

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes	Community Engagement Notes
5. Reduce events service levels by 20%.	Reduce grants for events service level change to be determined.	MLA expected value \$200,000. Current estimated value of \$199,000.	<p>The Events Team have carefully reviewed demand and financial impact of the current events schedule and adjusted the schedule and draft budgets for 2026/27.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ceasing Twilight Markets other than Mother’s Day. There may be third-party operators willing to take over this event (saving \$24K). • Reducing Music in the Gardens and considering future ticketed delivery (saving \$35K and providing the potential for increased revenue in the future). • Reducing to one CBD Christmas tree (saving \$32K). • Reducing end of year staff function and celebrating service functions (saving \$32K). • Combining Albury Awards, Australia Day and Citizenship (saving \$44K). • Reducing city-wide flag changeovers (saving \$10K). • Reducing the Events Sponsorship Program allocation (saving \$10K). • Moving to electronic programs and reducing offerings for Seniors Week (saving \$12K). • Work has commenced to explore sponsorship opportunities to rebuild the Events calendar in a financially sustainable manner into the future. 	<p>Draft budgets are subject to further community consultation</p> <p>There was stronger community support for retaining current Events service levels in the representative survey than in the Opt-In (62% vs 46%). The reductions noted have been carefully considered in light of attendance levels which are a strong indicator of actual community support.</p>

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes	Community Engagement Notes
6. Reduce service levels for cultural activation and community development by 20%.	Closure of wood fired oven and pumphouse project, reduced placemaking activities, programs and services. Remove or reduce grants.	MLA expected value \$200,000. Current estimated value of \$193,251.	<p>Planning for potential implementations may result in changes to community service levels:</p> <p>EOI for third party operations of the wood fired oven is being planned.</p> <p>A reduction in staffed hours and programs through Pumphouse will achieve effective financial outcomes without significant change to service levels. These minor adjustments include deferring the Artist in Residence program and are recommended for implementation.</p> <p>Placemaking activities are being carefully reviewed to ensure maximum value in the current environment.</p>	<p>Results from both the representative and the opt-in surveys show that community imperative for retaining current service levels with regards to placemaking as the lowest priority from the 16 options provided. The Trade Off Allocator preference share for Current artistic and cultural experience (placemaking) was 2% in the representative survey (less in opt-in).</p>
7. Reduce Communities service levels by 25%.	Reduce youth services/events. Reduce programs. Stop or reduce community grants. Transfer Glenecho and Mirambeena community centres to be governed by a committee of management and being independent of Albury City. Reduce food programs. Reduce community centre staffed hours.	MLA expected value \$800,000. Current estimated value of \$647,253.	<p>Savings already realised - Discontinuation of 2 vacant positions (\$220K).</p> <p>A reduction in staffed hours at Glenecho and Mirambeena will achieve effective financial outcomes without significant change to service levels. These minor adjustments are recommended for implementation.</p> <p>We are looking for opportunities to reduce AlburyCity's role in Youth Programs through improved partnering or seeking alternative providers.</p>	<p>It is noted that a significantly larger portion (26%) of respondents to the Opt-in survey have recently used community centres than was indicated by the representative survey. The Trade Off Allocator reflects this difference in cohorts with a ranking of 12% in the Opt-in survey and less than 1% in representative.</p>

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes	Community Engagement Notes
8. Leisure facilities.	Review service levels at the sports centre, sportsgrounds and aquatic facilities reduce winter pool hours.	MLA expected value \$200,000. Current estimated value of \$387,000	Savings already realised - Cost reductions and revenue increases will be reflected in draft budgets for Lauren Jackson following completion of works and reduction in requirement to lease space through Scots (\$200,000). Analysis of winter operating hours of Albury Swim Centre indicates a cost to operate from May to August of \$187K in 2026/27 with an average of 84 entries per day in the 2025 season. Given this cost, closure of the pool for the winter season is recommended. There are minimum notice periods to Aligned Leisure for a contract variation of contract.	Retention of current operating hours of swimming pools is seen as of moderate importance (8th out of 16) across both the representative and opt-in surveys. Whilst the Trade Off Allocator shows a higher preference share from the opt-in survey (8% as opposed to 3%), there is also a slightly higher percentage of opt-in respondents who have recently used swimming pools.
9. Natural Areas - service level change.	Remove grants.	MLA expected value \$20,000. Current estimated value of \$20,000.	Pausing this grant is included in recommendations for adjustments to Financial Assistance for next year as part of the budget processes.	Budget processes include community consultation.
10. Sport and recreation - service level change.	Remove grants.	MLA expected value \$60,000. Current estimated value of \$30,000	Budget processes are being used to consider reductions to Financial Assistance grants. Options for generating 3rd party sponsorship also being explored to minimise impact on current service levels.	Budget processes include community consultation.
11. Reduce watering of green spaces.	Reduce water use by 20%.	MLA expected value \$200,000. Current estimated value of \$61,000+	Savings already realised - Recent installation of new irrigation controllers is already expected to save \$61K annually without impacting green space standards. Options for re-activating river pumps and the Botanic Gardens bore pump are being explored as we seek to reduce our reliance on town water and reduce associated costs. An understanding of the costs and expected savings will inform decisions.	Watering of Green Spaces contributes to the second preference 'Places and Spaces' from the Representative Survey participants.

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes	Community Engagement Notes
12. Finance - service level change.	Consistent with reducing or removing grants (Remove rate relief for NFP organisations).	MLA expected value \$150,000. Current estimated value of \$0	Legislatively, we cannot charge full rates to organisations with exemptions	N/A
13. Reduce the number of play spaces in the community.	Currently 87. Reduction in number of play spaces by 20%.	MLA expected value \$150,000. Current estimated value over the next 2 years of \$0	A review of smaller Play Spaces is underway through the Play Space Strategy, which is currently being drafted following a recent community 'Have Your Say' engagement. Outcomes are aligned to the Social Infrastructure Strategy and will include steps executed through the Property Strategy. It is noted that a reduction in play spaces is unlikely to have a significant impact on ongoing operational expenses but will provide once off benefit in years beyond 2027/28.	Community engagement through strategy development.
14. Reduce service levels for economic development by 30%.	Alternatively increase revenue. Reduce programs. Reduce support to businesses. Reduced promotional campaigns.	MLA expected value \$600,000. Current estimated value of \$93,000	Savings already realised - Reduction to budget for Invest AlburyWodonga (\$55K); Removal of the Dean St Parklets will reduce ongoing costs by \$10K per annum; A decision has been made not to renew .ID subscription with a saving of \$28,000 per annum. Additional efficiencies are also being considered and continue to be identified for assessment.	

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes	Community Engagement Notes
<p>15. Reduce service levels for visitor economy and experience and tourism.</p>	<p>Reduce programs.</p>	<p>MLA expected value \$250,000. Current estimated value of \$221,780</p>	<p>Planning for potential implementations may result in changes to community service levels:</p> <p>A review of the face-to-face services of the Visitor Information Centre is underway with a view to achieving a model with improved financial sustainability.</p> <p>We remain committed to delivering our obligations under the Albury Wodonga Tourism Partnership Agreement and to achieving the Towards Albury 2050 outcome of supporting diverse and evolving tourism experiences for our community. Given the current agreements, any changes to service levels for 2026/27 will be minor and aligned with changes to the library opening hours if endorsed.</p>	<p>Whilst community engagement indicated a low priority for Visitor Information Centre services, this is from the perspective of residents, not visitors</p>

SECTION 2: SERVICE LEVEL REDUCTIONS – CCORPORATE SERVICES

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes
16. Reduce Information Management Service Levels by 20%.	Service level change to be determined. Remove/cancel underutilised or duplicate software.	MLA expected value \$2,000,000. Current estimated value of \$780,000	A full review of software licencing has been undertaken identifying \$580K in savings for which a phased implementation plan is being developed. Some changes to internal service levels are being scoped to determine whether the impacts are manageable.
17. Customer service - service levels increase wait times.	Extend customer service response times, avoid using casual staff, move customer interactions online and create AI powered chat bot.	MLA expected value \$100,000. Current estimated value of \$64,000	Operational efficiencies of \$11K have already been identified and implemented. We are working to adjust budgets for uniform spend across the organisation for savings of \$50,000 in 2025/26. Policy adjustments will be considered during the 2026/27 financial year which may generate additional savings. We are investigating scope for the central Customer Experience team to expand responsibilities to support cost reductions in other areas. This may impact community and internal staff wait times.
18. HR and payroll systems.	Service level reduction by 10%. Change to fortnightly pays. Outsourcing services. Devolving responsibility for minor matters to Service Leaders.	MLA expected value \$150,000. Current estimated value of \$118,000	Operational efficiencies of \$118K have already been identified and implemented. We continue to consider opportunities to enhance the efficiency of delivery of internal services from People and Culture.
19. Talent management and organisational development.	Service level reduction by 20%. Devolve responsibility for minor matters to Service Leaders. Simplify and automate recruitment processes.	MLA expected value \$200,000. Current estimated value of \$0	We continue to consider opportunities to enhance the efficiency of delivery of internal services from People and Culture.

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes
20. Wellbeing, health and safety.	Service level reduction by 20%. Reduction in assistance programs. Increased risk tolerances.	MLA expected value \$200,000. Current estimated value of \$81,741	Operational efficiencies of \$81,741 have already been identified and implemented. A decision has been taken not to further reduce internal service levels as to do so may impact AlburyCity's WHS safety performance and has the potential to then impact Council's premium rate which is lower than the regional average by 0.89%.
21. Corporate performance.	service level reduction by 10%. Review corporate performance framework and risk processes to reduce cost.	MLA expected value \$100,000. Current estimated value of \$238,454	Most of these savings will be realised in 2027/28 rather than 2026/27 due to remaining work on the current Financial Sustainability project. Internal service levels have been reviewed and adjusted to essential only. We are exploring potential insurance premium savings during this year's renewal processes by increasing excess for insurances where we have not previously made claims beyond the excess level.
22. Financial management.	Service level reduction by 10%. Reduced support to clusters and increase risk tolerance.	MLA expected value \$300,000. Current estimated value of \$9,000+	Operational efficiencies of \$9K through removal of an underused subscription have been implemented. In light of Crowe recommendations, operating structures for delivery of financial management services are being carefully considered for efficiency of achieving outcomes. We are working to understand the impact of removing discounts for up front rates payments with outcomes of that work to be presented through budget processes, which include further community consultation.
23. Project Management Office (PMO).	Change in delivery approach and governance. Consider a more decentralised model or alternative general cost saving through applied project management skills reducing project costs by say 5%.	MLA expected value \$350,000. Current estimated value of \$0 (impacting General Fund)	All costs for PMO are capital programs, so there is no opportunity through this area to impact the General (Operating) fund. Operating structures related to capital budget management processes are being carefully considered for opportunities for efficiency in achieving outcomes according to Crowe recommendations.

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes
24. Procurement.	Change in delivery approach and governance. Revert to a decentralised procurement model.	MLA expected value \$300,000. Current estimated value of \$147,225	Procurement costs are not all to the General (Operating) fund with an increasing portion being costed to Water & Wast Water based on shifts in procurement activity. The Procurement team are exploring improved category management for reducing organisational spend. Further reduction in centralised internal service levels are not recommended based on Crowe recommendations and capacity in other areas to take on the decentralised workload.
25. Governance and executive support.	Reduced support to clusters and increase risk tolerance.	MLA expected value \$150,000. Current estimated value of \$59,996	Increases expected in revenue based on changes to delivery structures that are being embedded at the moment. Reductions to staff travel budgets have already been implemented, resulting in savings.
26. Reduce external communications and engagement service levels by 5% and then 10%.	Reduce social media engagements and newsletter.	MLA expected value \$100,000. Current estimated value of \$62,500	Operational efficiencies of \$53K through reduction to budgeted overtime and removal of a duplicated system have been implemented. Additional operational savings are being scoped for implementation. No impact on external service levels is expected.
27. Review regional partnerships and innovation services.	Devolve regional partnerships into other service areas.	MLA expected value \$400,000. Current estimated value is undefined.	Investigations are still underway as to impacts of the loss of the technical expertise on business efficiencies and the impact on corporate reputation regarding established regional partnerships, including Two Cities One Community joint delivery and reporting of projects.

SECTION 3: NEW REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes
28. Lease out multistorey parking to pay & display companies in order to generate income.	In conjunction with charging for parking apply a \$25 per week revenue per parking space.	MLA expected value \$880,000. Current estimated value is \$0	Leasing out multistorey parking structures to pay and display companies is not the preferred option due to the complexity of managing current agreements with surrounding businesses who have supported development of these facilities. An overall plan for increasing parking revenue with minimal impact to current restrictions is being considered through opportunity #30 below.
29. Introduce metered timed parking and improve enforcement to manage traffic flow.	Discourage overstaying and raise revenue.	MLA expected value \$4,000,000. Current estimated value is \$0	The cost to implement metered times parking would exceed the revenue over the first 3 years. Community feedback clearly indicates that metered timed parking is not a preferred option. An overall plan for increasing parking revenue with minimal impact to current restrictions is being considered through opportunity #30 below.
30. Increased revenue from parking fines.	If parking meters are implemented, increased parking management will be required.	MLA expected value \$700,000. Current estimated value is TBA	An overall plan for increasing parking revenue with minimal impact to current restrictions is being considered. It is noted that community engagement provided a strong indication that the introduction of paid parking in the CBD is not a preferred option for improving financial sustainability.
31. Increase the commercial opportunities and revenue at the Albury Entertainment Centre.	Increase revenue and use. Stop subsidised use.	MLA expected value \$500,000. Current estimated value is \$0	This opportunity conflicts with redevelopment over the next 2 years. Revenue increases will only be possible in 3+ years.
32. Review Council's rental list and charge commercial rates for leases and licences and to ensure agreements require occupant to pay all costs for annual maintenance and compliance.	No Service Level change expected.	MLA expected value \$880,000. Current estimated value is TBA	This opportunity is being progressed through implementation of the Property Strategy. We are working to collate data about currently leased properties and tenants, charge rates, lease terms and conditions and the financial impact to Council of these, and costs to Council of maintaining properties. This data will inform activities through the Property Strategy.

