind the policy.

OFFICER: Through you, Mayor, there is an associated management procedure, as

speculated by Councillors, that unpacks the implementation of the policy. Certainly happy to circulate that to Councillors for visibility.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you.

CR SCHONFELDER: Mayor, I might speak now, if I may.

MAYOR STAPLETON: OK. Thanks, Cr Schonfelder.

CR SCHONFELDER: I'd just like to thank the Council officers for their work in relation to this, and also with what Cr Bodsworth purported about VCAT, the importance of VCAT and the fact that there is an avenue available to people if they wish to appeal a decision in relation to the special charge scheme. I am aware of particular cases of residents who wanted their road sealed. I know that in some cases, one or two residents have paid for a whole road to be sealed instead of other residents simply because they felt very strongly about wanting their road to be sealed. Also, there are people who don't want their road sealed and there are also people who don't want footpaths either side of a road, and I know now with planning and the fact with drainage and having open drainage, that now many developments only have a footpath on one side of the road, and I think from an environmental point of view, the usage of resources as well and not being a wasteful society, that's something that I think is very important as well. I note that this was last reviewed I think in 2019, so it's the first time that we as a Councillor group have renewed this policy and it's important to do so. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Schonfelder. Cr Phelps, do you have any closing comments?

CR PHELPS: Yes, thank you. I would like to just note that special rates and charges agreements can cover a very wide range of potential projects, from large to small, so things like sealing of unsealed roads, footpaths, pathways, kerb and channel drainage, construction or upgrade of sealed roads, car parks, local area traffic management, lighting and/or streetscapes. So it's a process top heavy with potential engagement with affected properties that would inevitably lead to longer time frames and increased costs. So, as I say, it's a very wide range of potential projects and that implies the costs of the project could also vary widely. I am confident this policy covers the need for the policy and, as Cr Bodsworth has said, it does need to be applied with care because it can have major financial effects on property owners, but I feel it should be adopted as it is. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. So we will now put that motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And that motion is carried 7-2. Thank you, Councillors.

And the next item is the Draft Events Policy, SCS-022. As I indicated at the start of the meeting, given the potential for a perceived conflict of interest on this item, I'm going to remove myself and invite our Deputy Mayor, Cr Phelps, up to Chair for this item and hopefully someone will come and get me when it's concluded. Thank you.

CR PHELPS: Item 4.6, the draft Event Policy SCS-022 and the purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the Draft Events Policy for public consultation for a period of four weeks. We have a recommendation before us. Would anyone like to move the motion? Thank you, Cr Crockett. And a seconder? Cr Walker. Thank you. Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you, Deputy Mayor. So tonight we're being asked to endorse the Events Policy for the purpose of community consultation, so putting it out for public comment, and inviting public submissions on the draft policy. So I encourage anyone who organises, attends or is involved or impacted by an event in our Shire to have their say on this policy.

A bit of a summary on it is that on the updated draft policy, it has a similar scope to previous versions, but it's been updated to be easier to read and understand, containing clearer policy principles and stronger guidance for event organisers and greater clarity on the event assessment process as well, some update on Council's role, on access and inclusion, sustainability and alignment with our eco destination certification, risk management and safety. What I think is great about this update is it removes the finer details from the policy and creates a hub of information on the Surf Coast events website and Event Grant Guidelines document. So I support the recommendation to share this draft for community comment and ask our residents to let us know what you think.

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Deputy Mayor Phelps. The events calendar of the Surf Coast is significant for Victoria, connecting communities, creating environments, encouraging and engaging with activities and sustaining businesses. The Surf Coast Shire hosts hundreds of events each year, ranging from internationally recognised events to mass participation offerings like the Rip Curl Pro, the bike ride, the Lorne sculpture, community-based activities like the Globe Theatre we heard about before, and the local markets often run by local groups and schools. Council supports and recognises the important role they play in connecting community in supporting economic outcomes. Depending on the nature and scale of the event, they have the potential to deliver significant economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits to the region. I love these events.

The Events Policy exists to provide the framework guiding how events are supported, assessed and managed, ensuring they align with Council objectives and community expectation, but also assist stakeholders in their evaluation of suitability of the event. Since the last policy in 2019, GORCAPA, or Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, has taken over some of the management of the land. This required Council to gain clarity as to the role GORCAPA would play - an event facilitation process thus developing new processes regarding the event application and assessment process. There are clear purposes around expectation, event objectives and reasons for holding an event are in this policy; an audience, demonstrating capacity, risk management, event activity and location suitability; time

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frames, environmental and community impact, access, inclusion, local business integration and calendar management.

