SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Council Meeting Agenda

Wednesday 15 July 2026

Council Chambers, Leongatha
Commencing at 2:00 PM

South Gippsland
Shire Council

OUR COUNCIL PLAN VISION STATEMENT

Our South Gippsland community is connected, resilient and empowered. We value our unique townships, our rural and coastal landscapes, while balancing growth.

A prosperous region, we draw strength from: visitor experience, emerging and creative industries, our agricultural sector and natural environment. We lead with purpose, are forward thinking, and deliver consolidated and sustainable services for our community.

The Council Agenda relates to the following Strategic Objectives of the Council Plan 2025-2029.

Leading with Integrity

Developing a Sustainable Future

Empowering Communities

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Notice is hereby given that Council Meeting of the
South Gippsland Shire Council will be held on Wednesday 15 July 2026
in the Council Chambers, Leongatha, commencing at 2:00pm

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Lucas Gardiner
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Privacy Statement

Council is required to keep minutes of each Council meeting. The minutes contain details of proceedings which may include personal information about community members disclosed as part of presentations, submissions and questions. The minutes of Council meetings are a public record and can be inspected by members of the public.

1. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1.1. LIVE-STREAMING COUNCIL MEETING DISCLAIMER

This Council Meeting is being streamed live, recorded and published in accordance with Council's *Live Streaming in Council Meetings Policy*.

Access to the live stream through Council's Internet is an option to view the 'open' component of a Council Meeting. Link to the Live Stream on Council's website: Live Streaming | Live Streaming | South Gippsland Shire Council

The Chair and/or the CEO have the discretion and authority at any time to direct the termination or interruption of live streaming. Such direction will only be given in exceptional circumstances where deemed relevant. Circumstances may include instances where the content of debate is considered misleading, defamatory or potentially inappropriate to be published.

Today's Meeting is being streamed live as well as recorded and published on Council's website.

Thank you

1.2. WELCOME TO THE COUNCIL MEETING

Public Questions
In accordance with Council's *Governance Rules, clause 57.6 the submission of agenda public questions has now closed. Questions must be received by Council,* 24 hours prior to the commencement of the Council Meeting. Questions received within 24 hours of the commencement of the Meeting will be considered at the next Council Meeting.

1.3. OPENING PRAYER

As we gather here from diverse backgrounds and beliefs, may we hold privilege with good care and trust. As we deliberate and discuss, may we be wise in our discernment, fair in our decisions and visionary in our planning. May we be guided by our common goal of a strong and united South Gippsland.

1.4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

We acknowledge the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

1.5. APOLOGIES

1.6. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the South Gippsland Shire Council Meeting held on 17 June 2026 in the Council Chambers, Leongatha be confirmed.

1.7. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST FOR COUNCILLORS

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), Division 2 sets out the requirements relating to declaring a Conflict of Interest. Disclosure of a conflict of interest in respect of a matter to be considered at a Council Meeting is required under section 130(1)(a) and specifically applies to a relevant person being a Councillor, member of a delegated committee who is not a Councillor and a member of Council staff.

Council's *Governance Rules, Chapter 5 – Clause 2 - Disclosure of a Conflict of Interest at a Council Meeting* sets out the prescribed manner required to disclose a conflict of interest at South Gippsland Shire Council.

Council's *Governance Rules* require a Councillor and/or staff member who has a conflict of interest in a matter being considered at a Council Meeting to announce before the matter is considered and disclose this in a written notice to the Chief Executive Officer. The details included in the disclosure, explain the nature of the conflict of interest, whether it is classified as general or material (s.127 and s.128), the name of the relevant person(s) and their relationship to them.

Failure to comply with disclosures of conflict of interest (s.130) may be subject to penalty points and/or other disciplinary measures depending on the nature of the conflict.

The *Local Government Act 2020* can be accessed from the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary documents website at www.legislation.vic.gov.au.

Council's *Governance Rules* can be accessed from Council's Policies webpage.

Councillor Scott Rae declared a general Conflict of Interest for Confidential Agenda Item 9.2 PRIVATE COMMERCIAL INFORMATION - Award Contract CON/459 – Microsoft Licensing, as he shared previous employment with a listed tenderer.

1.8. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST FOR STAFF

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), Division 2 sets out the requirements relating to declaring a Conflict of Interest. Disclosure of a conflict of interest in respect of a matter to be considered at a Council Meeting is required under section 130(1)(a) and specifically applies to a relevant person being a Councillor, member of a delegated committee who is not a Councillor and a member of Council staff.

Council's *Governance Rules, Chapter 5, clause 6, 7 and 8* sets the prescribed manner required for staff to disclose a conflict of interest when:

- Preparing Reports for Meetings
- Exercise of Delegated Power
- Exercise of a Statutory Function

Council staff must immediately upon becoming aware of a conflict of interest provide a written notice to the Chief Executive Officer disclosing the conflict of interest, explain the nature of the conflict and how it will be managed. Upon becoming aware and declaring a conflict of interest, a staff member may not exercise a power or perform a function in the matter. All prepared reports will record that staff member(s) have considered a conflict of interest and include if any, the details of a disclosure.

Failure to comply with disclosures of conflict of interest (s.130) may be subject to penalty points and/or other disciplinary measures depending on the nature of the conflict.

The *Local Government Act 2020* can be accessed from the Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary documents website at www.legislation.vic.gov.au.

Council's *Governance Rules* can be accessed from Council's Policies webpage.

2. AGENDA PUBLIC QUESTIONS

2.1. PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS

Petitions and Joint Letters are written requests that have been signed by a number of community members. According to the *Governance Rules Division 9 - clause 58 – Petitions and Joint Letters*, members of the community may submit a valid petition or joint letter to a Councillor or to Council addressed to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Councillor presenting the petition or joint letter is responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with the contents and purpose of the petition or joint letter and that it does not contain language disrespectful to Council.

The requirements of the lead petitioner are detailed in the *Governance Rules*, available on Council's website.

Council received one petition for consideration, relating to Traffic Safety Upgrades at Loch Primary School. There were 212 signatures.

The prayer of the petition is set out below:

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that Council urgently address the safety of vulnerable road users surrounding Loch Primary School by securing dedicated external infrastructure funding. Specifically, we request Council:

1. *Formally submit an application to the State Government's 2026 TAC Local Government Grant Program (LGGP) on our community's behalf; and*
2. *Utilise these grant funds to design and immediately implement safety measures, including but not limited to, installing flashing school zone speed signs and constructing formal, structured parking bays. These bays should be complete with safe walkway clearances and steps that connect directly to the existing walk path, ensuring safe access for all pedestrians."*

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **Receives and notes the petition relating to traffic safety upgrades at Loch Primary School (Confidential Attachment [10.1.1]);**
2. **Notes an officer report is presented to Council no later than 19 August 2026 Council Meeting, detailing the matters raised and potential courses of action; and**
3. **Writes to the Lead Petitioner to thank them for bringing the petition to Council and to advise them of the resolution and timeframe.**

2.2. ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS AGENDA PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to previous questions taken on notice at a former Council Meeting, may be included in the Minutes of this Meeting or alternatively responded to as a customer request inline with Council's *Customer Service Charter* and *Governance Rules*, available on Council's website.

Background material submitted with a question will not be recorded in the Council Meeting minutes.

Council received one question submitted by Mr Amor at the 20 May 2026 Council Meeting related to Agenda Item 5.2 – Organisational Performance Report – July 2025 to March 2026.

Question:

Its budget capital works is behind by $5 Million dollars due by contractors. Is this $5 Million of capital works behind in last budget or budget prior to this meeting?

Agenda Item 5.2 - Organisational Performance Report – July 2025 to March 2026 at the 20 May 2026 Meeting, related to Council's performance in the 2025/26 financial year up to 31 March 2026. Therefore, the capital works expenditure and forecast figures detailed in the report, and attachments, are for the period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026.

As outlined in the report: Capital Works expenditure to 31 March 2026 of $13.5 million is behind the forecast of $18.3 million. This is attributable to timing differences across several projects primarily due to contractor availability, material supply constraints, permitting processes and community consultation timelines.

Council is committed to delivering the projects in the Capital Works Program. When project timelines are adjusted, budget allocations may be carried forward into the next financial year. This will be assessed and determined at the conclusion of this 2025/26 financial year.

2.3. SUBMITTED AGENDA PUBLIC QUESTIONS

All community member questions for Council Meetings are to be written and submitted 24 hours prior to the commencement of a Council Meeting to allow time for a response to be prepared. Reasonable efforts will be made to answer pre-submitted questions at the Meeting. Any question received after the closing time of 24 hours prior to the commencement of a Council Meeting, will be held over to the next scheduled Council Meeting.

When further time is required to prepare an answer, questions may be taken-on-notice and responses will be included in the minutes of the next Council Meeting or alternatively responded to as a customer request in line with Council's *Customer Service Charter* and *Governance Rules,* available on Council's website.