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes
33. Review Council's lease arrangement with the communications tower Redlight Hill.	No Service Level change expected.	MLA expected value \$100,000. Current estimated value is \$0	Confirmed that relevant towers are not Council owned.
34. Cemeteries to set charges to break even.	Recover costs to break even in year two. No Service Level change expected.	MLA expected value \$560,000. Current estimated value is \$384,000+	Operating efficiencies identified and implementation being planned. Fee increases being considered through budget processes. Review of structures used with regards to preserved funds underway.
35. Airport increased revenue.	Increase revenues or lease out Airport.	MLA expected value \$300,000. Current estimated value is \$542,000	Fee increases / new fees being considered through budget processes. Commercial advertising opportunities being considered.
36. Children's services full cost recovery.		MLA expected value \$210,000. Current estimated value is \$570,000	Fee increases being considered through budget processes. Service Excellence final report currently being considered by Executive with outcomes to be separately presented.

SECTION 4: EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS (INTERNAL)

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes
37. Reduce the use of consultants.	Reduction of nonessential consultancies. Prioritise work required to be outsourced to a smaller budget.	MLA expected value \$400,000. Current estimated value is \$0	Consultants budget lines in General (Operating) budget already minimised and well below the target. Operating projects with consultancy budget are assessed on a case-by-case basis to confirm requirements before approval.
38. Replace up to 100 laptops with PC desktops no longer required post Covid.	Work from home usage still available through remote desktop if a personal PC is at home. No Service Level change expected.	MLA expected value \$20,000. Current estimated value is \$38,000	75 laptop replacements replaced with PC desktops over the next 3 years. Remaining 25 replacements would impact productivity.
39. Expand partnerships and sponsorship opportunities for events, facilities, and programs to offset operational costs without compromising community outcomes.	Unknown impact on service levels, but as an example few large Councils directly run Museums, and they are more often run by volunteer community groups with grant support.	MLA expected value \$50,000. Current estimated value is \$0	There are already processes for considering sponsorship and partnership across events, facilities and programs. Maximising these makes sense but needs to be on a per activity or partnership basis. There may be future opportunity to combine skills in grants attraction with partnerships and sponsorships.

SECTION 5: OTHER

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes
40. With Ministerial approval the Water Fund has the capacity to pay dividends to the Council's General Fund.	No Service Level change expected.	MLA expected value \$750,000. Current estimated value is \$0	Not feasible given the pending work on Water and Waste Water Infrastructure.
41. Review staff reward and recognition program.	Reduced rewards and celebrations.	MLA expected value \$50,000. Current value is \$100,000	Review of reward and recognition program will ensure offering is in line with revised budget allocation.
42. Review of fleet and plant purchasing type and specification.		MLA expected value \$50,000. Current estimated value is \$TBA	Several linked bodies of work are underway to consider light fleet, heavy fleet and plant separately - assessing current utilisation and reviewing policy and purchasing guidelines to ensure that we can make informed and consistent decisions about purchasing vs hire.
43. Review staff vehicle arrangements.	Limit access, type, transition to pool cars, strict use arrangements and novated lease options.	MLA expected value \$50,000. Current estimated value is \$TBA	Savings will only be realised through alternative contracting arrangements into the future.
44. Review organisation operating model.	Changes the result from the adopting of different service levels may impact the current operation model, requiring changes.	MLA expected value \$50,000. Current estimated value is \$TBA	Options for efficiencies being considered.
45. Reduce AEC project scope back to \$30M.	No Service Level change expected.	MLA expected value \$50,000. Current estimated value is \$0	AEC project endorsed to proceed.

Opportunity	Description (MLA)	Financial Summary	Assessment Notes
46. Review all assets to ensure that they are fully utilised and if not consider a framework to review opportunities for repurpose/lease/rent/sell in support of additional income streams.	Need to identify additional assets for disposal.	MLA expected value not defined. Current estimated value is \$TBA	Progressing through the implementation of the Property Strategy for property assets. Progressing through opportunity #42 for plant and fleet.
47. Review useful lives and asset values.	No Service Level change expected.	MLA expected value \$2,000,000. \$1,590,000 achieved for 2025/26. Reviewing useful lives and asset values is an annual process. This is not an avenue for ongoing savings.	A review was underway during the preparation of the Morrison Low Advisory report. Depreciation further optimised following initial 2025/26 budget.
48. Not proceeding with projected \$20M loans required to support capital works program under business-as-usual LTFP scenario from 2026/27.	Defer capital works, defer lower priority projects, ensure renewals don't occur before useful life is exhausted. Review capital and renewal forecasts against demands to assess if deferral and/or staging of work can be effectively achieved. Changes in service level to be determined as a result of deferred projects.	MLA expected value \$580,000. Current estimated value is \$0	Capital works program reduction being considered through development of Four Year Delivery Program, however additional TCORP loan already in place.

CM14.5. Recommendation to Discontinue Upfront Rates Payment Discount

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to assess the operational, financial, administrative and customer impacts of offering an upfront rates-payment discount. Currently, 5,508 ratepayers take up the discount, of whom 4,381 are non-pensioners. The report recommends discontinuing the practice due to its operational inefficiencies, low levels of customer satisfaction, absence of any legislative requirement, and the lack of a demonstrable financial benefit to Council.

Summary

Offering an upfront rates discount provides no financial benefit to Council, while creating significant administrative inefficiencies, increasing customer disputes and complicating system processes. The policy can be perceived as unfair, as it disproportionately benefits ratepayers with the financial capacity to pay in full upfront while disadvantaging those who cannot. The practice also prolongs statutory rating tasks and introduces inequities, including the double-benefiting those who already receive mandated concessions. Importantly, there is no requirement under NSW legislation for councils to offer an early-payment discount.

Internal analysis by the Revenue Team identifies substantial operational impacts, including extensive manual processing, system instability, frequent receipt reversals, amended notice requests and delays in levy processing. These inefficiencies divert staff resources, elevate the risk of error and diminish the overall customer experience.

Given the legislative context and the documented operational and customer impacts, discontinuing the early payment discount is recommended.

Recommendation

That Council endorses the discontinuation of the upfront payment discount effective from 1 July 2026.

Issues

Legislative and Policy Context

Section 563 of the *Local Government Act 1993* states that “a council may discount the amount of a rate or charge to such extent as it determines if the whole of the discounted amount of the rate or charge is paid by a date nominated by the council.” The legislation clearly establishes that councils are under no obligation to offer a discount for early payment.

The continuation of the discounting of rates as a practice leads to several concerns. These include equity and affordability issues, with evidence showing that the cash flow benefits are not significant enough to justify the cost of applying the discount. Reviews also found a discriminatory impact on community members who do not have the financial capacity to pay their rates in full upfront, preventing them from accessing the discount. As a result, many councils have discontinued this practice. Examples of Councils that do not offer early payment discounts include Waverley, Campbelltown, and Blacktown City Councils.

In contrast, pensioner rebates are legislated and mandatory, providing eligible pensioners with up to \$250 per year in statutory relief, of which 45% is funded by Council. In addition, Council provides a further 50% discount on domestic waste charges for full pensioners above the statutory requirement, fully subsidised by Council. Given this existing level of mandated and discretionary support, an upfront payment discount would duplicate relief already embedded in legislation, reducing overall fairness and transparency.

Section 563 of the *Local Government Act 1993* allows councils to offer a discount for rates paid in full by a nominated date; however, it does not require councils to provide such a discount.

Continuing this practice raises several concerns. Evidence shows that the financial benefit to Council is minimal, the process creates equity issues, and it disadvantages residents who cannot afford to pay their rates in full upfront. As a result, many councils, including Waverley, Campbelltown and Blacktown City, have already discontinued early payment discounts.

Pensioner rebates, by contrast, are mandatory and provide up to \$250 per year in statutory relief, with Council funding 45% of that amount. Council also offers an additional 50% discount on domestic waste charges for full pensioners, fully subsidised by Council. With this level of existing support already in place, offering an additional upfront payment discount would duplicate relief and reduce fairness and transparency.

Financial Impact Assessment

The calculation of the upfront discount rate offered, is performed to ensure there is no positive or negative financial impact to AlburyCity. Therefore, any positive overall financial impact to AlburyCity in offering discounts for rates paid in advance is negligible.

This is due to the upfront discount given being offset by increased interest earned from funds that are provided in advance. This requires an annual calculation to ensure that Council is not financially out of pocket.

Operational and Administrative Impacts

The following highlights numerous issues resulting from the upfront discount practice.

Manual Processing and Adjustments

Postponed rates accounts require manual review and adjustment once full payment is received, creating additional administrative effort. Each adjustment requires the preparation, authorisation, and processing of individual input forms, increasing workload and the risk of error. In addition, discounts are sometimes incorrectly applied to the gross levy for pensioners, resulting in unintended additional concessions beyond those intended by policy.

Increased Customer Complaints and Disputes

The application of early payment discounts frequently leads to increased customer complaints and disputes. Ratepayers often argue that they are entitled to the discount despite making late payments, which draws in multiple customer service channels such as phone, email, CRM, and online chat,

significantly increasing staff workload. Further complications arise when payments are made to incorrect accounts, such as water instead of rates, with customers still expecting the discount to apply. This necessitates receipt reversals and ongoing communication. Customers with multiple properties also regularly misallocate payments, requiring further manual intervention. In addition, system errors in applying or displaying discounts result in frequent requests for amended notices, generating extra work and increasing tension with ratepayers.

System Failures and Technical Issues

The Civica system experiences significant performance issues when processing discounts on prepaid accounts. Levy processing times can extend beyond 24 hours and frequently require repeated attempts or intervention from external vendors. Printed notices are also unable to accurately display discounts, requiring specialised wording and manual adjustments for print file vendors, adding further complexity and cost.

Complications in Supplementary and Ongoing Processing

Early payment discounts interfere with standard instalment schedules, requiring ongoing maintenance and oversight. Supplementary valuations and changes to waste management services introduce additional errors, as the system attempts to reapply discounts inappropriately. Reversing discounts is particularly problematic and can destabilise the system or require manual bank reconciliation workarounds. When customers miss discount deadlines due to issues outside Council's control, such as full email inboxes, they frequently request exceptions, increasing conflict and placing further pressure on staff.

Early payment discounts interfere with standard instalment schedules and require ongoing maintenance and oversight. Supplementary valuations and changes to waste services also introduce errors, as the system may attempt to reapply discounts incorrectly. Reversing a discount is particularly complex and can destabilise the system or require manual reconciliation workarounds. When customers miss discount deadlines due to factors outside Council's control such as email delivery issues, they often request exceptions, which create concerns for customers, often resulting in complaints which take time to resolve.

At the same time, Council recognises that some customers do appreciate the option to pay their full rates upfront. Any future changes will ensure these customers continue to receive clear information and easy-to-use payment options that support good financial planning.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – Any financial benefits from upfront discounts are negligible, however the practice creates increased administrative workload, system instability, and a higher volume of customer complaints, which in turn places sustained pressure on staff and core business processes. Manual interventions, system failures, and frequent exceptions reduce efficiency and increase the risk of processing errors, inconsistent decision making, and service delays. Over time, these impacts affect Council's ability to deliver services effectively, maintain system integrity, and ensure business continuity during peak rating periods.

- **Corporate Risk** – Maintaining an early payment discount creates corporate risk for Council in relation to public perception, equity, and propriety. The policy can be perceived as unfair, as it disproportionately benefits ratepayers with the financial capacity to pay in full upfront while disadvantaging those who cannot. This undermines Council’s commitment to equity and transparency and may attract negative public or media attention. Inconsistent application, frequent exceptions, and system errors also increase the risk of perceived impropriety or preferential treatment, which can erode community trust and confidence in Council’s decision making and governance processes.

The removal of discounting for AlburyCity, could create some short-term risk with the community who have utilised this option.

- **WHS and Public Risk** – There were no risks identified.
- **Environmental Risk** – There were no risks identified.
- **Four Year Delivery Program and General Program Risk** – There were no risks identified.

Engagement

AlburyCity’s Revenue Team has been consulted considerably in the completion of this report. They have identified through their regular participation at the Revenue Professionals conferences that the discontinuation of upfront rate discounts is widespread within NSW councils.

Strategic Alignment

Towards Albury 2050 Community Strategic Plan

This project aligns with the following outcomes from the Towards Albury 2050 Community Strategic Plan:

Theme Four – A Leading Community.

4.4 Albury has open and collaborative leadership.

4.4.2 Government business is conducted with good governance, accountability and transparency.

Options

1. That Council endorses the discontinuation of the upfront payment discount effective from 1 July 2026. **Recommended**; or
2. That Council does not endorse the discontinuation of the upfront payment discount effective from 1 July 2026. **Not Recommended**.

File ref.	FIL25/03458
Reporting team	Strategy & Performance
Attachments	Nil

CM14.6. Financial Assistance FY 25/26 - Budget Review**Purpose**

To present Council with options for the distribution of uncommitted Financial Assistance for the remainder of the 2025/26 Financial Year, in line with proposed 2026/27 Financial Assistance considerations for Council's Long Term Financial Sustainability Plan.

Summary

Under its Financial Assistance Policy, AlburyCity regularly makes financial and in-kind contributions to meet the needs identified in the Community Strategic Plan 'Towards Albury 2050', and other AlburyCity social, cultural and recreation strategic plans, in fulfilling its access and equity obligations. The Policy ensures that Financial Assistance is allocated in accordance with Council's financial position and to ensure ongoing financial sustainability.

Council endorses the Financial Assistance Budget Schedule through the Draft Budget presented to Council for endorsement at a Council Meeting in June each year.

In the 2025/26 Financial Year, Council endorsed a Financial Assistance budget of \$4.7M across nine Funding Streams, noting that this overall figure included provisional funding of \$2.4M for MAMA Pty Ltd. Council resolved not to proceed with the MAMA Transition project, resulting in \$2.3M being available in 2025/26 for Financial Assistance including Community Infrastructure Fund.