However, from the Council Plan, under Sustainable Communities, we acknowledge tourism will be an important element but not at the expense of local amenity or environmental values. Consider this when giving feedback - not just from community but also from our event organisers and that side of thing too. From this draft policy, does community have a voice in events? Do we get bang for our buck? Is it clear how much an event is sustainable? Should the Community Impact Advisory Committee return and should large-scale commercial events like the upcoming grand final and (inaudible) race leave a legacy?

I want to talk about a legacy. Imagine a legacy where these world-class commercial cycling events that are left advocated for all the pot holes and the roads of the Great Ocean Road to be fixed. Previous large events like the Falls Festival, on top of bringing a world-class event to Surf Coast, had up to \$16,000 each year as a community grant, contributing over \$150,000 over the years. The Great Ocean Road marathon run contributes to local Apollo Bay and District Health Foundation out of our Shire, having distributed over 300,000 over the years, including international trips for Apollo Bay College, safety equipment for the sailing club and community gardens and Great Ocean Road Health hospital equipment. Our main community vision is to leave the Surf Coast better than they found it. Wouldn't it be great if a legacy for large events or a community foundation resource would be a great outcome for inclusion in the policy for our communities. As this is a draft, I am not proposing any amendments but I would like to consider this in feedback for the draft. I welcome the draft policy and encourage the community and stakeholders, including events, to provide feedback. Thanks to the Economic Development Team Officers in putting this together. They do do a great job in the events space, and remember to advertise your events on the Surf Coast events page as promotion. Thank you.

CR PHELPS: Would any other Councillors like to speak to this motion? Cr Bodsworth? CR BODSWORTH: Yes, I want to second Cr Walker's points there about legacy and about impact. So the decision is to put a draft policy out for public comment, so like Cr Walker, I'm not going to go too deep into that. But I do think part of Council's role, which is set out in the policy, is also to work with other agencies to ensure the best possible management of impacts, minimising disruption and ensuring clear net benefit, which can also be benefit in the legacy sense, like Cr Walker talked about. I'm also keen to second that call-out to event promoters and providers to offer your feedback on the draft policy and to communities, as Cr Crockett said. Thank you.

CR PHELPS: Any other Councillor like to speak to this? Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: Thank you. I support the policy going out for public consultation. Before it does go out, though, there's a few drafting errors that require fixing, and before the policy comes back for final adoption, I would also like to strengthen by clarifying who makes decisions and how procedural fairness is upheld around event approvals and

cancellations, more detail on how and when the policy applies to events on private land and by including clearer and scaled requirements for insurance and risk management. I think those sorts of improvements will make the policy more clearer and transparent and ultimately easier to administer. Subject to those observations, I will support the recommendation.

CR PHELPS: Thank you. Would any other Councillors like to speak? Cr Barker, please.

CR BARKER: The draft's not ready for public exhibition yet. Pages 80 and 81 are a key concern. The statutory principles table still contains blank 'yes' or 'no' choices, showing that it hasn't been completed. The policy refers to outdated building regulations. It says 'an event is define' rather than 'an event is defined'. Another clause says 'Council will and make available guidance'. Simple typos. Now, those are not ideological objections. They're basic document control failures in a policy being recommended by supposedly professional Officers. I pine for a Council where Officers cease giving someone who failed Year 10 English cause for spelling and grammatical concerns.

More importantly, the report provides no cost for Event Grants, Officer assessments, Council promotion, compliance work or Council-run events. It also exempts Council's internal events from the policy. Apparently, private and community event organisers must satisfy Council's values and assessment criteria while Council give itself a hall pass. Double standards are a primary driver of resentment and degrading community satisfaction in any organisation. During a private briefing on a major event years ago, I proposed that rather than a cash contribution being made from Council to the event, we use feedback from the event to repair roads that result in both an event benefit in the future and a benefit to ratepayers who are funding. That wasn't followed through.

