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AGENDA

Hearing of Submissions Committee Meeting to be held at Darebin Civic Centre, 350 High Street Preston on Monday, 16 June 2025 at 6:30pm.

This meeting will be a scheduled hybrid meeting, at which both councillors and members of the public may participate either in person or virtually.

This meeting will also be livestreamed and may be accessed from Council's website www.darebin.vic.gov.au

Persons wishing to observe the meeting in person are required to register by 12pm on the day of the meeting.

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Agenda

1. MEMBERSHIP

Cr. Kristine Olaris OAM (Mayor)
Cr. Emily Dimitriadis (Deputy Mayor)
Cr. Matt Arturi
Cr. Connie Boglis OAM
Cr. Ruth Jelley
Cr. Julie O'Brien
Cr. Alexandra Sangster
Cr. Vasilios Tsalkos

2. APOLOGIES

3. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

4. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS HEARING OF SUBMISSIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Recommendation

That the Minutes of the Hearing of Submissions Committee Meeting held on 12 May 2025 be confirmed as a correct record of business transacted.

5. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

5.1 HEARING OF SUBMISISONS: DRAFT BUDGET & DRAFT OUR DAREBIN PLAN

Author: Coordinator Management Accountant

Reviewed By: General Manager Infrastructure, Operations & Finance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 12 May 2025, Council resolved the following documents be made available for community exhibition and feedback for a three-week period from 14 May to 3 June 2025:

- Draft 2025-26 budget (incorporating the 4-year financial outlook),
- Draft 10-year Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) 2026-2035,
- Draft 4-year Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29,
- Draft 10-year Asset Management Plan 2026-2035,
- Draft Our Darebin Plan 2025-29,
- Draft Our Annual Action Plan 2025-26,
- Declaration of the public waste service charge,
- Declaration of the service charge for kerbside collection services,
- Granting of the three concessions aligned to equity principles to support waste cost recovery charges,
- Granting of a Council Pensioner Rebate within general rates, aligned to equity principles, for pensioners who are not eligible for the Kerbside Waste Collection Charge Pensioner Concession; and
- Granting of a 100% concession for general rates for all properties owned or managed by Aboriginal Housing Victoria as a 'registered agency', relating to the provision of affordable housing.

Council placed the draft budget & associated documents on public display, with any person requesting to be heard in support of their written submission to be heard by Council's Hearing of Submissions Committee at 6.30pm on 16 June 2025.

Council is required to adopt a Budget each financial year and will consider adoption of the budget on 30 June 2025, including considering all submissions.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

- (1) Notes the submissions received from the community (**confidential Appendix A**)
- (2) Thanks all submitters and presenters for addressing the Committee in support of their budget submission.

- (3) Refers all submissions for further consideration to the Special Council meeting to be held on 30 June 2025 as part of Council's deliberations in adopting the Budget 2025-26, Our Darebin Plan 2025-29 and associated matters.
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BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION

Previous Council Resolution

At its special meeting held on 12 May 2025, Council resolved (as a high level summary):

'That Council:

- (1) *Endorse the following draft 2025-26 Budget Documents to proceed to community exhibition:*
 - (1) *the draft 2025-26 Budget (incorporating the 4-year Budget) (**Appendix A**) and associated fees and charges (**Appendix B**), Capital Works Program (**Appendix C**) and Operating Projects (**Appendix D**), to resource the Our Darebin Plan 2025-29 and 2025-26 Council Plan Action Plan,*
 - (2) *the draft 10-Year Long Term Financial Plan 2026-2035 (**Appendix E**).*
 - (3) *the draft revised Revenue and Rating Plan 2026-2029 (**Appendix F**).*
 - (4) *the draft 10-Year Asset Plan (**Appendix G**).*
- (2) *Endorses the draft Our Darebin Plan 2025-29 (Appendix A) and the draft Our Annual Action Plan 2025-26 (Appendix B) to proceed to community exhibition.*

It should be noted that all amendments to the draft documents resolved by Council at its 12 May 2025 Special Council meeting, were made to the respective documents via either addendums or physical updates prior to releasing them on community exhibition.

ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN

Strategic Direction 1: Vibrant, Respectful and Connected

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

Strategic Direction 3: Climate, Green and Sustainable

Strategic Direction 4 Responsible, Transparent and Responsive

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

4.1 We will ensure balanced and responsible financial decision making that meets the needs of our community now and into the future

DISCUSSION

CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES

Financial Management

The draft four-year budget has been prepared to ensure that the overall budget each year is financially sustainable in the long run and Council operates within its means. To achieve this, the draft budget incorporates significant savings targets. To operationalize these targets, robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms are necessary, especially regarding unplanned cost pressures.

Community Engagement

The process of developing the draft budget documents included substantial community consultation including consultation with stakeholders which included expert Committee members, and the Darebin community through deliberative engagement panels as noted by the Council in its meeting on 24 February 2025.

Summary of communication channels utilised for 'exhibition' of the draft budget

Engagement/ Communications Activity	Number of participants/ people engaged	Target group	Demographic information
Feedback Survey	269 submissions received in total 248 via online Have Your Say page 21 via email	Darebin City Council Residential/commercial residents	Darebin community members who live, work, own a business, study and visit our municipality
Have Your Say Page	2,495 visits by 1,605 visitors	Darebin City Council Residential/commercial residents	Darebin community members who live, work, own a business, study and visit our municipality
Printed Posters	50 x posters distributed to customer service locations, libraries, Council venues and community hubs	Darebin City Council Residential/commercial residents	Darebin community members
Printed postcards	400 postcards distributed via feedback stations, engagement pop-ups, Council venues and community hubs	Darebin City Council Residential/commercial residents	Darebin community members
Fact Sheets	Printed fact sheets about Council Plan and Budget	Darebin City Council Residential/commercial residents	Darebin community members
Plain English Fact Sheet	Printed fact sheet utilising plain English language	Darebin residents requiring simpler language for accessibility	
CALD advertising	Adverts in Italian, Greek, Vietnamese and Chinese language newspapers Adverts on 3KND radio	Darebin residents who primarily speak Italian, Greek, Vietnamese or Chinese. Aboriginal community members	

E-Newsletters	June editions e-newsletters sent to over 8000 Your Darebin recipients. Included in 4 other e-newsletters	Darebin City Council Residential/commercial residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General community members • Families • Older residents • Business owners • Residents with an interest in sustainability
Emails	Emails sent to community groups and advisory committees who contributed to stage one engagement. Email sent to Our Darebin Community Panel members	Community Groups, Advisory Committees, Our Darebin Community Panel Members	
Social Media Posts	2 x Instagram & Facebook posts featuring Mayor's video. 2 x stories on Facebook 2x stories on Instagram	Darebin City Council Residential/commercial residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members who follow DCC social media accounts • People who live in Darebin (paid ad)

Promotion to community of 'exhibition' of the budget was done via:

- Your Say Darebin page and email to Your Say subscribers
- Darebin City Council website home page banner and Budget page
- Video for social media
- Facebook, Instagram, organic posts
- LinkedIn
- Article in e-newsletters:
 - *Your Darebin*
 - *Sustainable Darebin*
 - *What's on for Families*
 - *East Preston Community Centre news*
 - *Disability Access and Inclusion*
 - *What's on for Older Active Darebin*
 - *Darebin Business Update*
- Website news item
- Communication to advisory groups
- Poster, postcard, fact sheets
- Hard copy information will be distributed to customer service centre, libraries, community centres and neighbourhood houses.

The community feedback received has been organised into themes, and a breakdown of this categorisation is presented below.

Theme	No. of submissions
Environment, Parks & Sustainability	194
Leisure, Recreation & Community Services	25
Other General Matters	24
Sustainable Transport	13
Supporting Business/Community Grants	5
Culture, Equity & Inclusion	3
City Planning, Approvals & Design	3
Buildings & Facility Management	2
Totals	269

Common feedback raised in community submissions are as follows:

Support for work proposed in Draft Budget

- Community support for the ***Pitcher Park Sportsground Renovation*** capital works project included in the 2025/26 draft budget. 81 submitters expressed support.
- Community support for the ***Johnson Park – Irrigation & Turf Renewal*** capital works project included in the 2025/26 draft budget. 46 submitters expressed support.
- Community support for the ***Cranross tennis Court Resurface*** capital works project included in the 2025/26 draft budget. 10 submitters expressed support.