At the Meeting, the person submitting the question(s) may have the option to read out their question(s) and will be recorded in the minutes. Questions may not be allowed where the question(s) is deemed to be:

- is not relevant to any Council agenda topic
- relates to a matter outside the duties, functions and powers of Council;
- is defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial or objectionable in language or substance;
- deals with a subject matter already publicly answered; or is repetitious or vexatious questions from the same *Questioner*;
- is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff;
- relates to personnel matters; personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer;
- industrial matters; contractual matters; proposed developments; legal advice; law enforcement matters; or
- relates to confidential information as defined under the Act; or
- relates to matters affecting the security of Council property;
- is illegible, vague, not make sense or not be a question;
- relates to council business information and operational matters not specific to Council meeting agenda topics; and/or
- relates to any other matter which Council considers would prejudice Council or any person

A person may submit up to three (3) questions, this includes a combined total of three (3) questions for related parties or groups. The total word count of all questions submitted is to be 200 words or fewer. Background material submitted with a question will not be read out or recorded in the Council Meeting minutes.

The CEO, in consultation with the Mayor, may decide not to refer a question to a Council Meeting if there is a more appropriate way to respond. Questions and responses may be read out by the Chair or a nominated Councillor or Council staff.

Public question time in the agenda will not exceed 15 minutes in duration, unless extended by a further 15 minutes by a resolution of Council.

3. NOTICES OF MOTION AND/OR RESCISSION

3.0. NIL

4. URGENT BUSINESS

Normally no motion should be debated by Councillors unless the matter is already included as an item on the Agenda. However, in some circumstances it is possible to raise urgent motions.

Council's *Governance Rules 2020*, *clause 23 - Urgent Business*, allows for where a situation has not been provided for under the *Governance Rules*, the Council may determine the matter by resolution. Established practice has provided for urgent motions to be raised at Council provided the matter cannot be dealt with at the next Council Meeting or by Officers under delegation.

It is necessary for the Councillor wishing to raise a matter of urgent business to raise a motion similar to the following:

'That consideration of (the issue) be dealt with as a matter of urgent business and Councillor….be allowed a 'short period' to indicate the reason(s) why the matter should be considered as a matter of urgent business.' If the Chairperson accepts the motion as meeting the urgent business criteria, normal meeting procedures in Council's *Governance Rules 2020,* clause 23 will apply.

If the motion to accept the item as a matter of urgent business is passed by Council, the motion relating to the specific issue can then be put and debated in the normal way.

5. COUNCIL REPORTS

5.1. STATUTORY PROCEDURES - PROPERTY SALES - 4-6 POWER STREET, FOSTER - FOLLOWING COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Directorate:	Infrastructure Sustainability
Department:	Infrastructure Planning

Council Plan
Theme - Developing a Sustainable Future

Council manages a portfolio of land for community benefit and strategic uses.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide Council an update on the property at 4-6 Power Street, Foster. A public consultation period was conducted from 20 April 2026 to 20 May 2026 to seek feedback on the proposal to place the property on the open public market for sale, with no community submissions received.

As a result, this report recommends placing the property on the open public market for sale.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **Notes that a public consultation period was conducted from 20 April 2026 to 20 May 2026 to seek feedback on the proposal to place the property on the open public market, and that no community submissions were received;**

2. **Authorises that, in accordance with s.114 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the land known as 4–6 Power Street, Foster, and part of 5 Simpson Street, Foster - described in Certificates of Title Volume 12549 Folio 485, Volume 9943 Folio 692, Volume 9851 Folio 370, Volume 10852 Folio 160 and Volume 10852 Folio 159, with a combined area of approximately 4,152m², be placed on the open public market for sale; and**

3. **Authorises the Chief Executive Officer, or authorised delegate, to execute the land sale and all associated documentation, with the net proceeds from the sale to be transferred to the Asset Development Reserve.**

REPORT

Council has identified the following land as no longer required for Council or community use and resolved on 15 April 2026 to commence statutory procedures, in accordance with s.114 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, to sell:

> *4–6 Power Street, Foster, and part of 5 Simpson Street, Foster, being the land described in Certificates of Title Volume 12549 Folio 485, Volume 9943 Folio 692, Volume 9851 Folio 370, Volume 10852 Folio 160 and Volume 10852 Folio 159, comprising an area of approximately 4,152m².*

The land had previously been offered for lease, but no viable lease offers were accepted. A community consultation process on the proposed sale was recently undertaken, and no submissions were received.

A valuation must be obtained no more than six-months prior to the sale. Council intends to sell the land by public sale for not less than the valuation amount received.

CONSULTATION / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council placed a public notice calling for submissions to the proposed sale of 4-6 Power Street, Foster and part 5 Simpson Street, Foster in the local newspaper Sentinel Times edition commencing 20 April 2026. Submissions closed 5:00PM on Wednesday 20 May 2026.

There were no submissions received.

RESOURCES / FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Once the property is sold, Council will receive the income from the sale and reduced maintenance liabilities, with the net proceeds from the sale to be transferred into the Asset Development Reserve.

STAFF DISCLOSURE

All officers involved in the preparation of this report have considered and determined that they do not have a conflict of interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Council's Good Governance Framework

Pillar 3. Decision Making

Council Policy / Strategy / Plans

Documents are available on Council's website at the following LINK.

Nil

Legislative Provisions

Local Government Act 2020

Regional, State and National Plan and Policies

Nil

5.2. POLICY REVIEW: DRAFT PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY POLICY (C75), FRAUD AND CORRUPT CONDUCT POLICY (C19) AND COUNCILLOR GIFTS BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY (C01)

Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity
Department:	Governance and Integrity

Council Plan
Theme - Leading with Integrity

A review of a suite of governance policies to ensure Councils commitment to ensuring good governance, transparency and legislative compliance. To provide clear guidance to Councillors and employees on matters such as fraud and corruption, gift declarations and ensuring the community is supported through Council's Public Transparency Policy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to consider the endorsement of the *Draft Public Transparency Policy* (*C75*), *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)* and the *Councillor Gifts Benefits and Hospitality Policy (C01)*.

A community consultation period is proposed from 16 July 2026 to 12 August 2026 to seek feedback on the *Draft Public Transparency Policy (C75)*.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **Adopts the *Draft Public Transparency Policy (C75*) (Attachment [5.2.1]) for a period of community consultation from 16 July 2026 to 12 August 2026, in accordance with Council's *Community Engagement Strategy* and *Community Engagement Policy (C06)*;**

2. **Adopts the *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)* (Attachment [5.2.2]) and *Councillor Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy (C01)* (Attachment [5.2.3]); and**

3. **Notes the Councillor's Gifts and Benefits Register will be published and updated on a six-monthly basis on Council's website by 31 July 2026 and will include information for the current term of Council, in line with Council's *Councillor Gifts Benefits and Hospitality Policy (C01)* (Attachment [5.2.3]).**

REPORT

Draft Public Transparency Policy (C75)

The *Public Transparency Policy (C75)* **(Attachment [5.2.1]**) is required to be adopted under s.57 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and must give effect to the *Public Transparency Principles* outlined in s.58 of the Act. The Policy is to demonstrate that council information and decision-making processes must be publicly available, understandable, and accessible, unless the information is deemed confidential or contrary to the public interest.

This Policy has been reviewed and consolidated. A summary of changes is below:

- removed duplication and updated legislative references such as the *Model Councillor Code of Conduct*.
- Updated formatting to align with current policy template.
- Updated to remove detailed operational instructions and now focuses on high-level principles and governance intent.
- Shifted from "how to do transparency to "principles guiding transparency".
- Reduced the length of the Policy from 14 to five pages. The new version is a condensed, principles-based policy rather than a procedural manual.

The legislation addressed through this Policy include the Acts and the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act)*. Many other Acts are also relevant and applicable. The Policy outlines that community members are encouraged to refer to the *FOI Act Part II Statement* when seeking information from Council.

This Policy as per the Act is classified as a strategic governance policy and therefore, it is recommended to go out to community consultation for a four-week period in accordance with Council's *Community Engagement Strategy* and *Community Engagement Policy (C06)*.

A community consultation period is proposed from 16 July 2026 to 12 August 2026 to seek feedback on the *Draft Public Transparency Policy (C75)* and a future report will be presented at the 16 September 2026 Council Meeting for final endorsement of the Policy.

Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)

The *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)* (**Attachment [5.2.2]**) formalises Council's commitment to ensuring that fraudulent and corrupt behaviour within or against Council is not tolerated. This has been developed to comply with Council's good governance and conduct obligations in line with various legislation, principally the *Local Government Act 2020* and the best practice of the *Australian Standard: AS 8001:2021 – Fraud and Corruption Control (Australian Standards)*.