The assessment criteria can be weighed differently by Officers but no public scoring method or review process is provided. That creates broad administrative discretion and risks inconsistent treatment. Events can bring genuine economic and social benefit but they can also impose noise, traffic, clean-up and policing costs on residents who never agreed to host them. I would return this to the draft so that Officers can create the law, complete the tables, remove the drafting mistakes, disclose the full annual cost, apply the same standards to Council events and publish an objective assessment and appeal process. I won't be supporting it as it stands.

CR PHELPS: Thank you. Did we have a correction to this item that was uploaded to - can I just check with Governance in regards to Cr Barker's point about the legislation table. I was under the impression that had been --

OFFICER: Thank you, Deputy Mayor, I can confirm that that was updated in the agenda and an administrative note was added.

CR PHELPS: Sorry?

OFFICER: An administrative note was added.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: And when our Governance Officer says it was uploaded, it was uploaded on to the public website, so it's community-facing.

CR PHELPS: That's what I thought. Thank you.

CR SCHONFELDER: Acting Mayor, I might just ask a question. I have a version of the agenda tonight which might not have been the latest version, so I don't know whether Cr Barker might have had the same experience.

CR PHELPS: I expect so. I have the same. The public-facing agenda has been updated with the table. Cr Pattison, please.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. So events are one of the things that make the Surf Coast such a vibrant place to live. They bring people together and support local business. For community festivals through to sporting events and markets, organisers need a policy that is clear and predictable while also protecting residents, volunteers and our environment. With this events policy update, the emphasis is on sustainability, inclusion, safety and environmental impacts. The motion is seeking endorsement of this policy for community consultation and I look forward to seeing community feedback on this draft. There are some minor grammatical errors, and these can easily be updated prior to going out to consultation. That is the sensible approach, that we move forward with this policy and that the feedback is sought from our community and we then can progress with the great work of actually assessing and delivering events within our community. And in this policy - in this draft policy, there's clear assessment criteria which have been outlined which give a clearer understanding when applying for events and the like. So I do encourage my fellow Councillors to support this policy so we can put it out for the community to give us their feedback and provide a robust policy going forward. Thank you.

CR PHELPS: Thank you. Cr Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you, Acting Mayor. It has been touched on tonight, the different events that take place within our municipality, and I must say I'm very proud of the fact that we have two that are broadcasted worldwide, being the Rip Curl Pro and the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Bike Race, and I must say I'm very pleased with the fact that the hinterland is included with part of the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Bike Race, and I know there are arguments - and this is about the details of the policy and how the community feels - I am mindful of arguments that exist about the promotion of elite sports. There's an argument that what about local events for local people? But then there's also another part of the argument, that I know - I believe that when people see professional cyclists riding and competing in events, I even feel like riding my bike. And I won't mention my colleagues but there are some of us who have the greatest intentions of becoming more physically active, but I know myself, I haven't actually fulfilled that undertaking, but I hope to sooner rather than later.

I do agree with Cr Pattison about the fact that if there are grammatical errors, they can easily be rectified, and receiving the community input is so important. I wish that we could have the Rip Curl Pro in the hinterland, but unless we have a wave pool built, we are unable to have that - and I nearly said - instead of 'wave', I nearly said 'rave', so I nearly perhaps got myself into trouble then. But I must say I enjoy attending concerts and I actually live not far from Mount Duneed Estate, which is another municipality, but I know when Fleetwood Mac performed, I could actually hear the music and I was quite envious of the people who were attending the event, but I was still pleased that I was able to hear the music. The economic impacts of events is so important and I believe we are the envy of many municipalities nationwide with the events that we have in our municipality. So that's something to be mindful of. Thank you.

CR PHELPS: Thank you, Cr Schonfelder. All Councillors have spoken so I will invite Cr Crockett for any final comments?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you. Yes, I just wanted to thank my fellow Councillors for highlighting all the awesome events we're so lucky to have on the Surf Coast and for the Officers for putting together the draft policy which allows these events to occur now and into the future.

CR PHELPS: Thank you. So we will now put the motion to the vote. All those in favour? And all those against? Motion is carried 7-1. I will return to the Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. The next item we have on the agenda is 4.7, which is the proposed minor changes to dog regulations. And the purpose of this report is for Council to consider proposed changes to the Surf Coast Shire Council dog regulations, which are the conditions to manage dogs in public places made by resolution under Section 26 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Since the agenda was published, Officers have advised that their recommendation has been updated. So I will invite Governance to share the revised recommendation on the screen before we continue so Councillors can have an opportunity to review that. So I guess for clarity, the Officer recommendation has changed because it has been noted that there are some inconsistencies with dog regulations with the current signage and the map at Point Roadknight. So rather than delay the consideration of the other two locations, we're going ahead with those, and Officers will make some further investigations around Point Roadknight and come back to it. So do we have a mover of a motion? Cr Pattison. And seconded by Cr Bodsworth.