Since the adoption of Council's Budget for the 2025/26 Financial Year on 23 June 2025, Council's financial sustainability challenges have resulted in Council considering options to reduce Council's deficit in the General Fund. Council is now looking at a range of levers that will assist in reducing AlburyCity's financial deficit of \$21M. One of these levers is reviewing operating budgets, including Financial Assistance commitments for the remainder of the current financial year.

Following a review of AlburyCity's Financial Assistance, an opportunity was identified to generate immediate savings. The distribution of non-committed Financial Assistance has been paused to allow Council to consider whether to continue the disbursement of Financial Assistance non-committed funds or retaining these funds to be returned as savings in the 2025/26 Financial Year.

A saving of up to \$159,160 could be achieved if non-committed funds under Financial Assistance are not distributed in the 2025/26 Financial Year.

The Financial Assistance Budget for the 2026/27 Financial Year will be considered in line with AlburyCity's 2026/27 Budget process, to be endorsed at a Council Meeting in June 2026.

Recommendation

That Council pause the distribution of any non-committed Financial Assistance for the remainder of the 2025/26 Financial Year, to achieve savings of up to \$159,160.

Background

AlburyCity's Financial Assistance provides funding, expertise and support to local organisations that foster inclusion, address key issues and ensure our communities thrive.

Financial Assistance provided by AlburyCity is required to comply with the *Local Government Act 1993*, associated regulations and Council's Financial Assistance Policy (the Policy) (refer Attachment 1).

The Policy recognises that the disbursement of Financial Assistance funds is an important part of AlburyCity's strategy to partner with the community and businesses to further the strategic directions of the *Towards Albury 2050* Community Strategic Plan. The Policy also states that one of its objectives is to ensure that Financial Assistance is allocated in accordance with Council's financial position and to ensure ongoing financial sustainability. The intent of Financial Assistance is to be an avenue of support, it is not guaranteed and rounds are often highly competitive.

Under the Policy, Financial Assistance is categorised into two groups, Funding Streams and Programs. A Funding Stream is the overarching level that encompasses a group of grants, programs or projects. Programs sit under each Funding Stream and are the grouping of individually funded initiatives or projects. The nine Funding Streams are:

1. Community Infrastructure Fund
2. Community Organisation Support
3. Sports and Recreation
4. Environment
5. Community and Place
6. Economic Development
7. Events
8. Mayoral Donations
9. General Support

Financial Assistance is endorsed annually during the June Council Meeting as part of Council's Budget process and captured into the Financial Assistance Schedule (refer Attachment 2). The provision of Financial Assistance is then distributed via either donations from the Mayor; a competitive funding process where projects and initiatives aligned with AlburyCity's Community Strategic Plan 'Towards Albury 2050' are recommended for distribution; the endorsement of funding under delegation by the CEO, or upon specific requests received from community organisations where the demand meets the criteria in line with the Financial Assistance Policy.

In the 2025/26 Financial Year, the endorsed Financial Assistance budget was \$4.7M, noting, this included provisional funding of \$2.4M for MAMA Pty Ltd. As Council resolved not to proceed with the MAMA Ltd transition project Financial Assistance totalling \$2.3M is available this financial year including the Community Infrastructure Fund.

To date \$2.2M of Financial Assistance has been distributed or is committed through service agreements and contracts.

The Financial Assistance Budget for the 2026/27 Financial Year will take into consideration Council's Financial Sustainability targets and will be submitted for public exhibition in April and presented for endorsement in June 2026 as part of the annual budget process.

Issues

Review of Uncommitted Funds

A review of Financial Assistance expenditure in the 2025/26 Financial Year was conducted to identify any opportunities to generate further savings, in alignment with AlburyCity's Financial Sustainability.

Of a total Financial Assistance budget of \$2.3M, several Financial Assistance Programs were identified where savings could be made of up to \$159,160 (refer Table 2), noting that the remainder of the Financial Assistance Budget has been either distributed or committed.

Where contractual or service agreements are in place, Financial Assistance funds cannot be identified as potential savings, irrespective of whether the funds have been distributed.

Table 1. Identified Financial Assistance Savings per Program

Type of Financial Assistance	FY 25/26 Budget Allocation	Year-to-date Program Expenditure	FY 25/26 non-Committed Program Funds	Potential saving for remainder of FY 25/26
Events	\$66,279	\$56,879	-	\$9,400
Albury Entertainment Centre Subsidised Use	\$12,000	-	\$2,000	\$10,000
Sporting User Group Financial Assistance	\$10,000	\$5,490	\$2,000	\$2,510
Land Management Incentive Program	\$100,000	-	-	\$100,000
Youth Events Sponsorship	\$1,000	-	-	\$1,000
Medical Scholarship	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
Community and Cultural Grants	\$50,000	\$25,000	-	\$25,000
LibraryMuseum	\$800	-	-	\$800
Mayoral Donations	\$2,000	\$1,550	-	\$450
Executive Support	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
Potential Savings for FY 25/26				\$159,160

Open Grant Rounds

Two grants – the Land Management Incentive Program (LMIP) and the Community and Cultural Grants, were recently open for applications.

Land Management Incentive Program

Applications for the Land Management Incentive Program were open from 1 December 2025 to 22 February 2026, with an advertised funding pool of \$100,000.

Six applications were received, totalling \$125,220 in requests. The selection process has not commenced.

Community and Cultural Grants

Applications for Round 2 2025/26 of Community and Cultural Grants opened on 8 February 2026, with an advertised funding pool of \$25,000. During the time that the round was open for submissions, one application was received and another one was in progress.

To support Council's Financial Sustainability Plan both grants have been paused to provide Council the opportunity to determine whether to continue the distribution of uncommitted Financial Assistance funds or see these funds retained as budget savings for the remainder of the 2025/26 Financial Year.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – Through its Financial Assistance Policy, AlburyCity provides funding, expertise and support to local organisations. The 2025/26 Financial Assistance Budget Schedule has been endorsed at a Council Meeting in June 2025. Year to date, most of the Financial Assistance has been distributed or is committed. However, given the current Financial Sustainability challenges, to continue the disbursement of funds that have not been allocated or committed would contribute to AlburyCity's financial deficit. The recommended suspension of further program expenditure where non-committed funds have been identified aligns with AlburyCity's commitment to Financial Sustainability.
- **Corporate Risk** – Supporting local organisations is important in achieving the objectives of *Towards Albury 2050*. This needs to be balanced by the need for AlburyCity to be a transparent and financially responsible organisation. There is a likelihood that AlburyCity receives negative media attention and community feedback from individuals and organisations that expect Financial Assistance to be available for the remainder of the 2025/26 Financial Year.
- **WHS and Public Risk** – The risks associated are adequately managed via AlburyCity's policies and procedures.
- **Environmental Risk** – Suspending the Land Management Incentive Program limits opportunities for private landholders to undertake activities that protect the Albury LGA's natural environment and local threatened species. AlburyCity undertakes significant work on public land.

- **Four Year Delivery Program and General Program Risk** – Savings identified will generate a positive impact on AlburyCity's General Fund cashflow as a result.

Engagement

An internal analysis of the 2025/26 Financial Assistance Budget Schedule has identified savings up to \$159,160 for the remainder of the 2025/26 Financial Year.

Impacted internal stakeholders were consulted. This consultation has highlighted the need to retain Financial Assistance where contractual or service agreements exist.

Strategic Alignment

Towards Albury 2050 Community Strategic Plan

This project aligns with the following outcomes from the Towards Albury 2050 Community Strategic Plan:

Theme Four – A Leading Community.

4.2 Our Community's voice is considered in decision making.

4.2.1 Effectively engage the community on decisions that affect them.

Theme Four – A Leading Community.

4.4 Albury has open and collaborative leadership.

4.4.2 Government business is conducted with good governance, accountability and transparency.

Options

10. That Council pause the distribution of any non-committed Financial Assistance for the remainder of the 2025/26 Financial Year, to achieve savings of up to \$159,160. **Recommended.**
11. That Council continue to provide Financial Assistance in accordance with the endorsed Financial Assistance Budget Schedule for the 2025/26 Financial Year; **Not Recommended**

File ref.	FIL25/02575
Reporting team	Community & Place
Attachments	1. Financial Assistance Policy ENDORSED 25092023 [10 pages] - (DOC23/380103) 2. 2025-26 Financial Assistance Budget [3 pages] - (DOC25/173831)

Financial Assistance Policy

1. Purpose

AlburyCity regularly makes financial and in-kind contributions to groups, organisations and individuals. These financial contributions are an important part of Council's approach to meet the needs of the community identified in the Community Strategic Plan and other Council strategies and plans.

The purpose of the policy is to specify how Council allocates financial assistance and fulfils its legislative requirements under Sections 356 and 377 of the Local Government Act 1993.

Section 356, '*Can a council financially assist others?*', states that:

- 1) A council may, in accordance with a resolution of the council, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions.
- 2) A proposed recipient who acts for private gain is not ineligible to be granted financial assistance but must not receive any benefit under this section until at least 28 days' public notice of the council's proposal to pass the necessary resolution has been given.
- 3) However, public notice is not required if—
 - (a) the financial assistance is part of a specific program, and
 - (b) the program's details have been included in the council's draft operational plan for the year in which the financial assistance is proposed to be given, and
 - (c) the program's proposed budget for that year does not exceed 5 per cent of the council's proposed income from the ordinary rates levied for that year, and
 - (d) the program applies uniformly to all persons within the council's area or to a significant group of persons within the area.
- 4) Public notice is also not required if the financial assistance is part of a program of graffiti removal work.

Section 377, '*General power of the council to delegate*', gives Council, among other things, the power to (By resolution) delegate to the general manager "a decision under section 356 to contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons."

This policy provides guidance to individuals and organisations when applying for cash, interest free loans and in-kind financial assistance. It also provides guidance to AlburyCity Councillors and employees when responding to and managing requests for financial assistance.

2. Policy Statement

AlburyCity's financial assistance Policy support initiatives and projects that strengthen the social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes of the Albury Local Government Area (LGA). Through financial assistance, AlburyCity partners with the community and business to further the strategic directions of the Community Strategic Plan, Towards Albury 2050.

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AlburyCity recognises and respects the vital contribution of community and business in developing and delivering projects that contribute to a vibrant, inclusive, resilient, innovative and sustainable city. AlburyCity's financial assistance provides financial and in-kind support for a diverse range of projects. This policy provides the framework for managing financial assistance applications. It sets the expected outcomes of AlburyCity's financial assistance and the principles that guide funding by AlburyCity.

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- 2.1 Provide a mechanism to partner with community to deliver on the Community Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 Ensure that financial assistance is allocated in accordance with Council's financial position and to ensure ongoing financial sustainability.
- 2.3 Ensure that financial assistance and in-kind support to community groups, organisations and individuals encourages social, cultural, and environmental sustainability, is fair and equitable, transparent, and undertaken within a system that fosters public confidence and reflects Council's role.
- 2.4 Ensure the recipients of the financial assistance or in-kind support understand their role and obligations.
- 2.5 Ensure Council fulfils its legislative requirements under Sections 356 and 377 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.
- 2.6 Provide support to community groups to maximise their opportunities in accessing financial assistance sources other than AlburyCity, including regularly promoting grant opportunities through community networks, assisting organisations prepare applications, conducting grant writing workshops, providing grant application resources on the AlburyCity website, and offering assistance where reasonable and practicable.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all outgoing grants, interest free loans, sponsorship, and in-kind provisions. This policy applies to all not-for-profit organisations, for-profit organisations, sole traders, individuals, owners' corporations, unincorporated community groups and government agencies who apply for financial assistance from AlburyCity.

This policy applies to all financial assistance activity made available by AlburyCity as per Section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993* and is independent of regular procurement of goods, works and services.

4. Definitions

Acquittal a report that ensures that financial assistance recipients have administered funds responsibly and in line with the terms and conditions of the Funding Agreement. An acquittal report usually consists

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of a written report that summarises how the project fared against the initial objectives of the project. It also provides a financial statement detailing how the funds were spent.

Assessor is a person who evaluates a grant application. An assessor can be a Councillor, Council officer or a member from the community. All assessors will be required to make a conflict-of-interest declaration for the grant stream and or program they are assessing.

Donation is any financial assistance or in-kind support that is provided by AlburyCity to any individual, group or organisation to support a service, program or initiative that is likely to benefit the community.

Financial assistance includes direct financial and in-kind contributions provided by Council to a group, organisation or individual through programs approved by Council.

Funding Stream is the overarching level that encompasses a group of grants, programs or projects and has a capped amount allocated.

Grant is a mechanism by which Council provides financial assistance. It can be cash or in-kind support provided to recipients who meet a specific program or fund criteria to deliver an agreed outcome. The evaluation process is usually competitive.

In-kind Support includes donations involving the use of Council personnel, equipment or facilities. This form of support may still lead to Council incurring direct costs such as wages and plant hire. It also includes the subsidisation, reduction of fees normally charged by Council to use a facility or access a service as this is income forgone by Council.

Interest Free Loan is a mechanism by which Council can provide financial assistance for Community Infrastructure Fund requests. It is sum of money provided to organisations or individuals where they pay zero interest back to AlburyCity. Interest free loans will be required to fit within the funding limit for the Community Infrastructure Fund and will be subject to a separate loan agreement.

Program Guidelines provide specific details for each of AlburyCity's financial assistance programs including funding priorities, key dates, funding available, eligibility criteria, application processes, guidance for unspent funds and assessment criteria.

Scholarship is a sum of money paid to an individual to assist in funding their education and/or extra-curricular activities.