This Policy has been reviewed and consolidated. A summary of changes is below:

- Updated formatting to align with current policy template.
- Updated information within the Policy to reference and align with Fraud and Corruption Control AS 8001:2021.
- Reduce the length of the Policy from ten to eight pages by summarising information in dot points.

This Policy continues a “zero tolerance” approach. The *Australian Standards,* Acts and Regulations sets out Council’s plans to prevent, detect and respond to incidents of fraud and corruption by establishing robust internal controls and embedding a strong culture of ethical conduct throughout the organisation.

Councillor Gifts Benefits and Hospitality Policy (CO1)

The *Councillor, Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy (C01)* (**Attachment [5.2.3]**) has been updated to require the Councillor Gifts and Benefits Register (Register) be published on Council’s website every six-months to promote open transparency. This recommendation is following an internal audit report into Fraud Management and Prevention conducted in November 2024 for the Audit and Risk Committee.

A new provision (clauses 3.3 and 3.4) has been added to this Policy for a public Register of a summary of gifts and benefits declared by Councillors to be added to Council’s website.

The Register is to be updated every six-months and will include information for the duration of each current Council term. At the conclusion of each Council term, the Register will be removed from the website.

CONSULTATION / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Consultation has been undertaken with Council’s Audit and Risk Committee for all three policies and community consultation for a period of four weeks is recommended by Council officers for the *Draft Public Transparency Policy (C75)***.**

RESOURCES / FINANCIAL VIABILITY

There are no resource or financial implications in the revision of these Policies.

RISKS

There are no risk implications in the revision of these Policies.

STAFF DISCLOSURE

All officers involved in the preparation of this report have considered and determined that they do not have a conflict of interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachments are available on Council’s website at the following LINK.

1. Draft Public Transparency Policy (C75) - 15 July 2026 Council Meeting [**5.2.1** - 5 pages]
2. Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19) - 15 July 2026 Council Meeting [**5.2.2** - 8 pages]

3. Councillor Acceptance of Gifts Benefits and Hospitality Policy (C01) - 15 July 2026 Council Meeting [**5.2.3** - 13 pages]

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Council's Good Governance Framework

Pillar 4. Structure, Systems & Policies

Council Policy / Strategy / Plans

Documents are available on Council's website at the following LINK.

Audit and Risk Committee Charter (C08)
Councillor Gifts Benefits and Hospitality Policy (CO1)
Councillor Support and Expenditure Policy (C51)
Community Engagement Policy (C06)
Community Engagement Strategy
Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)
Governance Rules (C82)
Information Privacy Policy (Website Privacy Statement) (C22)
Local Government Model Councillor Code of Conduct
Public Transparency Policy (C75)

Legislative Provisions

Australian Standard: AS 8001:2021 – Fraud and Corruption Control (Australian Standards)
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
Crimes Act 1958
Freedom of Information Act 1982
Gender Equality Act 2020
Local Government Act 2020
Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020

Regional, State and National Plan and Policies

Nil

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL POLICY

DRAFT PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY POLICY			
Policy No.	C75	Adoption Date:	Council Meeting <Date>
Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity	Department:	Governance and Integrity
Revision Date:	<Date> 2030		

GOOD GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK – OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES	
Supporting Pillar:	Pillar 4. Structure, Systems & Policies
Link to Pillar:	The Public Transparency Policy provides guidance in the management and release of Council information in accordance with various pieces of legislation, while protecting the rights of individuals and enabling the effective working of government.

1. PURPOSE

1.1. The purpose of the *Public Transparency Policy (C75)* (the Policy) is to:

1.1.1. Support Council in its ongoing commitment to good governance and the importance of open processes and information; and

1.1.2. Provide guidance in the management and release of Council information in accordance with legislation, while protecting the rights of individuals and enabling the effective working of government.

1.2. Council must adopt and maintain a Public Transparency Policy under s.57 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act). This Policy gives effect to the Public Transparency Principles outlined in s.58 of *the Act*.

2. SCOPE

2.1. The scope of this Policy applies to Councillors and Council employees, including documents and information Council holds.

2.2. The scope of this Policy does not apply to documents, and information Council does not hold.

3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

3.1. This Policy has been developed to consider what Council and community information will be made publicly accessible at any time, available through inspection, or upon request while limiting the rights of access to some forms of information that may not be in the public's best interest to release, or that may only be released in full or part under the Freedom of Information Act 1982.

3.2. Council information must be publicly available unless:

3.2.1. The information is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act; or

3.2.2. Public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.

3.3. Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the community.

3.4. Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

3.5. Council will make information available as far as reasonably practicable, consistent with the Public Transparency Principles, and balanced against operational workload and available resources for responding to requests or proactively releasing information.

Council Information

3.6. A list of available categories of information Council holds is provided in the *Freedom of Information Part II Statement* published in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Part II Statement).

3.7. Part II of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* requires government agencies and local councils to publish a number of statements designed to assist members of the public in accessing the information it holds.

3.8. Community members are encouraged to refer to the *FOI Part II Statement* when seeking information from Council. It is accessible on Council's website www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au.

3.9. In some instances, the right of access to some documents may be refused or limited by exemptions in the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Public Available Information

3.10. A wide range of Council information is available for public access or inspection. Outlined below are various types of information that are readily accessible to the public.

3.11. Council maintains a website that provides access to a vast range and number of documents and Council information that is available for public access or inspection. The following list includes documents that are required to be available on Council's website, however this is not a complete list and additional documents (both mandatory and non-mandatory) to these documents are also accessible. Refer to Council's *FOI Part II Statement* for further information.

3.11.1. Annual Reports

3.11.2. Quarterly Organisational Performance Reports

3.11.3. Minutes of Council Meetings

3.11.4. Model Councillor Code of Conduct

3.11.5. Summary of Personal Interest Returns

3.11.6. General Local Law 2024

3.12. Examples of where Council proactively makes Council information available includes:

3.12.1. Monthly summaries of Strategic Briefings for Councillors via Council Meetings;

3.12.2. Monthly summary of Documents Sealed, Contracts Varied, Award or Extended by the CEO via Council Meetings;

3.12.3. Awarded Contract (above public tender threshold) details on Council's website; and

3.12.4. Summaries of various registers such as: Councillor and Employee Gifts and Benefits and Interstate and Overseas Travel.

Council Information Request

3.13. The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* gives individuals the right to request access to documents that Council holds, that are not already publicly available, or available for a fee or charge.

3.14. Information on how to lodge a Freedom of Information request can be found on Council's website.

3.15. In some instances, the right of access to some documents may be refused or limited by exemptions in the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Decision Making

3.16. Council decisions are made in open and closed sessions of Council Meetings. Except in exceptional circumstances members of the public are able to attend open Council Meetings to observe the debate and resolutions made by Council. A livestream of the open Council Meetings is available through the website for those unable to attend in person.

3.17. Open Agendas and Minutes of Council Meetings are available on the website. Archives of the livestreams can be access on the website following the meeting. Council will meet the requirement of a minimum of 12 months of publishing Council Meeting Minutes on Council's website.

3.18. Council will occasionally have closed sessions of Council Meetings to consider reports and/or information that are deemed confidential in accordance with s.66 of the Act. Whenever possible, Council may resolve to make public some resolutions and/or documents associated with confidential matters considered in closed sessions. Council decisions will be:

3.18.1. Undertaken in accordance with the Act, any other Regulations and the *Governance Rules (C82)*.

3.18.2. Conducted in an open and transparent forum, unless in accordance with the provisions in the Act, any other Regulations and *Governance Rules (C82)*.

3.18.3. Informed through community engagement, in accordance with the Community Engagement Principles and Council's *Community Engagement Policy (C06)*.

3.18.4. Made fairly and on their merits, and where any person whose rights will be directly affected by a decision of the Council, that person will be entitled to communicate their views and have their interests considered.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

This Policy mitigates Council's risks as described below:

Governance

4.1. Council demonstrates its commitment to managing Council information in accordance with various Act such as the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and *Local Government Act 2020*.

4.2. Community confidence and public trust in Council to be maintained or improved through appropriate sharing or release of Council information.

5. IMPLEMENTATION STATEMENT

Human Rights Charter

5.1. This Policy has considered *the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Gender Equality

5.2. This Policy has considered the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in its development.

Roles and Responsibilities

5.3. The Governance & Integrity Department maintains this Policy and undertakes the services of Corporate Governance and Freedom of Information which supports the successful implementation of this Policy.

5.4. All employees are to ensure that any Council information required to be made available for public access under any relevant Act, is done so in compliance with the Acts.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

6.1. This Policy will be reviewed and adopted by Council on a four-year cycle.

6.2. Policies may be reviewed earlier than a four-year cycle if legislative provisions, Industry or organisation requirements change.

7. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislative Provisions	Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Freedom of Information Act 1982 Gender Equality Act 2020 Local Government Act 1989 Local Government Act 2020 Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 Public Record Act 1973
Council Supporting Documents	Community Engagement Policy (C06) Councillor Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy (C01) Councillor Support and Expenditure Policy (C51) Corporate Information Management Policy (CE49) Employee Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy (CE86) Governance Rules (C82) Information Privacy Policy (C22) Procurement Policy (C32) Live Streaming of Council Meeting Policy (C67)

8. DEFINITIONS

Council Information	The Public Records Act legally requires local councils to create, manage, and preserve comprehensive, accurate records of their business, decisions, and administrative actions.
Councillor Information	Elected councillors are not officially considered "employees" or "public officers" under the Public Record Act. Any documents or communications they make generally only become official public records if or when they are received by a council employee or formally tendered into a council meeting.

9. REVISION HISTORY

Approved By	Approval Date	Sections Modified	CM9 Ref#
Council Meeting	*22 July 2020*	*New Policy*	*D7637422*

Approved By	Approval Date	Sections Modified	CM9 Ref#
Council Meeting	*<DATE>*	*Major review undertaken of all sections*	*D3223826*

10. ATTACHMENT SUMMARY

Nil

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL POLICY

FRAUD AND CORRUPT CONDUCT POLICY

Policy No.	C19	Adoption Date:	Council Meeting <Date>
Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity	Department:	Governance and Integrity
Revision Date:	<Date>2030		

GOOD GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK – OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

Supporting Pillar:	Pillar 7. Risk & Compliance
Link to Pillar:	Act with integrity and impartiality: be honest and diligent, avoid conflicts of interest, treat people with respect, act lawfully and show leadership.

1. PURPOSE

1.1. The purpose of the *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)* (the Policy) is to formalise Council's commitment to ensuring that fraudulent and corrupt behaviour within or against Council is not tolerated.

1.2. This Policy establishes Council's approach to preventing, detecting and responding to fraud and corruption by establishing internal controls and fostering a strong organisational culture of ethical conduct, in accordance with the principles and guidelines of the *Australian Standard for Fraud and Corruption Control AS 8001:2021*.

1.3. This Policy has been developed to maintain Council's good governance and conduct obligations in accordance with relevant legislation, principally the *Local Government Act 2020*.

1.4. This Policy is supported by the Council employee *Public Interest Disclosure Policy (CE21)* available on Council's website.

2. SCOPE

2.1. The scope of this Policy applies to all Councillors, employees and volunteers engaged directly by Council, as well as all agents and contractors either engaged by Council or by an authorised contractor of Council.

2.2. The scope of this Policy does not apply to people or any behaviours or transactions where Council is not associated or connected.

3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

3.1. Council is committed to maintaining a culture of honesty and integrity and does not tolerate fraudulent or corrupt conduct for the benefit of any individual, organisation, or Council itself.

3.2. Reports of suspected fraud or corruption must be based on a reasonable suspicion supported by available facts, noting that frivolous or vexatious complaints may have consequences.

3.3. Prevention and detection of fraud and corruption is the responsibility of all Councillors, employees and volunteers. Council:

3.3.1. Maintains a 'zero tolerance' attitude towards fraud and corruption, regardless of value or materiality;

3.3.2. Requires that any suspected or detected incident of fraud or corruption be reported immediately;

3.3.3. Is committed to ensure that all cases of fraud or corruption will be handled and investigated in a confidential, prompt and professional manner, and with procedural fairness.

3.4. Council prohibits the payment or acceptance of facilitation payments on its behalf, recognising that such payments are difficult to distinguish from bribery and raise ethical concerns.

3.5. Council adopts an integrated approach to managing fraud by incorporating prevention, detection and investigation as part of its overall business risk and resource management.

3.6. Council is committed to protecting itself against any attempt to dishonestly obtain a benefit through deception or other means by members of the public, agents, intermediaries, employees, volunteers, contractors, or Councillors.

3.7. Council maintains *Public Interest Disclosure Policy (CE21)* available on its website) that protect 'whistleblowers' from unjust recrimination, when they make reports based on an honest and reasonable suspicion of fraud or corruption.

PREVENTION, DETECTION AND RESPONDING

Prevention

3.8. Council follows the below principles for preventing fraud and corruption:

3.8.1. Promoting a sound integrity framework (culture of integrity, accountability and ethical behaviour);

3.8.2. Training and awareness activities;

3.8.3. Managing conflicts of interest;

3.8.4. Managing risk connected to gifts, hospitality, donations and similar benefits;

3.8.5. Managing internal controls and the internal control environment;

3.8.6. Managing performance-based targets;

3.8.7. Workforce screening;

3.8.8. Screening and ongoing management of business associates;

3.8.9. Preventing technology enabled fraud; and

3.8.10. Physical security and asset management.

Detection

3.9. Council follows the below principles for detecting fraud and corruption:

3.9.1. Transactional Review;

3.9.2. Audits and Data Analysis;

3.9.3. Identification of early warnings signs;

3.9.4. Fraud and Corruption Reporting Channels, including complaint management;

3.9.5. Whistleblower Protections;

3.9.6. Intelligence and Stakeholder relations; and

3.9.7. Exit interviews.

3.10. Suspected fraud must be reported to the employee's immediate Supervisor or Manager. In the event that it is not appropriate to report suspicions to an immediate Supervisor or Manager, the matter is to be reported to Council's *Public Interest Disclosure Coordinators* and/or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or delegate in accordance with Council's *Public Interest Disclosures Policy (CE21)*.

3.11. On receiving a report of suspected fraud or corrupt conduct, the Executive Director, Manager, Coordinator, or Supervisor receiving the report must record details of the notification, including the date and time it was made and the matters raised.

3.12. Councillors should report any suspected fraud to the CEO. If there is an allegation made against the CEO this should be notified to the Mayor, where advice will be sought from the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

Response

3.13. Council follows the below actions for responding to fraud and corruption:

3.13.1. Immediate action and investigation on the detection of fraud and corruption events;

3.13.2. Crisis management following detection of fraud and corruption events;

3.13.3. External and internal reporting;

3.13.4. Protection and collection of evidence and any relevant disciplinary actions or investigation;

3.13.5. Recovery of stolen funds or property; and

3.13.6. Assessing internal controls and systems following a fraud and corruption event.

3.14. In consultation with the CEO or delegate, the Manager Governance & Integrity will ensure that all disclosures of fraud are assessed and that an appropriate response plan is initiated. The Manager Governance & Integrity will maintain a confidential register of fraud incidents.

3.15. Only employees who need to know will be made aware of the matter under investigation. An external party may be engaged to assist with the conduct of an investigation.

Notifications

3.16. The CEO must notify IBAC of any matter where there are reasonable grounds to suspect corrupt conduct (including suspected fraud), in accordance with IBAC's Directions for Relevant Principal Officers.

3.17. Should IBAC refer the matter back to the CEO for further action, the CEO (or delegate) must act in accordance with IBAC's instructions and provide any required reports to IBAC and Council's Audit and Risk Committee.

3.18. All significant or systemic instances of fraud or corruption must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Mayor. A report on any known or suspected fraud or corrupt conduct will be provided to each meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee.

3.19. In line with Council's zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption, where an investigation identifies sufficient evidence to reasonably believe a criminal offence has occurred, the matter and supporting evidence will be referred to the relevant law enforcement agency, subject to approval by the CEO. External reporting of unsubstantiated or uninvestigated suspicions will not occur unless exceptional circumstances require immediate reporting to Police or IBAC.

Civil Action

3.20. Where fraud results in financial loss to Council, the CEO (or delegate) must assess whether civil proceedings should be initiated to recover losses or to support investigation and enforcement activities. Civil proceedings may be commenced at any time following identification and reporting of the matter.

3.21. Where criminal proceedings are commenced by Police, the CEO (or delegate) must liaise with the relevant Police officer to ensure that an application for restitution is made where a conviction is secured.

Post-incident Review

3.22. Following any confirmed incident of fraud, the Manager Governance & Integrity or relevant Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator must ensure a review is undertaken of the adequacy and effectiveness of relevant internal controls by appropriate Council employee.

3.23. A post-incident report must be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

This Policy and the associated procedures mitigate Council's risks as described below:

People

4.1. In order to comply with its obligations under the Local Government Act 2020 and maintain the trust and confidence of the community, it is critical that Council and Councillors maintain the highest possible standards of good governance, integrity, ethical behaviour and conduct.

Reputational

4.2. Comprehensive fraud and corrupt conduct controls which are supported by this Policy minimises risk of activity that causes financial and reputational loss to Council and the consequent negative impact on the community.

Financial

4.3. The effective management of financial sustainability and good governance are strategic risks for Council. The establishment and adherence to a Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19) combined with effective control of aspects of the broader financial management assist to mitigate this risk.

Governance

4.4. This Policy and the associated procedures support good governance and mitigate risks of fraudulent and corrupt behaviour within or against Council.