CR PATTISON: I think Cr Bodsworth is far more passionate about this and the like, so you are welcome to move it if you like.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Both hands went up at the same time. CR BODSWORTH: I'm happy to move it.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Great. And seconded by Cr Pattison. And is that as per the revised recommendation? CR BODSWORTH: Yes, thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. CR BODSWORTH: So this is following on from consultation on the 2026-29 Domestic Animal Management Plan, or DAMP. Some amendments to the regulations were identified as required out of that DAMP work. The amendments are seeking to improve the clarity and accuracy of regulated area maps, with a change to what was in the agenda as noted on the screen a minute ago, so excluding point Roadknight but for Split Point in Aireys Inlet and also a change for the newly constructed hockey pitch at Banyul Warri Fields in Torquay north.

The changes with regard to the maps on the beaches were - again noting that Point Roadknight is out of that for the time being - but there were some gaps in the maps. So there were coloured zones pictured and in between areas of coloured zone there were some blank areas, so obviously unhelpful for people with dogs and also unhelpful for Officers who were out trying to make sure people comply with dog regulations. So those things needed to be cleaned up. It's, I think, a very logical and straightforward following-through on what was noted during the Domestic Animal Management Plan and there's a formal gazettal process that needs to take place. In relation to the beach areas, Councillors did receive some correspondence from Surf Coast Friends of the Hooded Plover, who I would like to make a shout out to and for their fantastic work and also for their diligence in looking at what was proposed in this item, and it's in recognition of some inconsistencies that we're holding off on the Point Roadknight portion of that, which I think is appropriate, but also appropriate that we press on with the others so that we make sure those regulations are in place and can be enforced. So I think that's all I need to say on this and I recommend that we go ahead with this as proposed, as moved.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. So, as Cr Bodsworth has identified, these are relatively minor amendments but they provide greater clarity for both the community and Officers, and one of the key practical reasons for the report is that dogs will be prohibited from the synthetic hockey surface, and that's about protecting a significant investment and asset that we have - the new hockey pitch. Sometimes it's these smaller policy changes that reduce confusion and improve compliance because everybody understands the rules more clearly. I think everything else has really been covered. I encourage our Councillors to support the motion.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: This is one of the more complete reports in the agenda. It identifies the legal power, the affected locations and estimated implementation costs of about \$3,000. However, Council should not confuse consultation on the broader DAMP with clear consent for every later map amendment. I had some other stuff prepared but that's no longer relevant. So I can support minor evidence-based changes but Council should publish the number of responses from each affected location, the views for and against each change, enforcement implications and the exact wording that will appear on signs. Without that information, we can't make an effective

decision. Regulation should be no broader than needed. Clear rules at known conflict points are preferable to vague restrictions across large areas. If you ask anyone about the beach signs on how to manage their dogs, most people wouldn't be able to tell you, unless they've got a specific interest in it. This recommendation is supportable if Officers can be trusted to confirm the local evidence and provide clearer public maps.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. Would any other Councillors like to speak? And, Cr Bodsworth, did you have any closing comments? CR BODSWORTH: No, thanks, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: OK. We'll put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 8-1. Thank you, Councillors.

Next up we have item 4.8, project budget adjustments and cash reserve transfers. The purpose of this report is to present 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 prior reports presented to Council. Officers have advised that their recommendation has been updated following the distribution of the agenda. So I will invite them to share that on the screen before we continue. This has also been circulated to Councillors via email. So with that, we do have a recommendation before us, which would now include this project budget adjustment table. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Cr Phelps, as per the amended recommendation?

CR PHELPS: Yes.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you. And a seconder?

CR BARKER: A question.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Just a moment, Cr Barker, sorry. With regard to the question, I'll just see if we have got a seconder for that motion and then I'll give you an opportunity to ask the question, or is your seconding of it relevant to the question?

CR BARKER: No.