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5. References

- 5.1 The Local Government Act 1993, specifically Section 356, Can a Council financially assist others? and Section 377, General power of the Council to delegate
- 5.2 Program guidelines for each specific financial assistance program
- 5.3 AlburyCity Scholarships Program
- 5.4 AlburyCity Delegations of Authority Register
- 5.5 Albury Entertainment Centre – Subsidised Use Policy DOC11/44667
- 5.6 Annual Financial Assistance Schedule (adopted by Council as part of the annual Operational Plan)
- 5.7 Annual Events Assistance budget (adopted by Council as part of the annual Operational Plan)
- 5.8 Annual Fees and Charges Schedule (adopted by Council as part of the annual Operational Plan)
- 5.9 Smarty Grants Online Application System
- 5.10 Events Sponsorship Procedure (DOC10/32514[v2])
- 5.11 Waiving of Fees for Development Applications/Construction Certificates Policy (DOC11/27888)
- 5.12 Accounting for Council’s Financial Assistance Procedure DOC13/36784
- 5.13 Asset Disposal Policy (DOC13/47094).
- 5.14 Draft AlburyCity Asset Management Strategy 2023-2027 (DOC23/101510)

6. Content

6.1 Funding Streams

Funding streams have been created to capture the types of financial assistance that AlburyCity provides to the community.

The funding streams have been aligned to the four themes that are identified within the Community Strategic Plan – Towards Albury 2050:

- A Growing Sustainable Economy
- An Enhanced Natural Environment
- A Caring Community
- A Leading Community

Each of these streams will have a set funding limit applied and will be underpinned by individual programs that have their own guidelines.

Financial assistance is allocated through Council’s budget process, and any assistance allocated to the community throughout the year is reported in Council’s annual report. Note that Council may adjust the annual budget, the capped funding stream limit and or the name and purpose of each program, as community needs change, at which time program details will be updated on Council’s website.

At the time of the development of this policy the following funding streams and programs are in place to provide financial assistance:

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Funding Stream	Towards Albury 2050 Alignment		
Community Infrastructure Fund (previous Community Fund)	*	^	#
<p>For significant community capital assets or improvements, this fund encourages financial contribution from applicants and includes the provision of up to ten-year interest free loans.</p> <p>Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Infrastructure Fund - New Requests • Approved Infrastructure Projects 			
Community Organisation Support (previous Financial Assistance)		^	#
<p>Provided to any community organisation to support a service, program or initiative that is likely to benefit the community.</p> <p>Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-Year Approved Funding • Community Centre Operational Support • Community Organisation Support – New Requests 			
Sport and Recreation			#
<p>Upgrading sporting and recreational equipment or related infrastructure, business plans, forward planning documents or feasibility studies related to the development of their sport within AlburyCity and supporting individual athletes to compete at State or National level.</p> <p>Programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports Grants • Fee Reduction 			
Environment		^	
<p>Supporting an environmentally sustainable community including sustainability rebates and land management incentives.</p> <p>Programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Sustainability Rebate Program • Land Management Incentive Program 			

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Community and Place		^	#	@
<p>Provides funding to develop and present new and innovative community and cultural development projects, programs, and activities; and support to individuals to assist in funding their education and/or extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>Programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General In-Kind Support • Community and Cultural Grants • Tertiary Students Scholarships 				
Economic Development	*			
<p>To attract, expand and support business activities that will deliver significant benefits to the Albury LGA.</p> <p>Programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albury Business Connect Sponsorship • Albury Business Connect – CBD Promotional Rate • Economic Development Incentive Program 				
Events	*		#	
<p>Financial or in-kind support for events is assessed on a range of criteria including community and economic benefit.</p> <p>Programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General In-Kind Support • Event Sponsorship 				
Mayoral Donations			#	
<p>Requests for one-off financial donations at the discretion of the Mayor.</p> <p>Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayoral Discretionary Fund 				
General Support			#	
<p>Provision of financial and in-kind support under delegation to the Chief Executive Officer to community, volunteer, not-for-profit and charity organisations.</p> <p>Programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General In-Kind Support • Fee Reduction • Council Building - Peppercorn Rental • Albury Waste Management Centre Gate Fees • Albury Entertainment Centre (AEC) Subsidised Use 				

Key:

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Towards Themes	Albury 2050
A Growing Sustainable	*
An Enhanced Natural	^
A Caring Community	#
A Leading Community	@

6.2 Funding Limits

Setting and committing to clear funding limits each year demonstrates that Council acts responsibly and with a fiscally sustainable intent. It provides transparency to Community and a greater understanding for applicants of the funds that are available.

The financial assistance budget set for the 2023/24 financial year serves as a baseline for setting limits within each funding stream moving forward. Additionally, the rate peg may be applied each year to the Community Organisation Support funding stream. This will assist community organisations to respond to economic pressures.

The remaining funding streams of Community Infrastructure Fund, Sport and Recreation, Environment, Community and Place, Economic Development, Events, Mayoral Donations and General Support, will not have the rate peg applied to them.

Funding limits are set as part of the annual budget process. This provides Council with the flexibility to review and adjust the funding limits each year to reflect current community needs. If additional funding is approved during this process this will be facilitated through a quarterly Budget review.

6.3 Applications

Financial Assistance information for the community will be available on the AlburyCity website. AlburyCity use grant administration software to manage financial assistance requests. Applicants will be required to submit their grant application via the grant administration software link provided on the AlburyCity website.

Community groups are encouraged to contact Council officers to discuss their project / initiative prior to submitting their application. Contact details will be made available on the AlburyCity website.

AlburyCity's financial assistance is grouped into funding streams. Funding streams have open and close dates for when the community can apply for funding, with dates available on the AlburyCity website.

Council has the flexibility of endorsing projects presented outside of the regular approval process by exception for consideration at a Council Meeting.

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6.4 General Criteria

The general criteria for evaluating requests for financial or in-kind assistance includes the following items:

- 6.4.1 How the initiative links to the four strategic themes identified AlburyCity's Community Strategic Plan, Toward Albury 2050:
 - o A Growing Sustainable Economy
 - o An Enhanced Natural Environment
 - o A Caring Community
 - o A Leading Community
- 6.4.2 How the initiative supports the delivery of Council's adopted strategies and plans.
- 6.4.3 The program is not typically or potentially able to be funded through other sources e.g., other levels of government, philanthropic entities.
- 6.4.4 How the initiative supports equity, diversity and inclusion in our community.
- 6.4.5 How the initiative supports social, cultural and environmental sustainability.
- 6.4.6 How the initiative provides community benefit beyond a specific interest group.
- 6.4.7 Whether the applicant has met their obligations if they have previously received financial assistance from AlburyCity.
- 6.4.8 Whether the applicant will be contributing to the initiative and the quantum of this contribution (financial and in-kind).
- 6.4.9 Whether the timing of the initiative integrates well with other initiatives.
- 6.4.10 Whether the applicant or the occupier of a facility that has applied for assistance is in arrears with their financial obligations to AlburyCity.
- 6.4.11 Whether the application fits within Council's budget allocation.

Criteria, specific to each program are detailed in the Program Guidelines applicable to that program.

6.5 Assessment

Decisions regarding the allocation of financial assistance will be made through one of the following:

- 6.5.1 Council endorsement - Grant programs are reported to Council for final approval before the grants are released. Council can also endorse projects outside of the regular approval process by exception.
- 6.5.2 Budget process - All other financial assistance applications will be considered as part of the Council budget process and will be reviewed by Council Officers, for eligibility and quality of application against the general policy criteria and specific criteria for the particular program. Council Officers compile applications into a report to Council, setting out the details of organisations that have been recommended to receive financial assistance, the amount, brief description of the program, service or activity to be funded and other relevant information.
- 6.5.3 Delegated authority – Council may delegate decisions to allocate financial assistance under individual programs to either the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

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Delegated authority may be allocated up to a specified amount and in accordance with adopted program guidelines.

Where relevant, the decision to fund an application is informed by findings from independent assessment panels and Advisory Committees. This is a mechanism by which a group of community members, industry-specific individuals and Councillor representatives meet to provide a rigorous assessment of funding requests received under an identified program. The findings of their assessment are reported to Executive for endorsement under delegated authority.

AlburyCity's financial assistance programs are highly competitive. Even though an application may meet the criteria it may not be competitive against other applications. If an application is unsuccessful, the applicant can request feedback from Council Officers.

All assessors are required to make a conflict-of-interest declaration on each application as part of the assessment process, and in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct.

6.6 Approval

For funding streams that require a Council resolution or approval under delegated authority of the CEO to provide financial assistance to organisations, formal advice will be provided to all applicants (both successful and unsuccessful). Organisations who have successfully obtained financial assistance will be provided with a letter/agreement setting out any conditions specific to the financial assistance.

Many projects including festivals and events require approvals and consents from AlburyCity (such as development applications), insurers, NSW Police and other state government agencies. If the necessary approvals cannot be obtained, the financial assistance may be revoked. Approval of financial assistance does not imply that the AlburyCity has given any other required consent, authorisation or approval.

Approval of in-kind support for a booking is not a guarantee of a booking. All bookings are subject to availability and must be made through the usual booking process for the facility, space or location requested.

Council may approve funding outside of funding programs developed in accordance with this Policy. In these instances, a report detailing the proposed financial assistance will be presented to Council, and, if endorsed, will be placed on Public Exhibition for no less than 28 days.

6.7 Acquittal

A formal acquittal is required at the end of each project. The recipient organisation is required to:

6.7.1 Complete an acquittal form provided by Council within 60 days after the funds have been expended, with details of how the funds were spent

6.7.2 Include receipts for any equipment purchased where funds are approved for the purchase of equipment; the equipment is to be identified as an asset for the organisation

6.7.3 Supply copies of promotional materials and acknowledgement of Council's support.

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AlburyCity maintain the right to audit, or have an agent, accountant, or other representative, audit such books, records and supporting data relating to the financial assistance upon thirty (30) days' notice.

Program Guidelines will provide specific guidance to recipients of financial assistance on how funding will be treated that is not expended in the financial year in which it was allocated.

6.8 Responsibilities

Councillors will approve AlburyCity's Financial Assistance Policy and all associated funding guidelines that enable provision of financial assistance, as and when they are due for review or amended.

Strategy & Performance Service Leader will provide a financial system that is able to record all relevant financial transactions to enable regular reconciliation and reporting of the financial assistance.

Council Officers responsible for administering the funding will:

- 6.8.1 Make decisions in accordance with this policy and specific program guidelines.
- 6.8.2 Work within their approved delegation.
- 6.8.3 Record all correspondence and other relevant material in AlburyCity's electronic document management system.
- 6.8.4 Record all transactions in accordance with the Financial Assistance Record Keeping Procedure. These transactions ensure all parties are aware of the monetary value of the assistance.

Corporate Performance Team will ensure AlburyCity's Annual Report documents all financial assistance activity for the year.

Detailed responsibilities for each program are outlined in the guidelines for each specific financial assistance program.

7. Authorisation

Owner	Directorate	Business Growth and Community – Community and Place – Communities
	Responsible Officer	Community Development Partner
Authorisation	Adopted Council 25 September 2023	
Review Date	September 2027	
Register	This policy is included in the Public Policy and Procedure Register.	
Record of Amendments	N/A	N/A
	N/A	N/A