Safety

4.5. This Policy provides guidance in ensuring a consistent approach is taken for instances of, or suspicions of fraudulent and corrupt conduct.

5. IMPLEMENTATION STATEMENT

Human Rights Charter

5.1. This Policy has considered the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

5.2. This Policy is a key mechanism for providing assurance that the Council meets its obligations under the Charter in several key areas, including:

5.2.1. Recognition and equality before the law; and

5.2.2. Privacy and reputation.

Gender Equality

5.3. This Policy has considered the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in its development.

Roles and Responsibilities

5.4. The responsibility for fraud and corrupt conduct prevention rests with all levels of Management, Councillors, employees, volunteers and agency or contract employee who represent the Council and who, collectively, must accept ownership of fraud and corrupt conduct prevention, detection and reporting. All employees are expected to support the development of an ethical and honest culture within Council.

Table 1 – Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Councillors	• Overall ownership of the *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19).* • Promote community awareness of Council's commitment to the prevention of fraud and corruption. • Notify the Mayor, who in turn will notify the CEO of any incidences of suspected fraud or corrupt behaviour. If there is an allegation made against the CEO this should be notified to the Mayor; who will seek advice from IBAC. • Demonstrate and promote an ethical and honest culture at South Gippsland Shire Council in all elements of their role as a Councillor.
Audit & Risk Committee	• Review the fraud control framework and monitor fraud risk management • Monitor reporting mechanisms and oversee Internal Audit coverage • Receive reports on significant matters and monitor investigation outcomes

Role	Responsibility
Chief Executive Officer	• Principal responsibility for the management of fraud and corrupt conduct controls to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, regulations and guidelines and that appropriate governance structures and processes are implemented. • Notification to IBAC under the *Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Act 2011* of any matter they suspect on reasonable grounds involves corrupt conduct. • Ownership of Council's Fraud Risk Register including identification, analysis, evaluation and treatment of risks.
Executive Leadership Team	• Ownership of fraud and corruption risk management within their portfolio, in accordance with Council's *Risk Management Policy and Framework (C35)*, including: – Identification, analysis and evaluation of fraud and corruption risks; – Implementation and performance of appropriate controls; and – Develop and implement Risk Treatment Plans where required. • Ensure employees are aware of fraud and corruption control responsibilities. • Monitor and actively manage excessive outstanding leave of an employee to ensure leave balances are at acceptable levels and within Enterprise Agreement requirements.
All employees, volunteers and contractors	• Understand the *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)*. • Comply with internal control measures, policies and procedures • Be alert to instances of fraud and corruption. • Report suspected acts of fraud or corruption to their supervisor or manager, or if that is not appropriate to a *Public Interest Disclosure Officer* pursuant to the *Public Interest Disclosure Policy (CE21)* available on Council's website. • Assist with any authorised inquiries or investigations into alleged fraud • Demonstrate and promote an ethical and honest culture at South Gippsland Shire Council in all elements of their role.
Manager Governance & Integrity	• Ownership of Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Framework across Council, including: – Development and maintenance of Council's *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)* – Respond to questions and/or provide training in relation to Fraud and Corruption Control – Management and monitoring of the Fraud risks included within the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers • Maintain Council's Fraud Risk Register including identification, analysis, evaluation and treatment of risks. • Development and maintenance of Public Interest Disclosure Evaluation and Public Interest Disclosure – Welfare Management Record forms and any other forms as deemed appropriate within the Framework. • Provide reporting on fraud and corruption control to Council, CEO, Audit and Risk Committee, Executive Leadership Team and employees.
Public Interest Disclosure Coordinators	• The following positions are delegated public officers to: – Respond to questions in relation to fraud and corruption; – Report on fraud and corruption to Council and the CEO. • The positions are Executive Director Strategy & Integrity, Manager of People and Culture and Governance & Integrity Manager.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

6.1. This Policy will be reviewed and adopted by Council on a four-year cycle.

6.2. Policies may be reviewed earlier than a four-year cycle if legislative provisions, Industry or organisation requirements change.

6.3. The Audit & Risk Committee will review Fraud Prevention controls at least every two years.

7. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislative Provisions	Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Freedom of Information Act 1982 Gender Equality Act 2020 Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Act 2011 Local Government Act 1989 Local Government Act 2020
Council Supporting Documents	Audit & Risk Committee Charter (C08) Councillor Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy (C01) Councillor Support and Expenditure Policy (C51) Drugs and Alcohol Policy (CE52) Employee Code of Conduct (CE20) Governance Rules 2020 (C82) Information Technology Policies Model Councillor Code of Conduct (C14) Procurement Policy (C32) Public Interest Disclosure Policy (CE21) Risk Management Policy (C35) Risk Management Framework (C35)
Related External Documents (*optional*)	Australian Standard for fraud and corruption control (AS 8001:2021)

8. DEFINITIONS

Corrupt Conduct	**Corrupt conduct** has the meaning given in section 4 of the *Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 (Vic)* and includes conduct (or attempted or conspired conduct, whether in or outside Victoria) that would constitute a relevant offence and that: • adversely affects or involves the dishonest or improper performance of the functions of a public officer or public body; • involves a breach of public trust; • involves the misuse of information obtained in the course of official duties; or adversely affects the effective performance of official functions resulting in a benefit to any person.
Facilitation Payments	**Facilitation payments** are unofficial, minor payments made to secure or expedite routine government actions, often referred to as "speed money," "grease payments," or "oiling the wheels."
Significant or Systemic	Significant or Systemic means an incident, or a pattern or recurrence of incidents, that a reasonable person would consider has a material impact on the Agency's or the State's reputation, financial position, or financial management. An incident is also considered significant, for the purpose of this Policy, where the value exceeds $5,000 in money or $10,000 in other property, or where it is otherwise determined to be significant at the discretion of the CEO due to potential material organisational impact.

9. REVISION HISTORY

Approved By	Approval Date	Sections Modified	CM9 Ref#
Council Meeting	*17 March 2010*	*Policy Review*	
Council Meeting	*16 April 2014*	*Policy Review*	*D8200214*
Council Meeting	*26 April 2017*	*Policy Review*	*D3407417*
Council Meeting	*19 May 2021*	*Policy Review*	*D1742021*
Council Meeting	*<Date>*	*Policy Review*	*D3465226*

10. ATTACHMENT SUMMARY

Nil

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL POLICY

South Gippsland Shire Council

COUNCILLOR GIFTS BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY			
Policy No.	C01	Adoption Date:	Council Meeting <Date>
Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity	Department:	Governance and Integrity
Revision Date:	<2030>		
GOOD GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK – OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES			
Supporting Pillar:	Pillar 4. Structure, Systems & Policies Pillar 7. Risk & Compliance		
Link to Pillar:	This Policy aims to ensure the management of gifts and hospitality are managed in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*.		

1. PURPOSE

1.1. The purpose of the *Councillor Gifts Benefits and Hospitality Policy (C01)* (the Policy) is to provide guidance to Councillors to ensure Councillors are not compromised in the performance of their duties by accepting gifts or benefits (immediate or for the future) which may result in a sense of obligation or could be interpreted as an attempt to influence.

1.2. The Policy has been developed in accordance with section 138 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (*the Act*) that requires Council to adopt a Councillor Gift Policy and ss.128(3)(h) and 128(4) that requires a Councillor to declare a conflict of interest because of receipt of a 'disclosable gift'.

1.3. The Policy should be read in conjunction with *the Act* and associated regulations. Particular requirements apply to s.137 of *the Act* relating to 'anonymous gifts' and ss. 306 and 309 relating to election campaign donations.

2. SCOPE

2.1. The scope of this Policy applies to all Councillors of the South Gippsland Shire Council (Council).

3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

Background

3.1. South Gippsland Shire Council is committed to ensuring that Councillors act with integrity and honesty when performing their duties and while attending functions as Council representatives.

3.2. The acceptance of gifts, benefits, hospitality and donations can create perceptions that a Councillor's integrity has been compromised. Councillors are required to declare the acceptance of gifts and donations to avoid putting themselves in a position which is likely to create a general or material conflict of interest whether real or perceived.

3.3. The Policy provides a way of meeting the high level of community expectations in respect of transparency and accountability, by the proper recording of significant gifts and donations made to Councillors in a public register. A summary of the Councillor *Gift Register* will be published on Council's website on a six-monthly basis.

3.4. The Register will hold information for each current term of Council. At the conclusion of each Council term, the Register will be removed from the website.

Transparency and Integrity

3.5. The Policy is based on transparency and integrity principles that apply to every person in public office, that they should avoid putting themselves in positions which are likely to create a general or material conflict of interest, whether real or perceived. This means that Councillors do not seek or accept gifts from people where the receipt of the gift is likely to create any perception of a conflict of interest with their public duty.