MAYOR STAPLETON: OK. So I'll just see if there's a seconder for that motion. Cr Bodsworth, thank you. And, Cr Barker, can I just ask you to go ahead with your question now.

CR BARKER: Can I confirm how that math works out?

MAYOR STAPLETON: Yes. I'll refer that to the CEO with regard to the changed table.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Which particular element are you talking about, Councillor?

CR BARKER: Is that a \$10,000 removed?

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Yes, it is.

CR BARKER: No, that's OK.

MAYOR STAPLETON: So, Cr Phelps, would you like to speak to this item?

CR PHELPS: Yes, thank you. There is a lot of information in this item this time around, which reflects an end-of-year closing of some projects. There are a number of new projects and projects initiated under delegation to the CEO and also some amended projects reflecting an increase or decrease in funding. These are available for all to see, with a brief reason of why that's taken place. Some improvements could be made to presentation of some of the details, such as remaining balances for carryover projects. I look forward to seeing these improvements, which I believe are already being looked into.

The intent of this item is transparency around project expenditure. It gives a broad view of what's being undertaken and what's completed and how the funding tracked. To pick on two projects, we do have motorcycle safety levy infrastructure works along Erskine Falls Road and Bambra-Aireys Inlet Road which are funded by the state, funding which has to be applied for, and I know motorcyclists will be particularly pleased to see this happening, since they have been paying this levy for some time. So I'm happy to approve these budget adjustments as listed. Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Phelps. And Cr Bodsworth? CR

BODSWORTH: I don't have anything to add, thanks, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Bodsworth. Any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: More just wanting clarification on that slide we had up before. Regarding the Winchelsea - I am assuming the Winchelsea --

MAYOR STAPLETON: I might just get Governance to put the motion back up or the table back up for reference, thanks, Cr Grist.

CR GRIST: I'm wondering whether, to make that work, the \$10,000 in the project allocation for the Winchelsea growth scenarios, that's being considered grant money; is that right?

MAYOR STAPLETON: I might have to refer that through the CEO - to General Manager McNeil.

OFFICER: Through you, Mayor, the update to the table is just acknowledging that the - it's a balancing out of a movement between projects versus an actual change to the balance. Your question is: does that mean that funding is being moved into a different category? Is that what you're asking?

CR GRIST: If you could just clarify what the \$40,000 and \$10,000 is in the Winchelsea growth scenarios assessment. That might help - where it's coming from.

OFFICER: So if you could just --

CR GRIST: In the Winchelsea growth scenarios assessment.

MAYOR STAPLETON: So within the table?

CR GRIST: Sorry, not on the back screen.

OFFICER: In the body of the report, yes.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Could you give us a page number for that, Cr Grist, just to make it easier.

CR GRIST: 102.

OFFICER: That might be something I can help with, if that's OK. Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you.

OFFICER: So the 40,000 is a grant allocation from the Department of Transport and Planning. The 10,000 is a pre-existing budget that would be Council's contribution to that project.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Did you want to look at the table again?

OFFICER: So that's gone into the grant funding line to add up to 1,334.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Let me go back to the table.

MAYOR STAPLETON: I don't think the 1,334 has changed. Is that what you're asking?

CR GRIST: Yes, I originally thought that was incorrect.

MAYOR STAPLETON: So the only change is the removal of the 10,000 - sorry, I shouldn't be getting into the details of the table. So are you happy to speak to this item now, Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: I don't have much to say but it's just the calculation doesn't add up in my mind. When you try to reconcile everything, my calculation was it was 1,324,044,

until you include the \$10,000.

MAYOR STAPLETON: I might just refer that back to our General Manager because I know that this was looked at today. So if I could ask General Manager McNeil to please respond and provide some clarity.

OFFICER: Thank you. Through you, Mayor, yes, we did check the numbers and the totals are correct. However, this was done quite quickly and I don't have the numbers, the calculations that were used to doublecheck and I would have to go through the body of the report to test. I think you might be right, though, in that the Council - we have moved the 10,000 from one project to another, and it's a Council contribution, as Chris Pike has confirmed, and I would just have to check where the allocation has moved to and confirm whether or not we've represented it accurately in the adjustment, but I can confirm that the totals are correct. So apologies for the confusion.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Ms McNeil. Did you just have the question, Cr Grist? Did you want to speak to the item or just get that clarity?