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2025/26 Financial Assistance Schedule										
Recipient	Budget	Requested Financial Assistance	Requested Change from previous yr budget	Request to prev. yr Budget Change	Budget	Budget to Budget Change	Increase %	Multi Yr Agreements Financial Assistance	Multi Yr Agreements Financial Assistance	Comments
Entity for funding	2024-25 \$	2025-26 \$	2025-26 \$	%	2025-26 \$		2025-26 %	2026-27 \$	2027-28 \$	
Community Organisation Support - Single-year New Requests	43,325	147,700	45,575	100.0%	37,640	(5,685)	-13.1%	-	-	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023/24 CSO program funding ending 30 June 2024
Friends of the Albury Botanic Garden		15,000	15,000			-	0.0%			Friends of the Gardens 2025 6 day convention in 13-20 October, 2025.
Uliver Memorial Community Trust	23,325	53,900	30,575	131.1%	-	(23,325)	-100.0%			Uliver Memorial DC2 Restoration project 2025/26. Funding request supports UMCT administrative expenses including hangar lease fees, rates, utilities, office supplies, training, internet and insurance.
Parklands Albury Wodonga	20,000	20,000	-	0.0%	20,000	-	0.0%			Parklands Albury Wodonga proposes to deliver a year-round park stewardship program that proactively involves local residents, youths, disability and the broader community in environmental restoration works at various sites across Albury City managed lands.
Albury Wodonga Regional Foodshare		58,800	58,800		17,640	17,640	0.0%			Seeking funding to develop a comprehensive business case for development of a hub on land donated by Wodonga TAFE. This will provide a centralised space for food warehousing, refrigeration, processing and distribution.
Community Organisation Support - Single-year Approved Requests	2,851	-	(2,851)	-100.0%	-	(2,851)	-100.0%	-	-	
Orana Community Centre		-	(2,851)	0.0%	-	-	0.0%			Funding to develop a master plan for an outdoor space
Lavington/North Albury & District Senior Citizens Club Inc	2,851		(2,851)		-	(2,851)	-100.0%			Hire Fees at Mirambeena Community Centre
Community Organisation Support - Multi-year New Requests	140,551	210,796	70,246	50.0%	119,299	(21,252)	-15.1%	83,210	46,416	
Albury City Band	12,582	12,000	(582)	-4.6%	-	(12,582)	-100.0%			Supporting the Albury City Band to sustain activities and expand outreach. Maintain and purchase instruments for members who cannot afford their own. Purchase new music to keep performances varied and fresh. Maintain hand assets.
Wodonga Urban Landcare Network	17,180	21,281	4,101	23.9%	10,640	(6,540)	-38.1%	10,920	11,247	Gardens for Wildlife (G4W) Albury Wodonga aim to continue the rollout of their education program providing a minimum 8 events and activities to educate, engage and motivate residents to create habitat within their gardens for native wildlife.
The Flying Fruit Fly Foundation	11,590	33,096	21,506	185.6%	13,096	1,506	13.0%	13,633	14,192	Continued rate relief.
The Immune Deficiency Foundation (IDFA)		4,200	4,200	0.0%	-	-	0.0%			IDFA are seeking sponsorship for the event in the form of purchasing show passes which are then distributed free of charge to children and families.
HotHouse Theatre	34,770	35,000	230	0.7%	35,000	230	0.7%			Recurring assistance for artists development and showcase of theatre work
Council Buildings - Hot House Theatre	12,427	12,937	510	4.1%	12,937	510	4.1%	13,467	14,019	Refer Hot House Theatre Donation. In kind donation of the rent free house for artists to work on creative projects "house in the country". This is in addition to the base funding above.
Boas Language Academy		38,232	38,232	100.0%	-	-	0.0%	38,232		Seeking funding to train two language teachers per year from Albury's refugee/migrant community to deliver new language courses to the community and offer in-language story-time.
Murray Conservatorium	14,023	13,915	(108)	-0.8%	6,958	(7,065)	-50.4%	6,958	6,958	Music education and development of music ensembles
Murray Arts	37,979	40,136	2,157	5.7%	40,668	2,689	7.1%			Regional development of artists across the Murray region. Bridge the gap between creativity and industry
Community Organisation Support - Multi-year Approved Requests	2,492,405	2,584,206	91,800	3.7%	2,584,206	91,801	3.7%	2,684,381	-	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget plus rate peg
Albury Conservation Company	52,900	52,900	-	0.0%	52,900	-	0.0%	52,900		Previous funding of Monitoring Squirrel Gliders in Albury's urban growth corridor. \$26k support per year for 3 years ending 2020/21. \$40k support provided per year for three year for phase 2 of Threatened Species Monitoring ending 2023/24. Application 24/25 is for Phase 3.
Albury Wodonga Eisteddfod	33,000	33,000	-	0.0%	33,000	-	0.0%	33,000		AlburyCity funding is used to offset hire cost of Albury Entertainment Centre. The Eisteddfod is an important part of the cultural landscape in the region and has significant economic impact in the lead up and during the event. Current two year agreement covers 2022/23 and 2023/24. Service Agreement in place with regular liaison.
Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau	40,000	40,000	-	0.0%	40,000	-	0.0%	40,000		Funding to support the continuation for Albury Cultural Exchange. Existing 3 year funding arrangement included 2 x 12 seater mini buses plus \$40,000 funding for one community development worker over 3 years - ends 2023/24.
Charles Sturt University	15,000	15,000	-	100.0%	15,000	-	0.0%	15,000		Leadership and Resilience Scholarship Option B.
MAMA Ltd	2,040,935	2,124,614	83,678	4.1%	2,124,614	83,679	4.1%	2,211,723		MAMA Governance Transition financial assistance package. Five-year funding approved at Council Meeting on 28 March 2022 for \$1,879,766 (FY22/23) plus 15% contingency fund of \$281,965 (FY22/23); with a rate peg uplift in future years
MAMA Ltd - Contingency Fund	306,140	318,692	12,552	4.1%	318,692	12,552	4.1%	331,759		MAMA Governance Transition financial assistance package. Five-year funding approved at Council Meeting on 28 March 2022 for \$1,879,766 (FY22/23) plus 15% contingency fund of \$281,965 (FY22/23); with a rate peg uplift in future years
Survivors of Suicide and Friends	4,430		(4,430)	-100.0%		(4,430)	-100.0%			Albury Wodonga Winter Solstice. Support provided for 3 years from 2022/23 to 2024/25 and Council was to work with them to become sustainable. Funding linked to Rate Peg
North East Pride Collective - Gateway Health			-	0.0%		-	0.0%			Funding requested to support the Rainbow Ball for 2022, 2023 and 2024 Rainbow Ball. A joint initiative with Wodonga City Council, Indigo Shire Council, Benalla Rural City and Wangaratta City Council.
Community Centre Operational - Multi-year New Requests	394,901	402,309	7,408	1.9%	402,309	7,408	1.9%	409,968	417,781	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget plus 2% increase
Westside Community Centre Incorporated	19,476	19,376	(100)	-0.5%	19,376	(100)	-0.5%	19,376	19,376	Continuation Youth Program.
Westside Community Centre Incorporated	86,185	87,909	1,724	2.0%	87,909	1,724	2.0%	89,667	91,460	Existing Program. 2% annual funding increases applies.
Thurgoona Community Centre Incorporated	167,567	170,918	3,351	2.0%	170,918	3,351	2.0%	174,336	177,823	Existing Program. 2% annual funding increases applies.
Thurgoona Community Centre Incorporated	14,879	15,177	298	2.0%	15,177	298	2.0%	15,481	15,791	Engaging youth leadership to foster young development. Prior year funding plus 2%
Thurgoona Community Centre Incorporated	58,567	59,738	1,171	2.0%	59,738	1,171	2.0%	60,933	62,152	Interactive Playgroup - Little Kidlets progression. Prior year funding plus 2%.
Orana Community Centre	48,226	49,191	965	2.0%	49,191	965	2.0%	50,175	51,179	Existing Program. 2% annual funding increases applies.

2025/26 Financial Assistance Schedule										
Recipient	Budget	Requested Financial Assistance	Requested Change from previous yr budget	Request to prev. yr Budget Change	Budget	Budget to Budget Change	Increase %	Multi Yr Agreements Financial Assistance	Multi Yr Agreements Financial Assistance	Comments
Entity for funding	2024-25 \$	2025-26 \$	2025-26 \$	%	2025-26 \$		2025-26 %	2026-27 \$	2027-28 \$	
Community Centre Operational - Multi-year Approved Requests	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget plus 2% increase
Community Organisation Support - Total	3,074,033	3,345,011	212,179	6.9%	3,143,454	69,421	2.3%	3,177,559	464,197	See above
Economic Development	642,130	371,721	(270,410)	-42.1%	341,721	(300,410)	-46.8%	332,622	335,848	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget
Albury Business Connect	142,000	137,000	(5,000)	-3.5%	137,000	(5,000)	-3.5%	132,000	127,000	Sponsorship for \$142,000 (ex GST) for 24/25 with \$5,000 annual reductions to 27/28.
Albury Business Connect - CBD Promotional Rate	185,130	192,721	7,590	4.1%	192,721	7,590	4.1%	200,622	208,848	Council has raised funds through the Albury CBD Promotional Special Rate (PSR) and provided to Albury Central Inc. or Albury Business Connect for management and service delivery since 1999. The Service Agreement incorporates key objectives, actions and tasks. Milestone Key Performance Indicators are subject to annual review by Council officers. Financial Assistance of \$163,890 in 2020/21 plus rate peg for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.
Albury Central Inc.	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	No administration funding proposed in 2016/17 due to efficiencies achieved through incorporation of Albury Central into the Albury Northside Chamber of Commerce.
Murray Hume Business Enterprise Centre	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	Sponsoring the Women in Business program graduation lunch and BEC business lunches.
Albury Entertainment Centre (AEC) Subsidised Use	15,000	12,000	(3,000)	-20.0%	12,000	(3,000)	-20.0%	-	-	AEC Subsidised Use provided to a wide range of local or Albury based not for profit and community organisations, in accordance with the AEC Subsidised Use Policy. Subsidies are provided in accordance with Council's AEC Subsidised Use Policy adopted by Council 22 Aug 2011 and reviewed every two years.
Economic Development Incentive Program	300,000	30,000	(270,000)	-90.0%	-	(300,000)	-100.0%	-	-	The proposed Program seeks to realise the community economic and social benefits derived from attracting major new investment and jobs to Albury, and encouraging significant expansion or renewal of existing businesses. Any expenditure under the Program is subject to an Economic Development Policy adopted by Council.
Events	66,279	66,279	-	0.0%	66,279	-	0.0%	-	-	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget
Events	66,279	66,279	-	0.0%	66,279	-	0.0%	-	-	Ongoing Program, that includes provision of full fee waiver or reduced fees for hire and in kind of equipment, installation of banners and event facilitation. Request as per 'Events' budget. This is based on requests with proposals to Executive for approval.
Environment	200,000	100,000	(100,000)	-50.0%	100,000	(100,000)	-50.0%	-	-	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget
Community Sustainability Rebate Program	100,000	-	(100,000)	-100.0%	-	(100,000)	-100.0%	-	-	Program aimed at the Towards Albury 2050 Community Net Zero Target by providing a sustainability rebate to owners and lessees of properties within Albury to reduce carbon emissions. The rebate is an expansion on the previous Community Energy Fund.
Land Management Incentive Program	100,000	100,000	-	0.0%	100,000	-	0.0%	-	-	This grant provides assistance for landholders, community groups & organisations to undertake on-ground environmental activities that benefit our local environment
Community and Place	58,800	26,800	(32,000)	-54.4%	51,800	(7,000)	-11.9%	-	-	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget
Border Medical Recruitment	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	
Glenecho Community Centre	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	Council now directly operates the centre. Financial results reflected in AlburyCity's operating budget.
Community and Cultural Grants	50,000	25,000	(25,000)	-50.0%	50,000	-	0.0%	-	-	Community & Cultural Grants are combined into one pool and distributed to community groups via two grant rounds. The Community and Cultural Grants are an important mechanism for AlburyCity to support small scale community projects that would not attract funds from other sources. It also allows our organisation to be responsive to community needs. Application received to be considered by Council. Expression of Interest: committee recommends to Council.
Community Safety	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	Provision of in-kind support for photocopying neighborhood watch surveys and newsletters.
Glenecho Community Centre	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	Provision for one-off financial assistance requests that occur during the year.
Library/Museum	800	800	-	0.0%	800	-	0.0%	-	-	Provision of full fee waiver or reduced fees for room hire to a wide range of local or Albury based not for profit and community organisations.
MAMA	7,000	-	(7,000)	-100.0%	-	(7,000)	-100.0%	-	-	Provision of full fee waiver for room hire to a wide range of local or Albury based not for profit and community organisations.
Mirambeena Community Centre	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	Provision for one-off financial assistance requests that occur during the year.
Youth Events	1,000	1,000	-	0.0%	1,000	-	0.0%	-	-	Provision of in-kind support for event facilitation.
Sports and Recreation	61,350	60,100	(1,250)	-2.0%	60,100	(1,250)	-2.0%	-	-	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget
Individual Athletes	5,100	5,100	-	0.0%	5,100	-	0.0%	-	-	Distributed to various individual athletes that apply for funding. Request to Council for Financial Assistance
Leisure Facilities	1,250	-	(1,250)	-100.0%	-	(1,250)	-100.0%	-	-	Provision of full fee waiver or reduced fees court hire and in-kind wages for event facilitation.
Sporting User Group Financial Assistance	10,000	10,000	-	0.0%	10,000	-	0.0%	-	-	Provision for one-off financial assistance requests that occur during the year.
SportsAlbury	45,000	45,000	-	0.0%	45,000	-	0.0%	-	-	Distributed to various sporting clubs that apply for funding through the grants program. Expression of Interest, Sports Albury recommends to Council.

2025/26 Financial Assistance Schedule										
Recipient	Budget	Requested	Requested Change	Request to prev. yr	Budget	Budget to	Increase %	Multi Yr	Multi Yr	Comments
Entity for funding	2024-25	Financial Assistance	from previous yr	Budget Change	2025-26	Budget Change	2025-26	Agreements	Agreements	
	\$	2025-26	2025-26	%	\$		%	2026-27	2027-28	
		\$	\$					\$	\$	
Mayoral Donations	12,000	12,000	-	0.0%	12,000	-	0.0%	-	-	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget
Mayoral Discretionary	10,000	10,000	-	0.0%	10,000	-	0.0%			Various community groups seeking financial support of up to \$500. There are no formal arrangements in place, however financial assistance to organisations considered based on requests which are received on an ad hoc basis.
Border Trust	2,000	2,000	-	0.0%	2,000	-	0.0%			AlburyCity Foundation Builder Contribution from the Mayoral Discretionary Fund.
General Support	209,110	209,110	-	0.0%	209,110	-	0.0%	-	-	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget
Albury Waste Management Centre Gate Fees	40,502	40,502	-	0.0%	40,502	-	0.0%			Write-off of Charities' Gate Entry Fees for Albury Waste Management Centre.
Albury & Border Rescue Squad	2,000	2,000	-	0.0%	2,000	-	0.0%			Provision of fuel cards.
Angel Flights	300	300	-	0.0%	300	-	0.0%			Angel Flight is a charity which coordinates non-emergency flights to assist country people to access specialist medical treatment that would otherwise be unavailable to them because of vast distance and high travel costs. AlburyCity does not charge landing charges for aircraft while they are conducting these flights.
Domestic Violence Fundraising and Awareness Raising				0.0%	-	-	0.0%			Funding to be allocated to awareness raising and fundraising including support for activities conducted in conjunction with the Albury Wodonga Domestic Violence Committee
Various Non-Profit Organisations	148,308	148,308	-	0.0%	148,308	-	0.0%			AlburyCity subsidises rates and water for non-profit organisations that lease Council owned premises. No rate peg increase as historically applied.
Executive Support	5,000	5,000	-	0.0%	5,000	-	0.0%			Provision of full fee waiver or reduced fees for room hire in Council Administration Building.
Engineering Services Management	3,000	3,000	-	0.0%	3,000	-	0.0%			Provision of in-kind support for event facilitation.
Albury Show Society	10,000	10,000	-	0.0%	10,000	-	0.0%			Various works are undertaken by AlburyCity staff in preparation for the annual Albury Show. These works (including payroll and plant costs) are provided at the Albury Showgrounds.
Total Financial Assistance/Sponsorships (Operational) Budget	4,323,702	4,191,021	(191,481)	-4.4%	3,984,464	(339,238)	-7.8%	3,510,182	800,045	2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget plus rate peg for Community Organisation Support multi-year agreements ONLY
Community Infrastructure Fund - New Requests		62,254	62,254	0.0%	62,254	62,254	0.0%			
Albury Wodonga Table Tennis Association (AWTTA)							0.0%			The AWTTA Facilities Redevelopment Project seeks to refurbish the ageing clubrooms in 3 stages. This is Stage 1 of the Project and will provide compliant Male, Female and Accessible toilets and changerooms, along with and multipurpose storage to help the club meet the needs of increased participation and ensure the amenities are fit for purpose.
Thurgoona Community Centre Incorporated (TCC)							0.0%			Seeking funding for the Stage 1 redevelopment of the TCC playground area, including replacing unused car park with turf, fencing extensions and planning for future development.
Lavington Panthers Bowling Club		62,254	62,254		62,254	62,254	0.0%			The Lavington Panthers Bowling Club commissioned and funded Detail Design for the upgrade of their clubroom facilities, and successfully obtained DA approval. They are seeking \$62,254 (comprising \$50,000 cash and \$12,254 interest free loan) for the construction of stage 1 of the Project - the provision of compliant ramp access to the clubhouse building.
Melrose Football Club							0.0%			Contribution to the Melrose Park Sports pavilion project through a \$50,000 interest free loan over a 10 year period.
Orana Community Centre							0.0%			Seeking funding to develop a youth and community garden. The garden will be constructed by disengaged youths who will then grow fresh produce for the community kitchen. The youth cooking group will then cook and serve low-cost meals to the community. Funding will be used to purchase materials for construction of the gardens and equipment for the cooking program.
Community Infrastructure Fund - Approved Funding	1,573,788	700,000	(873,788)	-55.5%	700,000	(873,788)	-55.5%			
West Albury Preschool				0.0%			0.0%			Phased building extension, refurbishment and improved wheelchair access (approved 2022/23) - additional funding request in 2023/204 of \$324,029 with 50% funded as a ten year interest free loan. FY2024 expenditure includes advancement of interest free loan of \$162,014
Albury Preschool	200,000		(200,000)	-100.0%	-	(200,000)	-100.0%			Early Learning Community Hub. Includes \$200,000 loan in FY24/25
Flying Fruit Fly Foundation				0.0%			0.0%			Funding for specialist technical equipment for stage 5 of new building project
Spillers Creek Community Inc.				0.0%			0.0%			Construction of portico entrance to community centre
Ross Circuit Preschool	700,000	700,000		0.0%	700,000		0.0%			Build new preschool room, enlarge outdoor play area and refurbish existing building. \$200,000 approved loan for FY21/22 and revised to FY24/25 is no longer required and has been removed
Westside Community Centre	601,688		(601,688)	-100.0%	-	(601,688)	-100.0%			Cash funding of Stage 1 of building project - car park development. Capital funding of \$487,722 in 2024/25 is conditional on NSW State Government grant funding and securing DA approval.
Albury Hotspurs Soccer Club	37,500		(37,500)	-100.0%	-	(37,500)	-100.0%			Complete ground lighting and modify grandstand to include storage
Table Top Community Centre	27,100		(27,100)	-100.0%	-	(27,100)	-100.0%			Facilities Upgrade
Thurgoona Community Centre Incorporated	7,500		(7,500)	-100.0%	-	(7,500)	-100.0%			Install permanent outdoor soft fall area with drainage
Total Community Infrastructure Fund (Capital) Budget	1,573,788	762,254	(811,534)	-51.6%	762,254	(811,534)	-51.6%			2024-25 Funding Stream Budget set from 2023-24 Budget