3.6. It is preferable that no gifts be accepted at all by Councillors, although Councillors are not prohibited from accepting gifts. The Policy requires that Councillors should avoid accepting gifts from people they know, or reasonably expect, will have dealings with the Council, and when it is possible that as a Councillor they may be called upon to deal with these people in their official capacity. Examples may include developers, community groups, real estate agents, suppliers and contractors (including potential), or other parties that may need to deal with Council at some stage.

3.7. Not accepting gifts from people and organisations that Councillors have dealings with in an official capacity, can avoid the following consequences:

3.7.1. The impression that the recipient is using their position for personal gain, rather than to serve the community; which reflects badly on the recipient and on the Council.

3.7.2. It is likely to prevent the recipient from undertaking duties that the recipient has been elected, appointed or reimbursed to perform, which may lead to a failing of responsibilities.

3.7.3. Accepting a gift may constitute, or appear to constitute, a misuse of position or acceptance of a secret commission, which are serious offences under the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Crimes Act 1958* respectively.

3.8. The key principles are:

3.8.1. **Obligations:** Councillors act in accordance with their respective obligations with good governance.

3.8.2. **Public Interest:** Councillors have a duty to act in the public interest above their private interests when carrying out their official functions, in compliance with this Policy.

3.8.3. **Culture of Integrity:** Council fosters a culture of integrity with Councillors declaring all gifts.

3.8.4. **Risk-based:** Council's risk in relation to gift offers are assessed, managed and monitored.

3.8.5. **Accountability:** Council's procedures are transparent and accountable. Councillors are accountable for declaring accepted gifts, declined gifts or where an exception applies under this Policy.

Gift Acceptance and Refusal

3.9. In accordance with the key principles of this Policy before deciding whether to accept an offer, Councillors should first consider if the offer could be perceived as influencing them in performing their duties or lead to reputational damage. The more valuable the offer, the more likely that a conflict of interest or reputational risk exists.

3.10. A Councillor is required to check the *Local Government Act 2020*, s.128(3)(h) and s.128(4) to determine if they are required to declare a material conflict of interest because of receipt of an 'disclosable gift' in any matter where a conflict may be relevant.

3.11. Council's *Gift Register* is to be used to record all gifts, whether accepted, declined, or given to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Council's use, on Council's *Gift and Donation Declaration Form*.

3.12. To support the intent and expectations of the Policy, Councillors are required to declare gifts offered or received by family members as defined under *the Act*, which may give rise to actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest or reputational risk to Council.

3.13. Developed by the Victorian Public Sector Commission, the **GIFT** test is a recommended example of what to think about when deciding whether to accept or decline a gift, benefit or hospitality.

Table 1 – GIFT Test (Victorian Public Sector Commission)

G	Giver	**Who is providing the gift, benefit or hospitality and what is their relationship to me?** Does my role require me to select contractors, award grants, regulate industries or determine government policies? Could the person or organisation benefit from a decision I make?
I	Influence	**Are they seeking to gain an advantage or influence my decisions or actions?** Has the gift, benefit or hospitality been offered to me publicly or privately? Is it a courtesy or a token of appreciation or valuable non-token offer? Does its timing coincide with a decision I am about to make?
F	Favour	**Are they seeking a favour in return for the gift, benefit or hospitality?** Has the gift, benefit or hospitality been offered honestly? Has the person or organisation made several offers over the last 12 months? Would accepting it create an obligation to return a favour?
T	Trust	**Would accepting the gift, benefit or hospitality diminish public trust?** How would the public view acceptance of this gift, benefit or hospitality? What would my colleagues, family, friends or associates think?

Acceptable Gifts – Non-token Gifts valued at $50 or more, including aggregates

3.14. Councillors are allowed to accept some gifts; however, they should avoid compromising their ability to act independently by accepting gifts individually, or accumulatively within a financial year that have a monetary value of $50 or more.

3.15. Fifty dollars is the Victorian public sector industry-based standard for non-token offers of benefits, gifts or hospitality that may be perceived to be by the recipient, the person making the offer or by the wider community, of more than consequential value.

3.16. All offers worth $50 or more are non-token offers. Regardless whether they are accepted or declined, they must be declared and submitted *via* Council's *Gift and Donation Declaration Form* and recorded on Council's *Gift Register*. This is to ensure that the combined aggregated total of offers made from a single source in the last five years does not exceed the gift disclosure threshold of $500.

3.17. While permissible to be retained, Councillors acting in good faith are encouraged to refuse, or dispose to the CEO gift offers that have an aggregate value of $50 or more that:

3.17.1. Are likely to influence them, or would be perceived to influence them, in the course of their duties; or

3.17.2. Have no legitimate business benefit.

3.18. While Councillors are able to accept gifts of $50 or more, they are encouraged to hand over the gift to the CEO to utilise for Council related purposes. This is to be recorded in Council's *Gift Register*.

Acceptable Gifts – Gestures and Token Gift Offers

3.19. Councillors are allowed to accept gestures that are token gift offers, benefits and hospitality, without approval or declaring the offer on the South Gippsland Shire Council's *Gift Register* if the value, or aggregate value is under $50. An example of a gesture is an object with no monetary value such as flowers cut from the person's garden or homemade baked goods.

3.20. A gesture may also be a souvenir received from a person or company as a result of attending a seminar or conference held, conducted or sponsored by them, for which an appropriate fee was paid to attend. An example of this is a tie, pen or mug.

3.21. Door prizes and raffle prizes at functions or conferences are not considered a gift if the individual has personally paid for their attendance, or where the individual has paid for the raffle ticket.

3.22. If a Councillor is repetitively offered gestures that accumulatively equate to $50 or more in a 12-month period, these are to be recorded in Council's *Gift Register* once a $50 value is reached.

Disclosable Gifts – restrictions apply

3.23. Council discourages the acceptance of 'disclosable gifts'.

3.24. A 'disclosable gift' for the purposes of declaring a material conflict of interest and determining if such a gift may be accepted is defined in s.128(4) as follows:

*"For the purposes of subsection (3)(h), **disclosable gift** means one or more gifts with a total value of, or more than, $500 or if an amount is prescribed for the purposes of this subsection, the prescribed amount, received from a person in the 5 years preceding the decision on the matter—*

(a) if the relevant person held the office of Councillor, was a member of Council staff or was a member of a delegated committee at the time the gift was received; or

(b) if the gift was, or gifts were, or will be, required to be disclosed as an election campaign donation—

but does not include the value of any reasonable hospitality received by the relevant person at an event or function that the relevant person attended in an official capacity as a Councillor, member of Council staff or member of a delegated committee."

3.25. The acceptance of any gifts over the aggregated value of $500 or more (accumulative in the past five (5) years or as a single gift) should be declined to avoid placing a Councillor in the position of having a potential Conflict of Interest in any matter involving the affected person (gift giver) in the future.

Prohibited Gifts – Anonymous Gifts

3.26. Any gift that is inconsistent with community values and could bring a Councillor's integrity, or that of the Council into disrepute must be declined.

3.27. An 'anonymous gift' is prohibited and must not to be accepted by a Councillor as per s.137 of *the Act*:

"Section 137 Local Government Act 2020 - anonymous gift not to be accepted

1. *Subject to subsection (2), a Councillor must not accept, directly or indirectly, a gift for the benefit of the Councillor the amount or value of which is equal to or exceeds the gift disclosure threshold unless—*
   - *(a) the name and address of the person making the gift are known to the Councillor; or*
   - *(b) at the time when the gift is made—*
     - *(i) the Councillor is given the name and address of the person making the gift; and*
     - *(ii) the Councillor reasonably believes that the name and address so given are the true name and address of the person making the gift.*

   Penalty: 60 penalty units.
2. *If the name and address of the person making the gift are not known to the Councillor for whose benefit the gift is intended, the Councillor is not in breach of subsection (1) if the Councillor disposes of the gift to the Council within 30 days of the gift being received.*
3. *In addition to the penalty specified in subsection (1), a Councillor who is found guilty of a breach of that subsection must pay to the Council the amount or value of the gift accepted in contravention of that subsection."*

3.28. If for any reason a Councillor finds themselves in possession of a gift when they don't know the name and address of the person who gave the gift, the Councillor can give the gift to the Council within 30 days of receiving the offer to avoid committing an offence and record in Council's *Gift Register*.

Gifts that create a Conflict of Interest

3.29. Councillors must not accept a gift that creates a conflict of interest (real, potential or perceived).

3.30. Note that a person from whom a Councillor has received a 'disclosable gift' is determined to be an 'affected person' under s.128(h) for the purposes of declaring a material conflict of interest.

3.31. A conflict of interest, created through receipt of a gift, denies all other community members of the right to be represented by their Councillor on particular matters coming before Council.

3.32. A conflict formed this way may also result in a Councillor unduly influencing other Councillors on how to vote for a certain issue. This is a misuse of position.

3.33. These actions undermine the integrity of individual Councillors and the trust of the community in Council.

Money or equivalent

3.34. Councillors must not accept money in any form. This includes gift cards (e.g. gift vouchers), or those easily converted into money (e.g. shares).