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: I think you're right, Cr Grist. I think it should be 1,324 in this table. Can we update that for the recommendation please, Governance?

OFFICER: CEO, I think we would just need to add it as a line as a positive number in project account. I think that's what's happened here. We just need to take the brackets off project account, keep the 10K there, reduce the grant funding by 10K so that the total number is right.

MAYOR STAPLETON: So has Governance got that? So the project account line, which is currently deleted and highlighted red, can be returned to being black, but we're removing the brackets from that 10. And then the grant funding of 1,334 should be highlighted red but should be 1,324. And make that line red as well, just so it's clear for Councillors that that's the adjustment. So does that provide more clarity for you, Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: So 10 grand is coming out of Council's project account into the grants?

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: No. It was in the grants and we have pulled it out and it's in a separate project account. Does that make sense, Cr Grist?

CR GRIST: Thank you.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks for seeking clarification on that too. It's good to have it resolved. So we now have the corrected recommended motion. I guess just for process, Cr Phelps, you are still happy to move it with those corrections?

CR PHELPS: A question on the subtotals. Are the original ones now correct as well?

MAYOR STAPLETON: Yes.

CR PHELPS: I'm happy with that.

MAYOR STAPLETON: OK. And the seconder was Cr Bodsworth. All still good? OK. Thank you. And, Cr Grist, did you want to speak to this item? No. Did any other Councillors want to speak to this item? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: This report asks Council to approve more than \$1.2 million in adjustments through one bundled motion. The original pathway needs another 425,000 because the project was more complex than anticipated. Surf Coast Highway Bristol Road intersection needs another \$400,000 because service relocations were not identified during design when service identification could have been paid for for maybe a grand or two. These are not small rounding errors. Together they represent around \$825,000 in additional funding. Now, if this was your money, you would not accept this. Just because it's ratepayers' money, that should mean no change in how that's accepted. The report tells us what happened but not who tested the original estimates, what assurance failed or what changed to prevent repetition. Ratepayers are expected to provide the money, while accountability disappears into passive language.

There are also grants and savings that may be reasonable. That is why these decisions should not be bundled together. Councillors should be able to support grant income if they support taking money from Victorians outside the Surf Coast or Australians from other states, while rejecting poorly explained overruns. Council meetings over past years show Councillors being warned when they criticise Council spending or incomplete costings, and what we just witnessed there is just another example of that, and I am not satisfied that the numbers just presented are accurate.

Now, this report demonstrates why detailed scrutiny is so necessary and not running on the fly. I prefer that the adjustments be separated by project, with a brief opportunity for Councillors to explain their position line by line, but I fear that benefit would be a waste of time because the adjustments would likely all pass, given the make-up of Council. Any material overrun should include its original estimate, revised estimate, cause, responsible control, alternatives considered, then lessons learned. Transparency is not placing a large table in an agenda. Transparency is making responsibility understandable for the average resident and ratepayer. Based on what I have seen here, I don't think it's possible to support it.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? No. Any closing comments, Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: I am happy to support Cr Barker's suggestion of allowing this item to be split apart into sub-items, to be approved or not, rather than one single bundled list, but I have no problems with this item as presented tonight.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Phelps. We will now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And against? And the motion is carried 7-2. Thank you, Councillors.

Conflict of Interest Records - the purpose of this report is to present Conflict of Interest Records received since the previous Council Meeting. We do have a recommendation before us. Do we have a mover? Cr Phelps. As per the recommendation? Thank you. And a seconder? Cr Walker, thank you. And, Cr Phelps, would you like to speak?

CR PHELPS: Once more, a standing item to publicised the announced conflicts of interests during briefings and meetings, and I'm happy to note these records.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you. And Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Nothing to add, thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks. Would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? We will put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And the motion is carried unanimously. Thank you, Councillors.

And Item 4.10, which is the award of contract T26-016 for Pollocksford Road Bridge refurbishment in Gnarwarre. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's support to allocate additional project funding and to award the contract for the Pollocksford Road Bridge refurbishment, and as the recommendation was redacted in the public agenda, I will now ask Officers to share the unredacted recommendation on the screen before we continue. Noting that Councillors would have received the unredacted version as a confidential item. I assume everyone has had a chance to already make themselves familiar with that motion. So do we have a mover? Cr Schonfelder, as per the recommendation? Thank you. And a seconder? Cr Pattison. Thank you. And, Cr Schonfelder, would you like to speak to this item?