CM14.7. Change to Council Meeting Schedule

Purpose

This report is to recommend to Council a temporary scheduling change for Committee meetings for the remainder of the 2025/2026 Financial Year.

Summary

At its meeting on 8 December 2025, Council adopted the updated Code of Meeting Practice, a new committee structure and the 2026 Council Meeting schedule.

With a significant body of work under way in regard to Financial Sustainability, which will be a strong focus in the coming months with the 2026/2027 budget build, it is proposed that the meeting schedule be adjusted so that the two committee meetings are split across two weeks for the remainder of the Financial Year.

Recommendation

That Council:

- a. Rescind the Council Meeting Schedule 2026; and,
- b. Adopt the updated Council and Committee Meeting Schedule 2026.

Issues

Two committees were established at the 8 December 2025 meeting, being the Infrastructure, Planning and Environment Committee and the Business, Growth and Community Committee, in alignment with the draft Code of Meeting Practice and the organisation's structure.

The Terms of Reference for each committee were adopted at the Extraordinary Meeting on Wednesday, 28 January 2026 with a review to be undertaken within six months.

The committees operate as forums for information sharing and to seek feedback and may consider Council officers' reports and make recommendations to Council.

It is expected that March to June will be an intensive time with presentations and updates on financial sustainability initiatives and the development of the 2026/2027 budget. As such, it is proposed to update the meeting schedule for dates up to and including the June 2026 meeting to have committee meetings on the first and second Mondays of the month, rather than on a single night. The amended meeting schedule allows sufficient time for Council to give due consideration to these important topics.

In line with the AlburyCity Code of Meeting Practice (2025), the updated structure, commencing on 7 April 2026 and continuing until 30 June 2026, would be as follows.

- **First Monday of the month** – Public Forum (if required) and BG&C Committee meeting.

- **Second Monday of the month** – Community Forum (if required), Public Forum (if required) and IP&E Committee meeting.
- **Third Monday of the month** – Council Meeting (Public Forum if required).
- **Fourth Monday of the month** – Nil. Available for meeting (if required).

Attachment 1 has the updated dates (highlighted) set out. There is no change from the originally adopted dates from July to December 2026.

The Code of Meeting Practice includes timing of ordinary council meetings which AlburyCity has adopted as the third Monday of the month at 6pm, excluding January, noting the 2026 schedule includes changing the December date to the second Monday due to the proximity to Christmas. Neither the code nor the Terms of Reference refer to Committee Meeting days and times.

The updated schedule does not preclude a review of the Terms of Reference for committees occurring before July 2026.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – Currently, Council has three formal meetings per month over two weeks. All meetings require live streaming, agenda preparation, and minute-taking. There are staffing implications in requiring officers to attend an additional meeting a month throughout this period and consideration will need to be given to individual workloads to alleviate resourcing pressures.
- **Corporate Risk** – The Model Code of Meeting Practice (referenced under Section 360 of the Local Government Act 1993) encourages councils to adopt meeting structures that promote orderly, informed and transparent decision-making. The change to the meeting schedule enables Council to appropriately consider a significant issue presently facing the organisation.
- **WHS and Public Risk** – There were no risks identified.
- **Environmental Risk** – There were no risks identified.
- **Four Year Delivery Program and General Program Risk** – There were no risks identified.

Engagement

There has been no engagement activity in the preparation of the report. However, any changes to the schedule will be communicated with the community and Our People to ensure timely preparation of business papers and opportunities for participation.

Strategic Alignment

Towards Albury 2050 Community Strategic Plan

This project aligns with the following outcomes from the Towards Albury 2050 Community Strategic Plan:

Theme Four – A Leading Community.

4.4 Albury has open and collaborative leadership.

4.4.2 Government business is conducted with good governance, accountability and transparency.

Options

1. That Council adopt the amended Council and Committee meeting schedule as attached.

Recommended.

This option provides a temporary change to the schedule to allow the appropriate consideration and presentation of the financial challenges facing the organisation during the build of the 2026/2027 budget through the committee structure. Splitting the committee meetings over two weeks avoids the need to adjourn or extend meetings beyond reasonable hours.

2. That Council make further amendments to the Council and Committee meeting schedule. **Not Recommended.**

The Council Meeting Schedule was adopted in December, and for timeliness and agility, this update only reflects a minor change to committee meeting dates for IP&E for just three months. Implications of more significant changes have not been considered at this time but can be evaluated in more detail as part of the planned review.

3. That Council resolve not to adopt any updates to the Council Meeting Schedule 2026. **Not Recommended.**

This change is to better support the organisation to work through current financial challenges within the recently adopted Code of Meeting Practice while avoiding the need to adjourn or extend meetings beyond reasonable hours. The update is relatively minor and temporary, while also allowing time for the new committee structure to be embedded.

File ref.	FIL26/01145
Reporting team	Governance and Executive Support
Attachments	1. Council and Committee Meeting Schedule 2026 [2 pages] - (DOC26/57224)

Council Meeting Schedule 2026 [updated]

DATE	DAY	MEETING
2 February 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee BG & C Committee
9 February 2026	Monday	Community Forum (if required)
16 February 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
23 February 2026	Monday	No Meeting
2 March 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee BG & C Committee
9 March 2026	Monday	Community Forum (if required)
16 March 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
23 March 2026	Monday	No Meeting
30 March 2026	Monday	No Meeting
7 April 2026 (Monday is a public holiday)	Tuesday	Public Forum (if required) BG & C Committee
13 April 2026	Monday	Community Forum (if required) Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee
20 April 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
27 April 2026	Monday	No Meeting
4 May 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) BG & C Committee
11 May 2026	Monday	Community Forum (if required) Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee
18 May 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
25 May 2026	Monday	No Meeting
1 June 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) BG & C Committee
9 June 2026 (Monday is a public holiday)	Tuesday	Community Forum (if required) Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee
15 June 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
22 June 2026	Monday	No Meeting
29 June 2026	Monday	No Meeting
6 July 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee BG & C Committee

DATE	DAY	MEETING
13 July 2026	Monday	Community Forum (if required)
20 July 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
27 July 2026	Monday	No Meeting
3 August 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee BG & C Committee
10 August 2026	Monday	Community Forum (if required)
17 August 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
24 August 2026	Monday	No Meeting
7 September 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee BG & C Committee
14 September 2026	Monday	Community Forum (if required)
21 September 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
28 September 2026	Monday	No Meeting
6 October 2026 (Monday is a public holiday)	Tuesday	Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee BG & C Committee
12 October 2026	Monday	Community Forum (if required)
19 October 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
26 October 2026	Monday	No Meeting
2 November 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee BG & C Committee
9 November 2026	Monday	Community Forum (if required)
16 November 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting
23 November 2026	Monday	No Meeting
30 November 2026	Monday	No Meeting
7 December 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) IP & E Committee BG & C Committee
14 December 2026	Monday	Public Forum (if required) Council Meeting*
21 December 2026	Monday	No Meeting
28 December 2026	Monday	No Meeting

* In December the Council meeting will take place on the 2nd Monday of the month.

CM15. Officers Reports for Noting

CM15.1. Budget Review Analysis Independent Audit Report

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the outcomes of the Crowe Budget Review and Analysis Independent Audit, including key findings, risk ratings and proposed management actions.

Summary

At the ordinary Council meeting on 10 March 2025, Council resolved to appoint an independent auditor to conduct a comprehensive review of current and future budgets.

Crowe was the external auditor for this audit. The review commenced in October 2025 and concluded in December 2025.

It was noted the organisation displayed many strengths which work to establish a solid platform for successfully implementing the recommendations presented in the report. By leveraging these capabilities, the report found the organisation was well-positioned to achieve the desired outcomes and drive sustainable improvements.

The report found AlburyCity's budget development, monitoring and reporting processes could be significantly enhanced, highlighting an immediate need to use the opportunity of preparing Council's Long Term Financial Plan to model different viable scenarios to ensure that Council remains a strong, financially viable, regional city.

It reinforced the finding of the Internal Budget Process Review that there is a need for timely, accurate, transparent and meaningful financial reporting that empowers informed decision-making.

The report identified 14 high risk recommendations and five medium risk recommendations, indicating major improvement was needed. The recommendations and findings have been aligned with the audit's objectives. AlburyCity has developed a plan to address the recommendations, and work is already underway as outlined in the management response column of the report.

Recommendation

That Council receive and note the Crowe Budget Review and Analysis Independent Audit report and implementation of the recommended actions.

Background

In line with the Council motion, AlburyCity requested Crowe to undertake a Budget Review and Analysis project, focused on opportunities to enhance Council's current budget process and long-term financial plan preparation.

The objectives of the audit were as follows.

1. Alignment with Strategic Goals – Assess how the budget supports Council’s strategic plan and high-priority projects.
2. Revenue Assumptions Evaluation – Evaluate accuracy and sustainability of revenue forecasts.
3. Expenditure Analysis – Identify inefficiencies and opportunities for cost organisation.
4. Financial Sustainability and Risk Management.
5. Capital Expenditure and Debt Strategy Review – Confirm prudence and sustainability of capital and debt plans.
6. Process and Transparency Improvements – Enhance accountability and efficiency in budgeting processes.
7. Compliance and internal Controls – Ensure regulatory compliance and robust internal controls.
8. Post-Budget Performance Monitoring – Establish effective mechanisms for monitoring and continuous improvement.

The Budget Review and Analysis audit confirms Council’s strong governance culture and resource capability but highlights critical financial sustainability risks and process improvement needs.

Root cause findings point to Processes and Systems and Culture and Conduct as the primary drivers for the identified issues, which are summarised below.

Immediate focus areas include:

- Addressing high-risk findings related to strategic alignment, revenue assumptions and expenditure control;
- Implementing recommendations from the Internal Budget Process Review; and,
- Strengthening monitoring and transparency mechanisms.

The Independent Budget Review and Analysis is one of several complementary initiatives progressing under the Financial Sustainability program. Alongside the Internal Budget Process Review and the Accelerated Service Planning project under Service Excellence, these initiatives are generating strong momentum for improvement. Collectively, they have identified valuable opportunities to strengthen Council’s financial and operational performance and work is already well under way to implement the recommendations.

Organisational Strengths

The review documented a number of positive findings which are noted in the report. It noted these strengths provide a strong foundation for implementing the recommendations and that the organisation was well-positioned to deliver the intended outcomes and achieve sustainable, long-term improvements.

It found Council was well-resourced, with a capable and diverse workforce with a Councillor group that blended experience with new perspectives. It identified there had been a strong organisational focus on addressing the deteriorating General Fund result, supported by several internal and external reviews, including the comprehensive Internal Budget Process Review (August 2025).

The appointment of two new Deputy CEOs was seen to bring renewed momentum to the Executive Team. The report also highlighted that the backgrounds of key staff who had recently joined the

organisation contributed valuable external experience. Council also maintained strong systems, documentation and processes, supported by a service-driven culture that delivered quality facilities and services to the community.