Regulatory Processes

3.35. A Councillor must not accept any gifts from any individual or group that may be involved with the permit application or regulatory activity where a Council regulatory process, or legal matter is underway, or coming up (e.g. a planning permit application; infringement appeal or claim against Council).

Bequests/ Wills

3.36. Any bequests to Councillors resulting from their position with Council, must not be accepted. Arrangements may be made to donate the bequest to a charitable institution in the name of the donor or returned to the immediate family.

Reward Programs

3.37. Councillors must not purposely collect rewards for personal use via reward points program for any Council related transactions (i.e. fly buys, frequent flyers, Everyday Rewards - Woolworths). This relates to any claims for reimbursement of expenses incurred in accordance with the *Councillor Support and Expenditure Policy (C51)*.

Procurement and Tender Process

3.38. Councillors must not accept any gifts from a current or prospective supplier/contractor or any offer that is made during a procurement or tender process by a person or organisation involved in the process.

3.39. Where gifts are received, offered or there are irregular approaches from suppliers, the Councillor must notify the Mayor and CEO and lodge a *Gift and Donation Declaration Form*, so their refusal/action can be properly recorded in Council's *Gift Register*.

3.40. Councillors must not visit a current supplier's premises on Council business without invitation. If a visit is required, the Councillor is to request a Senior Officer attend with them. It is understood that Councillors may visit current supplier's premises to purchase items in a personal capacity due to the geography of South Gippsland.

Hospitality

3.41. Gift offers of hospitality that exceed common courtesy must be refused as they are often inconsistent with community expectations and have a high risk of creating a conflict of interest. Examples of gift offers of hospitality that exceed common courtesy include (but are not limited to):

3.41.1. Attending as a guest in a corporate box at the football or races.

3.41.2. Attending a concert or theatre event.

3.41.3. Attending an industry golf day at a reduced fee.

3.41.4. Being 'shouted' a meal at a restaurant or sporting club.

3.41.5. Accepting discounted or complimentary tickets for a family member to attend an event.

Conferences

3.42. Gift offers in relation to conferences (sponsored attendance, participation, travel or accommodation) must be declined, unless there is:

3.42.1. Clear justification, such as where the invitation is issued by a Government department or related Local Government industry or the offeror is a peak body; and

3.42.2. Prior written approval granted by the CEO (Mayor for Councillors, CEO for Mayor) or another responsible person. The signed and dates approval must be attached to the gift offer declaration and noted in Council's *Gift Register*.

Future Benefit

3.43. Councillors are prohibited from accepting any offering in any form, to any value, that may be perceived to be a suggestion or guarantee of a future benefit to the Councillor or any other person.

3.44. This includes any benefits that may be derived either before, during or after a Councillor finishes their term of office. Some examples; include the assurance of future employment, services provided at a nil or substantially reduced value, beneficial property dealings, bank transfers or contract opportunities.

3.45. These will be treated as a fraudulent action and will be dealt with in accordance with Council's *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)*, or as a criminal matter to be dealt with by the Police depending on the circumstances.

3.46. Any offers of this kind must be publicly declared and disclosed to the CEO, who will consider the offer in line with Council's *Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19)*.

Attempts to Bribe

3.47. A Councillor who receives a gift offer that they believe is an attempted bribe must refuse the offer. They must:

3.47.1. Immediately notify the CEO and lodge a *Gift and Donation Declaration Form,* so their refusal can be recorded in Council's *Gift Register*.

3.47.2. Report the matter to the CEO or Public Interest Disclosure Officer who should report any criminal or corrupt conduct to the Victoria Police or the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

Endorsement of a product or service

3.48. A Councillor must not accept a gift, service, benefit or hospitality that could be perceived to be an endorsement of a product or service and will bring the individual or Council into disrepute.

Consequences of accepting prohibited gifts

3.49. Accepting a prohibited gift may constitute misuse of a Councillor's position. A breach of this Policy may result in serious misconduct allegations for Councillors. In addition, if the gift was offered with the expectation of something in return either immediately or in the future, such as preferential treatment, accepting it may constitute a bribe or other form of corruption and lead to criminal prosecution.

Recording and Reporting Prohibited Gift Offers

3.50. To assist the Council in monitoring the frequency and nature of prohibited gifts, it is essential that all such offers are disclosed and notified as declined in Council's *Gift Register*. Councillors must lodge a *Gift and Donation Declaration Form* and details of the gift to be included in Council's *Gift Register*.

3.51. A Councillor who believes another person within the Council may have solicited or been offered a bribe which they have not reported, must notify the CEO or report the matter as a public interest disclosure in accordance with Council's *Public Interest Disclosure Policy (CE21)*.

No Soliciting of Gifts or Secret Deals

3.52. Councillors must not solicit gifts, benefits, hospitality or secret deals for themselves or anyone else, in any form. To do so may constitute misuse of their position. It may also constitute corruption and lead to criminal prosecution.

Donations and Bequests of Gifts to Council

3.53. Council may be offered or bequested gifts or donations. Such gifts may include and are not limited to:

3.53.1. Real property

3.53.2. Donations

3.53.3. Art work

3.53.4. Free training and services

3.54. Council does not encourage and will not automatically accept a gift or donation. Given the potential for a vast range in terms of quality, relevance and the ongoing responsibility and maintenance requirements, Council reserves the right to decline the offer.

3.55. In relation to Bequests, consideration will be given to:

3.55.1. The expressed wishes and intentions of the bequestor, as outlined in the will, are paramount in determining the purpose for which the gift will be used. Where required, legal advice will be sought before Council accepts the bequest.

3.55.2. Where Council is unable to honour the intentions of the will, all appropriate legal measures will be taken to determine a purpose for the gift that most closely aligns to the bequestor's intentions.

Gift Disclosure

3.56. A Councillor must disclose any 'disclosable gift' valued at $500 or more (accumulative in the past five (5) years or as a single gift) in their next bi-annual *Personal Interest Return* form. They must also include the disclosable gift(s) in Council's *Gift Register* within 14 days of receiving the gift(s).

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

3.57. Councillor who has a conflict of interest as a result of receiving a gift or gifts from a person must disclose the conflict of interest in accordance with the procedures outlined in Council's *Governance Rules (C82)*.

Election Campaign Donation Disclosure

3.58. Gifts above the gift disclosure threshold that are election campaign donations must be disclosed in an *Election Campaign Donation form* and in accordance with the ss.

128(4), 306, 309, 310, of *the Act* and the *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020*.

Recording Gift Declaration in Council's Gift Register

3.59. Gifts valued at $50 or more, including aggregated gifts must be disclosed in Council's *Gift Register* by completing Council's *Gift and Donation Declaration Form:*

3.59.1. Where a gift is shared amongst multiple Councillors, the gift must be declared if the total value of the gift exceeds $50. All people sharing in the receipt of the gift must be listed on Council's *Gift and Donation Declaration Form*, with the initial receiver of the gift responsible for registering receipt of the gift at the top of the list.

3.59.2. Councillors are to provide details pertaining to the receipt, or offer, of any gift to the CEO within 14 days from the date of receipt/offer.

3.59.3. The information on Council's *Gift and Donation Declaration Form* will include if the gift has been refused, retained by the individual or given to the CEO for use by Council.

3.59.4. Gifts accepted (or declined) of $50 or more will be included in Council's *Gift Register* and will contain:

i. A description of the gift (or donation) and its estimated value;

ii. Date of receipt or decline of gift;

iii. The name of the gift giver (if known);

iv. Name of the receipt of gift;

v. What was done with the gift and the reason why (was it retained by the Councillor, handed to the Council, or declined);

vi. Gift offers provided by suppliers (irregular approaches from suppliers).

Undervaluing Gifts

3.60. Undervaluing gifts received to avoid declaring them, may constitute a breach of the Local Government *Model Councillor Code of Conduct*. Such matters will be managed in accordance with the procedures set out in the respective *Code* and relevant sections of *the Act*.

Inability to politely refuse a gift

3.61. On occasions a Councillor may be given a gift that cannot be politely refused. This typically occurs after a presentation at a function when a gift is given as an appreciation. If there is any risk that the gift may give rise to a material conflict of interest or otherwise compromise the recipient, it should be accepted on behalf of the Council and passed on to the CEO for use by the Council to avoid any personal conflict of interest. This type of gift must be declared on Council's *Gift Register*.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

This Policy mitigates Council's risks as described below:

Governance

4.1. Councillors are to understand their requirements and obligations under the Local Government *Model Councillor Code of Conduct*, *Governance Rules (C82)* and *Election Period Policy (C30)* and under the Act.

4.2. Council to demonstrate its commitment to probity in the management of potential breaches of the *Local Government Act 2020*, *Crimes Act 1958*, Codes of Conduct and Council policies.