CR SCHONFELDER: Yes, please, Mayor. The Council notes that the Pollocksford Bridge, as we saw on the screen, is a shared asset with Golden Plains Shire Council and all capital costs incurred in managing the asset are shared equally. The report notes that the Surf Coast Shire is managing the Pollocksford Road Bridge refurbishment project on behalf of both Councils and that we're allocating an additional \$700,000 to the Pollocksford Road Bridge refurbishment project from the asset renewal reserve to bring Council's total project allocation to \$1.5 million. We haven't approved the item yet, but I give notice of congratulating the tender, the successful tender, for this project. This item also authorises the CEO to execute contract documents on behalf of the Council.

To describe what has happened in a musical context, I am reminded of a song - and I can't recall the artist - but a lyric from it is "Forgiven, not forgotten", and I am mindful of the fact that many people in the community have been very - I would even say outraged that the bridge has been closed for so long, and the fact that the bridge has been closed in the first place, but I understand it's an ageing structure. It is ageing infrastructure in particular, and I do note that, as far as apportioning blame to the Council, I believe it was possibly neglected in the past. It wasn't maintained in the past. And now we can just deal with the present situation and hope that, as far as traffic movements on the bridge, they can be appropriately managed because I do

sympathise with people who live locally, including myself, who have to travel further, and with the cost of fuel, it penalises people, and also with the impending El Nino, which I hope doesn't materialise, as far as fire risk, the Gnarwarre CFA in particular have been very concerned about not having the access open. So I hope that for this point onwards, once the bridge is repaired, it will be open continuously. I note the age of the bridge and I also regret the fact that cost of living and infrastructure and costs have escalated for a number of reasons due to inflation and, sadly, the new bridge wasn't built but the tendering for it was much more than what the Federal Government was allocating us to pay before it. So I'm really looking forward to seeing the bridge repaired, and I know that life - I know Malcolm Fraser made a reference, and I'm trying to recall exactly what it was - I think "life wasn't meant to be easy". But perhaps this is a first-world problem. I think when you look at other problems happening in other parts of the world, we should perhaps reflect on that and realise that there is war taking place in other places. And I still think we live in the lucky country, to be honest. So I do encourage my colleagues to support this item. Thank you, Mayor.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Schonfelder, and Cr Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. So this motion is to award the contract for the refurbishment of the bridge deck in conjunction with Golden Plains Shire, and, as has been identified, the Pollocksford Road Bridge has been closed for some time, and that's caused much concern within the community. Maintaining our existing infrastructure is just as important as delivering new projects and there has been much frustration, and Cr Schonfelder has pointed that out many times to ensure we're all aware of the importance of this project. Very old bridges can be complicated to renew, and Officers have worked hard to get to this point. So I'm glad that we're at this point and I encourage Councillors to support this motion so that we can get this work done and get the bridge open again. I think that's really important.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Pattison, and would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Phelps?

CR PHELPS: As Cr Schonfelder has said, it has been a long time coming for an range of reasons that have dragged out in a solution way beyond community expectations. It is great to see that a tenderer has been found and I too strongly encourage acceptance of this recommendation to finally get the repairs started.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you. Any other Councillors? Cr Walker?

CR WALKER: Thank you, Mayor and fellow Councillors. It's a great outcome to see it is actually coming to fruition. But may I ask a question? Has Golden Plains Shire Council approved this? Good. Thank you. I just wanted to clarify that. So in light of that, yes, I support this - the bridge being redone sooner than later. Thanks.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Walker. Any other Councillors? Cr Crockett?

CR CROCKETT: Thank you. Yes, awarding this proposed contract will enable the

re-opening of the bridge, which is, I am sure, a big win for the locals and will restore the connectivity and help preserve this valued local connection, which is a heritage asset as well, and make sure all of the appropriate load limits and safety controls are in while we're at it, and acknowledging that this is a tricky one to fit in our budget in a tight fiscal environment and grateful to the sound financial management of our Council in having funds available in that asset renewal reserve, but acknowledging that it is a tight fiscal environment for Councils in situations like this and for us, as well as our friends across the bridge at Golden Plains, who would have even less rates revenue to offer. So appreciate their confirmation of this and Councils working together to make it happen.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Crockett. And would any other Councillors like to speak? Cr Barker?