Feedback seeking prioritisation of work not currently in Draft Budget, or seeking increases to the level of funding

- Community concerns relating to level of funding allocated in the draft budget to deliver Council's ***Climate Emergency Plan***. 37 submitters expressed concerns.
- Community support for ***Northcote tennis Court Improvements*** to be prioritized into the budget. 10 submitters expressed support.

Other common feedback

- Community concerns relating to Council Plan Action Plan item 3.2.5.3 – ***Waive Council's permit fees and provide half-day traffic controllers to support up to 20 community street parties***. Concerns related to administrative barriers to organising street parties and potential additional costs. 21 submitters expressed concerns.

Detailed feedback received from the community, is available in confidential **Appendix A**. The methodology for promoting and receiving submissions allowed everyone an opportunity to participate, however it was not a representative method and cannot be used to make conclusions about views of the 'whole community'.

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;
- the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;

- (g) the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;
- (h) regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making;
- (i) the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act;

Strategic Planning Principles

- (a) an integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting is to be adopted;

Service Performance Principles

- (a) services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community;

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

The strategic documents are designed to provide resources to:

- implement the draft Our Darebin Plan which sets out Council's strategic directions and key initiatives in regard to environmental sustainability.
- deliver services through many of which Council has integrated environmental sustainability considerations and practices including climate mitigation and resilience work.
- fulfill Council's duties and functions relating to environmental sustainability including under the Planning and Environment Act, the Water Act, the Local Government Act, the Environment Protection Act and the Building Act amongst others.

Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:

The strategic documents are designed to provide resources to:

- implement the draft Our Darebin Plan which sets out Council's strategic directions and key initiatives in regard to Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights.
- deliver services through many of which Council has integrated equity and inclusion considerations.
- fulfill Council's duties and functions relating to various equity and human rights considerations in legislation.

Economic Development and Cultural Considerations

The strategic documents are designed to provide resources to implement the draft Our Darebin Plan which sets out Council's strategic directions and key initiatives in regard to economic development and cultural considerations.

This draft budget proposes to continue a concession for general rates for all properties owned or managed by Aboriginal Housing Victoria as a 'registered agency', relating to the provision of affordable housing, in accordance with s169 (1d) of the Local Government Act 1989, and the exemption from general rates for properties owned or managed by Aboriginal Housing Victoria for charitable purposes, excluding those used for affordable housing.

Operational Impacts

The strategic documents are intended to fund all of Council's operations and implementation of the Council Plan. Price increases, well beyond revenue growth, mean that Council's budget does not fund as many operational activities as it used to.

To remain financially sustainable, this draft budget and draft Long Term Financial Plan incorporate savings targets that must be achieved each year through operational changes – either securing additional revenue or reducing costs. These targets are modest considering Council's overall budget (\$3.2M in 2025-26), however they will require operational changes, and these are expected to result in changes or adjustments to services.

Legal and Risk Implications

Council has an obligation to meet various requirements in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020 as they apply to the budget, Long Term Financial Plan and Council Plan*, and *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 which specifically relates to the Council Plan*.

The operational risks of our spending decisions are a key element in the decision-making process. Full consideration will be given to the risk impacts.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

- **16 June 2025 Hearing of Submissions**
- **30 June 2025 Council Meeting:** Adoption of the 2025/26 budget and the other associated documents.

At the Special Council meeting scheduled for 30 June 2025, Council will consider for adoption the:

- Draft 2025-26 budget (incorporating the 4-year financial outlook),
- Draft 10-year Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) 2026-2035,
- Draft 4-year Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29,
- Draft 10-year Asset Management Plan 2026-2035,
- Draft Our Darebin Plan 2025-29,
- Draft Our Annual Action Plan 2025-26,

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Community Vision 2041
- Public Transparency Policy
- Darebin Community Engagement Policy
- Toward Equality Framework

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*

Attachments

- Community Feedback with Management Responses (**Appendix A**) Confidential - enclosed under separate cover
- 16 June 25 HoS Speaker List (**Appendix B**) Confidential - enclosed under separate cover

DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

6. CLOSE OF MEETING