Key Issues Identified

The report identified that improvements are required in Council's budget development and financial reporting processes, with early engagement, clearer responsibilities and greater transparency identified as essential. Time pressures, limited interaction between Finance, PMO and operational leaders, and reliance on centralised adjustments have reduced confidence in financial information and hindered meaningful budget ownership.

Council continues to face long-term financial sustainability challenges with increasing pressure on capital funding. The report recommended stronger long-term financial planning and better alignment between strategic priorities and available resources.

Assessment of capital projects lacks consistency, with varying methodologies and challenges comparing competing priorities. A more structured and transparent approach is required to support sound investment decisions.

Cultural and organisational factors included things such as reduced accountability for financial performance, siloed working between key teams, delays in reporting and disengagement by budget owners. Recommendations focus on building stronger cohesion and clarifying financial responsibilities.

Additional opportunities also exist to enhance performance through improved procurement practices, technology, stronger collaboration and proactive consideration of emerging tools such as artificial intelligence.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – Failure to address the identified financial and organisational issues, including weaknesses in budgeting, financial reporting, capital project prioritisation and internal collaboration, could undermine Council's financial sustainability and impact its ability to deliver services effectively.
- **Corporate Risk** – Council's reputation for transparency, accountability and sound financial stewardship may be adversely affected if identified improvement actions, reviews and recommendations are not implemented in a timely and coordinated manner.
- **WHS and Public Risk** – There were no risks identified.
- **Environmental Risk** – There were no risks identified.
- **Four Year Delivery Program or General Program Risk** – Financial sustainability risks, including ongoing operating deficits, reliance on borrowings and constrained capital funding, may affect Council's capacity to deliver programs, services and infrastructure commitments within the Delivery Program.

Engagement

External community engagement was not required for this review. Internal engagement has included several internal stakeholders. Updates will be provided to Service Leaders, Team Leaders and the organisation between Executive, ARIC and the Council meeting, complementing the cadence of the Financial Sustainability project, as a building block of this overall project.

- Mayor Cr Kevin Mack
- Councillors
- Chief Executive Officer – Frank Zaknich
- Deputy CEO Infrastructure, Planning and Environment – Bridgett Leopold
- Deputy CEO Business, Growth and Community – Gael Evans-Barr
- Acting Chief Financial Officer – Ryan Hastie
- Members of Finance, PMO and Payroll teams
- Relevant Service and Team Leaders

Strategic Alignment

Towards Albury 2050 Community Strategic Plan

This project aligns with the following outcomes from the Towards Albury 2050 Community Strategic Plan:

Theme Four – A Leading Community.

4.4 Albury has open and collaborative leadership.

4.4.2 Government business is conducted with good governance, accountability and transparency.

File ref.	FIL25/01290
Reporting team	Governance and Executive Support
Attachments	1. Albury City - Budget Review and Analysis (Draft) Report 2026 - signed [50 pages] - (DOC25/364890)



Budget Review & Analysis

AlburyCity Council

Date: January 2026

Confidential

Prepared for: AlburyCity Council

Prepared by: Crowe Albury



Smart decisions. Lasting value.

19 January 2026

Kellie Davies
Senior Governance Lead
AlburyCity Council
553 Kiewa Street
Albury, NSW 2640

Dear Kellie,

Delivery of AlburyCity Council Budget Review and Analysis

We are pleased to attach our review report from the recently concluded Budget Review and Analysis project.

This review has been conducted in accordance with the Memorandum of Audit Planning issued at the commencement of the engagement and Council's original request for proposal.

In our professional judgement, sufficient and appropriate review procedures were completed and appropriate evidence gathered to support the accuracy of the conclusions reached and contained in this report.

The matters reported have been discussed with management and management comments have been provided for all issues included. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff involved for their assistance and cooperation during this process.

Should you have any questions or wish anything further, please contact me on 0436 032 296.

Yours sincerely,

Crowe Albury

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Danielle MacKenzie".

Danielle MacKenzie

Partner

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1 Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

In accordance with a motion by Council, AlburyCity Council (AlburyCity) have requested a Budget Review and Analysis project be undertaken. The review specifically focused on opportunities to enhance Council's current budget process and long term financial plan preparation.

1.2 Review objective

As outlined in AlburyCity's agreed project terms, the objective of the review is to provide independent assurance over the following key areas:

- i. Alignment with Strategic Goals - To determine the degree to which the budget reflects and supports the Council's strategic plan and high-priority projects.
- ii. Revenue Assumptions Evaluation - To evaluate the accuracy, reliability, and sustainability of the Council's revenue projections.
- iii. Expenditure Analysis - To assess the efficiency and effectiveness of current spending patterns and identify opportunities for cost optimisation.
- iv. Financial Sustainability and Financial Risk Management - To ensure the long-term financial viability of the Council and the effectiveness of its financial risk management strategies.
- v. Capital Expenditure and Debt Strategy Review - To evaluate the prudence and sustainability of capital expenditure plans and debt management strategies.
- vi. Process and Transparency Improvements -To enhance the transparency, accountability, and efficiency of the budgeting process.
- vii. Compliance and Internal Controls - To ensure that the budget complies with all applicable regulatory requirements and that robust internal controls are in place.
- viii. Post-Budget Performance Monitoring - To establish effective mechanisms for monitoring budget performance and facilitating continuous improvement.

In addition, Council has indicated that they welcome feedback on following areas as a result of learnings or insights gained throughout Crowe's project work:

- governance structure
- community engagement
- how we compare with local government sector standards
- ICT system adequacy
- Human resource capacity and capability

1.3 Review approach

The review was conducted primarily by applying discussion, observation and review techniques, concentrating on:

- Understanding through discussion and observation, Council's budget preparation and monitoring processes in place;
- Documenting and evaluating the methods associated with control and management; and
- Assessing the possibility of risks.

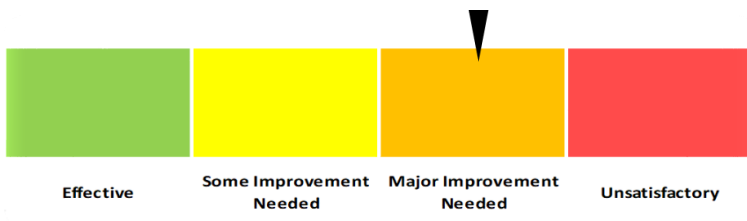
A scope limitation existed in that a limited number of senior Finance team personnel were unavailable throughout the duration of this review project. Observations have been made of areas that they had direct responsibility for. It was not possible to confirm the total accuracy of some of these assessments.

1.4 Review conclusion

AlburyCity's budget development, monitoring and reporting processes can be significantly enhanced. There is an immediate need to utilise the opportunity of preparing Council's Long Term Financial Plan to model different viable scenarios to ensure that Council remains a strong, financially viable, regional city.

As identified through AlburyCity's Internal Budget Process Review, there is a 'need for timely, accurate, transparent and meaningful financial reporting that empowers informed decision-making.'

This review identified a variety of recommendations to be considered for implementation.



Refer to Appendix 3 for further details.

1.5 Positive findings

The following points were noted during the review.



Council is generally well resourced and has a broad range of quality, well skilled, highly capable, experienced staff who are keen to make an active contribution to the ongoing performance and development of Council.



Council currently has a Councillor group that has good diversity. They provide a strong mix of both experienced individuals plus relatively young and fresh representatives.



There is a heightened sense of urgency within the whole of Council around the need to identify and implement viable options to arrest the deteriorating General Fund operating result. Multiple internal and external initiatives and reviews have been recently undertaken or are being performed. The intent is to accelerate a significantly improved overall Council financial result and specifically within the General Fund.



Council's Internal Budget Process Review, issued in August 2025, is a thorough, comprehensive and professionally undertaken piece of work. Key deliverables were produced including an itemised action plan to address identified process deficiencies.



The relatively recent appointment to Council of two new deputy CEOs, brings fresh perspective and energy to Council's Executive team.



There are many individuals within Council who have joined over the past several years. They bring excellent first hand experience of systems and behaviours used by other entities, either within a commercial or local government sector. These backgrounds provide a significant opportunity for Council to benefit from direct compare and contrast insights using lived experience.



There is a lot of professional quality documentation, tools, systems and processes within Council.











Strong service and delivery culture resulting in quality facilities and services to the Albury community.

These strengths establish a solid platform for successfully implementing the recommendations presented in this report. By leveraging these capabilities, the organisation is well-positioned to achieve the desired outcomes and drive sustainable improvements.

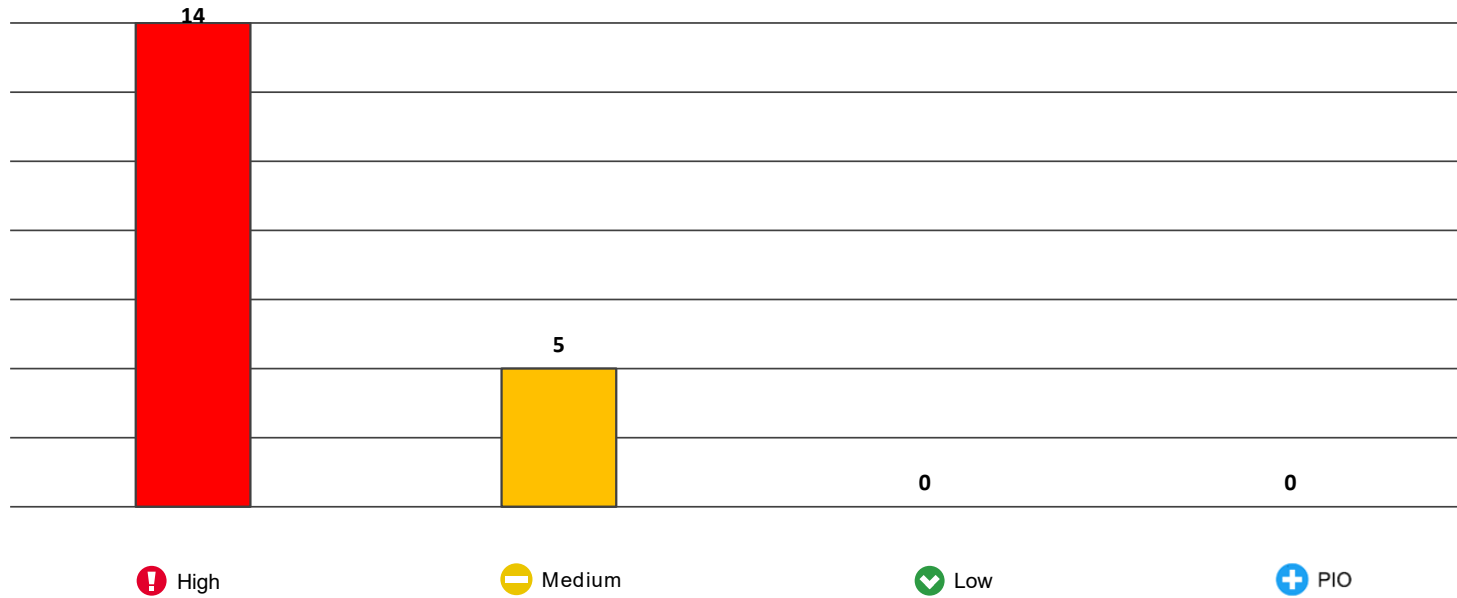
1.6 Ratings tables

Key to significance of risk rating

 High	High risk within the audit area due to some serious control weaknesses.	Issue requiring immediate remedial action.
 Medium	Moderate risk within the audit area due to existing controls that need improvement to ensure soundness.	Issue requiring remedial action as soon as possible.
 Low	Low risk within the audit area - some opportunities for control improvement exist.	Issue to be considered for future remedial action.
 PIO	Performance Improvement Observation (PIO) presents an opportunity to enhance a process.	Recommendation may enhance efficiency and effectiveness of processes

Root Cause Findings Rating			
Governance	Process and Systems	People	Culture and Conduct
			
4	7	2	6
Governance encompasses the framework by which an organisation is controlled and operates and the mechanisms by which it and its people are held accountable.	Process and systems encompass the controls within a process or Information technology (IT) system.	People are the stakeholders within an organisation. Risk in this area can be due to human error, manual processes or training.	Culture and conduct risk pertains to the uncertainty and potential for loss or failure caused by human behaviour or decisions, often slipping through traditional risk management systems.

1.7 Number of risks identified and rated



1.8 Basis and use of report

This report has been prepared in accordance with the objectives and approach set out in the Memorandum of Audit Planning (MAP), and subject to the limitations set out in Appendix 1 “Basis and Use of Report”.

Refer to Appendix 2 for personnel contacted during the review.

Refer to Appendix 3 for overall report rating and definitions.

2 Background

AlburyCity operates a complex and diverse business servicing the broader Albury community. It is reliant on strong leadership and cohesive functionality across the organisation to effectively deliver quality services in a timely and efficient manner.

AlburyCity similar to other local government entities face a range of ongoing challenges including:

- Doing more with less – challenge to deliver quality services with limited funding;
- Tapping into leadership to drive innovation – new skill sets are being explored as expectations grow and demands on councils become more complex;
- Complex future – financial constraint, technological advancements and changing workforce dynamics;
- Remaining competitive – as a prosperous and growing regional city there is active competition from other similar or larger entities with similar strong aspirations;
- Managing community expectations – the community has become accustomed to quality services and infrastructure without significant consideration of cost implications.

The *Local Government Act 1993* requires councils to apply sound financial management principles including responsible and sustainable expenditure, investment and effective financial and asset management.

Effective financial management is important in ensuring Council achieves its long term objectives, remain financially viable and deliver intended benefits for the community.

A key financial objective for AlburyCity is to arrest the decline of recurring and increasing General Fund operating losses excluding capital grants. Council's intent in the near term to undertake significant investment in Water and Wastewater Master Plans to support city growth dominates long term financial plan projections.

There is a growing challenge for AlburyCity to balance out competing priorities whilst also servicing existing and future debt obligations. Growing debt obligations shrink Council's capacity to fund future discretionary capital projects.