CR BARKER: I support fixing essential infrastructure but I don't support treating 'essential' as a magic word that removes the need for accurate estimates and public accountability. I still don't think that the public is fully aware of how we got to this point or why we're actually going so far over budget, but I'll be a minority vote so it doesn't really matter.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Barker. And would any other Councillors like to speak to this item? Cr Bodsworth? CR BODSWORTH: Just to note I'm really pleased to see the response to the request for tender and feel like we got a strong field. As Cr Pattison noted, an old bridge like this is always going to bring its risks with us but at least we've had time to - way too much time for some people - but we've had time and a lot of briefings and that kind of thing to get our heads around what's involved. It's going to be a tricky one, but I think at this point in time, I'm really grateful to Golden Plains Shire for the team work they have shown and for their commitment to the project, and I think we're in a really good position right now to get cracking.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cr Bodsworth. And any other Councillors? Before I go to you for closing comments, Cr Schonfelder, I might just ask the CEO to provide some clarity around maintenance of the Pollocksford Road Bridge, just to make sure that that is addressed.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: In terms of the maintenance of the bridge, Cr Schonfelder, we have had a regular cycle of doing the condition audits on the bridge - it is an old bridge - plus looking at what maintenance might be required on the bridge. We did have an issue with it where we had a load limit that wasn't complied with. We know that there were trucks and others that were using that bridge that was causing it to - and that was a big part of actually the degradation of the bridge - and so, in the end, from a risk approach, that is why we had to close the bridge because people weren't complying with the load limit, which was attempting to try to keep the bridge open, and so from a safety perspective, that was the decision that we made but it wasn't based on the fact that we hadn't been keeping up with the maintenance of the bridge. It's an old bridge that needs renewing.

CR SCHONFELDER: Can I ask, Mayor, that - there was a load limit of 20 tonne I believe for the bridge, and that happened in the past, that there were vehicles of a higher tonnage using the bridge. How will that be stopped in the future?

MAYOR STAPLETON: That's a question I'll put through the CEO. Thanks, Cr Schonfelder.

CR SCHONFELDER: That's what I've been asked.

CEO ROBYN SEYMOUR: Actually as part of the contract, the design and construct contract, there's a part of that that actually is looking at a design that can prevent large trucks from travelling across the bridge to try to ensure that we can maintain the load limit of the 20 tonnes, Cr Schonfelder. It's a good question because we don't want to renew the bridge and then be in the same position because there's inappropriate vehicles using that bridge in the future. So that's part of the requirement of the contract.

MAYOR STAPLETON: So I'll go to you now, Cr Schonfelder, for some closing comments.

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you for the clarification, Mayor and CEO. I was just a bit concerned that the bridge might become our equivalent of the Montague Street Bridge in Melbourne, which is problematic, and I should really emphasise the beauty of the bridge. It's a majestic structure and, like the bluestone bridge at Winchelsea, just an incredible asset. I'll ask this question rhetorically: the value to build the bridge as it stands today would be staggering, I imagine - like, bridges wouldn't be built in the same manner obviously.

As far as recreation is concerned, and having a healthy community, active transport, a lot of cyclists use the bridge and I know that we referred to major events earlier and with the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Race road, I thought it would be fantastic if the cyclists went over that bridge and also even the Winchelsea Bridge. I know with the last race we had, the course was changed and went further west. So never say never. I know Cr Phelps, for example, and another colleague, Cr Grist, would like the cyclists to probably go through Winchelsea, like myself and the rest of us. I'm very fond of the Pollocksford Bridge, which you have probably discerned, and apparently patience is a virtue, so I'm looking forward to the bridge being restored and I'm actually looking forward to it being re-opened as well. Thank you very much.

MAYOR STAPLETON: Thanks, Cr Schonfelder. So we'll now put the motion to a vote. All those in favour? And all those against? And the motion is carried 8-1. Thank you, Councillors.

We are now at the closed section of our meeting, as we have one confidential item to consider tonight. So we'll need to close the meeting to the public and end our livestream. I wish to thank everyone who has joined us tonight, both in person and online. So can I please have Councillors to move and second a motion to move into confidential? Cr Phelps and Cr Pattison, thank you. And all those in favour? And

against? And that motion is carried 7-1.

(Remainder of meeting conducted in camera).