A primary focus of this review was to assess whether Council has effective financial management arrangements that support Councillors and management to fulfil their financial stewardship responsibilities. This will support those charged with leadership responsibilities within AlburyCity to continue Albury's growth and development in a strong and sustainable way.

3 Summary of recommendations

The following table is a summary of recommendations identified during the review.





Audit Objective	Risk Rating		
	High	Medium	Low
Alignment with Strategic Goals determine the degree to which the budget reflects and supports the Council's strategic plan and high-priority projects.	Finding 10 Finding 15		
Revenue Assumptions Evaluation evaluate the accuracy, reliability, and sustainability of the Council's revenue projections.	Finding 12		
Expenditure Analysis assess the efficiency and effectiveness of current spending patterns and identify opportunities for cost optimisation	Finding 11		
Financial Sustainability and Financial Risk Management ensure the long-term financial viability of the Council and the effectiveness of its financial risk management strategies.	Finding 2 Finding 13	Finding 8	
Capital Expenditure and Debt Strategy Review evaluate the prudence and sustainability of capital expenditure plans and debt management strategies.	Finding 9		
Process and Transparency Improvements enhance the transparency, accountability, and efficiency of the budgeting process.	Finding 1 Finding 3	Finding 4	
Compliance and Internal Controls ensure that the budget complies with all applicable regulatory requirements and that robust internal controls are in place.	Finding 14 Finding 16		
Post-Budget Performance Monitoring establish effective mechanisms for monitoring budget performance and facilitating continuous improvement.	Finding 6 Finding 7		
Other insights	Finding 5	Finding 17 Finding 18 Finding 19	
Risks Total	14	5	0





4 Summary of testing procedures







Testing procedures	Description	Result of testing procedure
Trending analysis ¹	<p>High level, five year trending analysis indicates that there is a significant decline in Operating performance across the entire sector. AlburyCity's result though, particularly for the General Fund, is more severe than others within its peer group.</p> <p>Income from continuing operations within AlburyCity's General Fund has increased by 23% across this period. Expenses from continuing operations (excluding depreciation) for the General Fund has increased by 40% over the same time. This constant squeezing of Council's net margin is unsustainable in the longer term.</p> <p>The two main expense components are employee benefits plus materials and services. These represent 48% and 47% respectively of Council's 2025 consolidated result. Council's employee benefits cost alone has increased by 52% over this five year period.</p> <p>Of the 13 other councils included in our analysis of immediate and aspirational regional city peers, AlburyCity was lowest in capital grants for 2025 at \$21m compared to an average of \$63m.</p> <p>Using 2024 OLG population data, this equates to \$350 per capita which is less than half the group's average of \$744.</p>	 Medium
Comparison of Major project business cases	<p>There is not a consistent approach applied to the compilation of business cases for discretionary capital projects. Refer Finding 9.</p>	 High
Regulatory compliance	<p>There were no specific incidents identified of regulatory compliance breaches. Qualitatively though there are significant opportunities to enhance the timeliness and content of financial reporting – particularly for variance reporting.</p>	 Medium





¹ Data derived from signed general purpose financial statements 2019–2025 and Office of Local Government Time series data 2015-2025. Refer Appendix 4.



5 Detailed listing of recommendations





Finding #	Observation	Recommendation	Root cause	Risk rating
1	<p>Tighten up Council's budget setting process</p> <p>Previously within Council's budget setting process there was not optimal interaction between the Finance, PMO teams and budget owners.</p> <p>Time pressures and stretched resources, particularly within the Finance team, resulted in a rushed budget preparation process that lacked the necessary detail to have meaningful subsequent engagement with team and service leaders.</p> <p>A proper understanding of the budget numbers allocated to each budget owner is vital to have appropriate distribution of responsibilities across the organisation.</p> <p>Timely interaction through the financial year is critical to enhance Council's agility, efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>One on one sessions with each team leader is labour intensive.</p>	<p>We recommend that the Finance and PMO teams undertake a series of budget workshops initially with Service leaders and then to the Team leaders within each Service line.</p> <p>The workshops should focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership responsibilities of budget owners; • Confirmation of timelines to apply; • Content required of budget owners; • Support available; • Input on any revised numbers; • Process for locking down budget allocations. <p>Messaging of expectations and enforcement of a disciplined approach needs to a shared responsibility between Finance and Service leaders.</p>		 High
2	<p>Incorporate a budget revision process</p> <p>Council budget forecasts include one year, four year and 10 year long term financial planning.</p> <p>Council is facing considerable challenges, particularly regarding its borrowing program to fund operations and capital works.</p> <p>Council is exploring a range of initiatives to improve its financial performance and reverse a trend of operating deficits.</p> <p>Proposed budget numbers allocated to each team and service leader needs to be robustly assessed, challenged and potentially revised.</p>	<p>We suggest that there needs to be alignment between the different Council planning time horizons.</p> <p>Time needs to be allowed within the budget preparation plan to factor in senior level critiquing of the overall projected consolidated result. Sensitivity analysis around different scenarios should be modelled and assessed.</p> <p>Bottom up and top-down processes need to be performed concurrently.</p>		 High

Finding #	Observation	Recommendation	Root cause	Risk rating
3	<p>Transparency of internal charges</p> <p>There appears to be a recent history of excessive use of centralized management accounting processes by Finance to compensate for a rushed budget setting process.</p> <p>Allocation of staff costs, depreciation and overheads have often caused confusion and disengagement amongst teams leaders.</p> <p>Lack of financial transparency allows discipline to slip and reduces accountability for performance.</p>	<p>As recommended in the Internal Budget Process Review (IBPR) an internal cost allocation methodology that uses historical data and is reflective of the expected actual cost profile should be implemented.</p> <p>The assumptions used as the basis for constructing the budget for each team or service leader should be documented and shared to avoid second guessing.</p>		 High
4	<p>Communicate financial portfolios that match operating responsibilities</p> <p>Responsibility for the financial performance of service lines and teams has progressively been transferred across to the Finance team.</p> <p>There has been progressive disengagement due to delays in issuing financial information and uncertainty re the financial detail within reported numbers.</p> <p>Finance have then taken responsibility for providing commentary on variances that occur without necessarily fully understanding operational details.</p> <p>Lack of awareness of financial overlay of operational responsibilities means that service and team leaders have been partially flying blind. This hinders the efficiency and effectiveness across Council.</p>	<p>As part of the financial reporting, each team and service leader should have awareness of their assigned financial portfolio, its financial position and performance.</p> <p>Progressive monthly updates through the financial year for each portfolio should be issued on a timely basis.</p> <p>Each service and team leader needs to have a high degree of familiarity with the core numbers within the budget for their operational responsibility.</p>		 Medium

Finding #	Observation	Recommendation	Root cause	Risk rating
5	<p>Changes to the performance assessment process</p> <p>Council is exploring opportunities to improve its overall financial performance. A number of cultural changes might be considered to help achieve this outcome.</p> <p>A key focus is a higher degree of accountability for leaders assigned operational and financial responsibilities. Strong contributions to Council's financial performance should be acknowledged and encouraged.</p>	<p>Leaders' formal assessment process should be adjusted to acknowledge financial performance to help embed cultural shifts required across Council.</p> <p>Any changes should support a clear alignment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy • Leadership messaging • Performance assessment <p>This needs to be undertaken in a clear, disciplined and consistent way.</p>		 High
6	<p>Better cohesion between Finance and PMO teams</p> <p>The functionality of Council's finance system and its budgeting process is compromised if these two core teams are not working in sync with each other.</p> <p>The two teams perform vital and complementary functions. They are critical to the integrity and functionality of Council's finance function.</p> <p>Working in silos encourages the use of work arounds to occur. This adds to dysfunction.</p>	<p>The Finance and PMO teams need to be working collaboratively. Steps need to be taken to ensure that there is regular interaction and updates of activity and performance across the full year.</p>		 High
7	<p>Commit to financial reporting deadlines</p> <p>Users of Council's financial information need access to reliable data on a timely basis. A key part of that is monthly reporting of financial performance.</p> <p>Council has had difficulty meeting what should be a routine operational process in closing out its month end reports.</p> <p>Delayed financial information significantly dilutes its value and undermines confidence in the system. It denies the organisation the opportunity for improved accountability and responsiveness.</p>	<p>Steps need to be implemented to allow quicker close off and dissemination of financial information to users across the organisation on a monthly basis.</p> <p>This includes reporting on variances to Council on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>This needs to be inclusive of both the Finance and PMO teams.</p>		 High

Finding #	Observation	Recommendation	Root cause	Risk rating
8	<p>Collaboration across service lines</p> <p>Service lines work in their own space to deliver quality services.</p> <p>Cross-service line interaction exists with good engagement in some areas already, e.g. risk and innovation.</p>	<p>Council needs to continue to explore opportunities to work better as a cohesive unit where appropriate to deliver a better outcome for the community and Council's overall financial performance.</p> <p>A cross-service line, collaborative attitude should be encouraged, reinforced through an appropriate Council performance assessment structure.</p>		 Medium
9	<p>Balanced scorecard to rank capital projects</p> <p>There is inconsistency in how discretionary capital projects are currently assessed.</p> <p>Due to Council's reliance on borrowings, there are significant budget constraints on Council's capacity to fund immediate discretionary capital projects. Scrutiny of each capital project committed to is increasing.</p> <p>There are challenges identifying a single common methodology for rating all competing projects within a local government space.</p> <p>Net present value (NPV) is an indication of a project's capacity for self-funding. NPV works well in a commercial environment.</p> <p>From a local government perspective, Council's 'brownfield projects' often have ongoing commitments to ensure continued services. This commitment, if eliminated through a replacement asset, represents sunk costs saved that would otherwise be necessarily incurred.</p> <p>Projects that are able to generate a financial return to help fund them reduce the burden on Council. Financial summaries should try to be all inclusive of larger cost elements. Interest costs should be taken into consideration in assessing the viability of each project.</p> <p>Net sunk costs relating to ongoing servicing of an existing project should be factored into NPV calcs when Council considers project viability and ordering within the pipeline. Those projects with a standalone positive NPV should be given prioritization.</p> <p>As an example, the Albury Entertainment Centre (AEC) project has a commercially assessed negative NPV - inclusive of borrowing costs. If the project does not proceed there are still immediate and substantial sunk costs that AlburyCity would incur. If the NPV of those costs were factored into the project calculation as a cost saving then the AEC project flips to a positive NPV.</p>	<p>Financial summaries (including NPV calcs) should be utilised for assessing future capital projects. A business case should be all inclusive of lifecycle costs including interest costs and potential sunk costs.</p> <p>Projects with a positive NPV should be prioritised.</p>		 High

Finding #	Observation	Recommendation	Root cause	Risk rating
10	<p>Alignment of strategic priorities</p> <p>Currently there are approximately 150 different strategy documents. These are generally sophisticated, professional looking documents but the volume creates uncertainty of Council's core priorities.</p> <p>There is uncertainty amongst management regarding what is considered key financial priorities. There is a focus on chasing grant funding without necessary consideration of alignment, matching funding commitments and ongoing maintenance considerations.</p> <p>The Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) is the key financial tool for a council's long-term resourcing decisions. The LTFP should be regularly updated to respond to developments in the external environment and the decisions of Council.</p> <p>Financial modelling within an LTFP can assist councils to better understand uncertainty and identify opportunities and threats.</p> <p>Consideration and approval of LTFPs also engages councillors at an early stage regarding financial matters for discussion in their production of their objectives and their service and asset delivery strategy.</p> <p>The IP&R guidance requires councils to give due regard to promoting financial sustainability in their preparations of the LTFP through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progressively eliminating operating deficits • linking revenue with expenditure proposals • ensuring that proposed increases in assets/services are within financial means • ensuring adequate funding of infrastructure maintenance and renewal • using borrowing where appropriate • fairly distributing the rate burden. 	<p>Addressing the fundamentals of a good, disciplined organisation should help prioritise Council activity, refer also to recommendation 9.</p> <p>Reassess the 12 month, four and 10 year plans with active input from Council's senior leadership group. Ensure clear definition of Key financial priorities. Council should have consistent alignment between planning and messaging.</p>		 High

Finding #	Observation	Recommendation	Root cause	Risk rating
11	<p>Utilisation of centralised procurement</p> <p>A significant premium is paid on Council projects relative to regular local commercial contractor rates. This is considered to generally be for risk and regulatory compliance factors associated with local government projects.</p> <p>It is compulsory for AlburyCity to follow State government tendering guidelines.</p>	<p>Council's centralised procurement services should be consistently and uniformly used to ensure regulatory compliance. This should also allow concentrated efforts to explore legitimate but viable ways of better managing local government risk for contractors to reduce the premium factored into Council tenders.</p> <p>A more positive and engaging relationship between those service lines undertaking capital construction and Council's procurement department should be encouraged and supported, for Council's overall benefit.</p> <p>Procurement needs to ensure it can adequately balance out qualitative and financial considerations within their tender requests. They also should be responsive to the needs of any construction projects and activities to ensure ongoing value.</p>		 High
12	<p>Innovative and entrepreneurial attitude</p> <p>Over recent several years with Covid, overseas disruptions and their associated impacts, there have been significant increases in the cost of local government sector raw materials and labour.</p> <p>Without better cost management, AlburyCity joins those counterparts who are unable to maintain a sustainable relationship between cost and revenue increases. This puts Council at risk of delivering consistent deficits from continuing operations – even prior to any recognition of depreciation expense.</p> <p>This leaves no viable surplus within the General Fund to cover long term financial obligations.</p>	<p>An innovative and entrepreneurial attitude, within the confines of Council's local government constraints will need to be supported and encouraged. Behaviour of this nature already exists in pockets within Council.</p> <p>Champions who exemplify desired and appropriate behaviour should be identified, encouraged and replicated. Such behaviour starts with an 'ownership attitude' of not just their operational portfolio responsibilities but overlaid by financial portfolio accountability.</p> <p>This may require a whole of Council cultural shift and emphasis by leaders. It needs a balanced consideration, by Team and Service leaders, of both operational and capital aspects.</p>		 High