4.3. Community confidence and public trust in Council to be maintained or improved through appropriate and transparent declaration and use of gifts thereby minimising risks to Council, Councillors or staff reputations.

4.4. Councillors and staff to mitigate the risk of fraud and appropriately manage situations which may be regarded as unethical conduct or behaviour.

5. IMPLEMENTATION STATEMENT

Human Rights Charter

5.1. This Policy has considered the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Gender Equality

5.2. This Policy has considered the *Gender Equity Act 2020*.

Policy Publication

5.3. This Policy will be published on Council's website.

5.4. Council's *Gift Register* will be made available in accordance with South Gippsland Shire Council's *Public Transparency Policy (C75)* and clause 3.3 and 3.4 of this Policy.

5.5. The Policy is to be included in Council's Councillor Induction Program.

Roles and Responsibilities

5.6. Councillors are to always act in accordance with their respective obligations for good governance. These include, but are not limited to:

5.6.1. Reading, understanding and abiding by *the Act* at all times. In particular in relation to receipt, disposal and management of any gift, donations, hospitality or benefit.

5.6.2. Refusing all prohibited gifts.

5.6.3. Declining anything that is offered as an attempt to influence, bribe or create an expectation or an obligation on the Councillor or Council.

5.6.4. Not accept any offer that suggests a guarantee of a future benefit that may be deemed to be as real and tangible as money-in-the-bank.

5.6.5. Not soliciting gifts for themselves or anyone, in any form.

5.6.6. Disclosing of any gift valued at $500 or more (accumulative in the past five (5) years or as a single gift) in their *Biannual Personal Interest Return Form*, unless the gift is from a family member.

5.6.7. Declaring conflicts of interest as a result of receiving a gift or gifts from a person, in accordance with Council's *Governance Rules (C82)*.

5.6.8. Declaring gifts of over $50 or more, including aggregates in the Council's *Gift Register* within 14 days of receipt of the gift, in accordance with gift register requirements.

5.6.9. Declaring gifts above the threshold that are election campaign donations in Council's *Election Campaign Donation Return Form*.

5.6.10. Councillors are responsible for completing and submitting Council's *Gift and Donation Declaration Form* submitted *via* Council's *Gift and Donation Declaration Form* and recorded in Council's *Gift Register*.

5.7. The Governance Team maintains Council's *Gift Register* for recording all gifts declarations for Councillors, Employees and Contractors.

5.8. The Protected Disclosure Officer will manage any disclosures made in regard to questionable gifts or conduct and refer these to the respective authorities to investigate.

5.9. A copy of Council's *Gift Register* may be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee and Council (via the Audit and Risk Committee) every 12-months for their consideration. Monitoring Council's *Gift Register* will allow for any identified trends developing to be identified and considered by the Committee.

5.10. The Governance Team is to publish a summary of the Councillor *Gift Register* on Council's website on a six-monthly basis and is also able to provide public access to Council's *Gift Register* in accordance with Council's *Public Transparency Policy (C75)* via Council's email address council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au.

Non-compliance with this Policy

5.11. A Councillor has a duty to act in the public interest above their private interests when carrying out their official capacity and functions of a Councillor and to abide by this Policy.

5.12. If a member of the community wishes to ask a question in relation to Council's *Gift Register*, this is to be directed to the Governance Team via Council's email address council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

6.1. This Policy will be reviewed and adopted by Council on a four-year cycle.

6.2. Policies may be reviewed earlier than a four-year cycle if legislative provisions, industry or organisation requirements change.

7. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislative Provisions	Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Crimes Act 1958 Freedom of Information Act 1982 Gender Equality Act 2020 Local Government Act 2020 Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020
Council Supporting Documents	Audit and Risk Committee Charter (C08) Fraud and Corrupt Conduct Policy (C19) Governance Rules (C82) Information Privacy Policy (Website Privacy Statement) (C22) Local Government Model Councillor Code of Conduct Public Transparency Policy (C75)
Related External Documents (*optional*)	Gift and Declaration Form In the Public Interest, A Conflict of Interest a Guide for Councillors, delegated committee members and Council staff, October 2020

8. DEFINITIONS

Aggregated Gifts/ Benefits	If multiple gifts, donations, benefits or hospitality are received from a person, they must be treated as a single gift with an aggregate value. This applies to multiple token gifts and gestures aggregating to $50 or more in one financial year, or to a 'disclosable gift' value of $500 aggregated within five years.

Bribe	A bribe is an offer of money or other inducement made with the intention to corruptly influence a Councillor, Employee or contractor in the performance of their duties. Bribery or attempted bribery of a public official is a criminal offence.
Conflict of Interest	The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Councillors to declare General (s.127) or Material Conflicts (s.128) of Interest. A conflict of interest is a conflict between a Councillor's public duty to act in the best interest of the Council and their private interests (financial or non-financial). A conflict exists whether it is: • **Real** – it currently exists • **Potential** – it may arise, given the circumstances • **Perceived** – members of the public could reasonably form the view that a conflict exists, or could arise, that may improperly influence the person's performance of their duty to the Council, now or in the future.
Declarable Gift	A gift that is valued $50 or more must be recorded in Council's Gift Register.
Disclosable Gift	A 'disclosable gift' means any gift valued at or above $500 or a higher prescribed amount that a relevant person received in the preceding five years if: • the relevant person was a councillor, member of council staff or member of a delegated committee at the time the gift was received, or • the gift was an election campaign donation. If multiple gifts are received from a person, they must be treated as a single gift with an aggregate value. A gift includes any good or service (other than volunteer labour) that is provided for free or at an inadequate price. A failure to comply is an offence that can be prosecuted in court. If found guilty a fine of up to 60 penalty units may be imposed, the value of the gift must be paid to the Council and the Councillor may be required to pay the costs of the prosecution.
Ceremonial Gifts	• Ceremonial gifts are official gifts provided as part of the culture and practices of communities and government, within Australia or internationally. Ceremonial gifts are usually provided when conducting business with official delegates or representatives from another organisation, community. • Ceremonial gifts are the property of South Gippsland Shire Council, irrespective of value. The receipt of ceremonial gifts should be recorded on Council's Gift Register but does not need to be published online.
Gestures/ tokens – not considered gifts	• A souvenir received from a person or company as a result of attending a seminar or conference held, conducted or sponsored by them, for which an appropriate fee was paid to attend. For example ties, pens or mugs. • Small gestures of appreciation from the community or customers such as cut flowers from their garden or homemade baked goods. • Door prizes and raffle prizes at functions or conferences are not considered a gift if the individual has personally paid for their attendance, or where the individual has paid for the raffle ticket.
Gift (s.3)	Means any disposition of property, other than by will, made by a person to another person without consideration in money or money's worth or with inadequate consideration, including: (a) the provision of a service (other than volunteer labour); and (b) the payment of an amount in respect of a guarantee; and (c) the making of a payment or contribution at a fundraising
Gift Examples	A gift is anything of monetary or other value that is offered by an external organisation or individual to a Councillor, Employee or contractor as a result of their role with the agency. It includes free or discounted items or services, benefits or hospitality that exceeds common courtesy.

Hospitality Examples include:	**Services Examples include:**	**Benefits Examples include:**
• A bottle of wine or spirits, • Tickets to sporting events • Gift Voucher • Corporate hospitality at a corporate facility • Discounted products for personal use • Use of a holiday home • Free or discounted travel • Free training excursions • Door prize or voucher if an individual has not personally paid to attend	• Christmas hamper • Desk calendar • Box of chocolates • Bottle of wine • Commemorative object • Door prize at a function • Tree lopping • House painting	• Preferential treatment • Privileged access • Access to discount or loyalty programs • Promise of a new job

Hospitality	Hospitality is considered a gift unless the hospitality was reasonable and the person attending the function or event in an official Council capacity. Reasonableness test: the hospitality must be of a standard and type that an independent observer would consider appropriate and not excessive. Official capacity test: it must clearly be your duty as a Councillor to attend the relevant function or event. Hospitality that exceeds common courtesy includes: • A 'fine dining and wines' working lunch at another organisation's premises • An offer to pay for a working lunch at a café • An offer of a free spot on an industry golf day Hospitality that does not exceed common courtesy and is therefore not a gift includes: • Sandwiches and pastries over a lunchtime meeting • A cup of coffee at another organisation's premises • A cup of coffee at a café (unless there is a conflict of interest)
Internal Gifts	Gifts received by Councillors from South Gippsland Shire Council are not covered by this Policy and do not need to be declared. For example recognition gifts after the end of the Mayor term or Councillor term.
Legitimate Business Reason	A legitimate business reason is a business purpose that furthers official business or other legitimate goals of the Council. The following are not legitimate business reasons: • 'it would have been impolite to refuse • 'Refusal would offend' (except in compelling circumstances that are in the public interest, for example accepting a gift onstage at an official ceremony) • 'Networking' • 'Maintaining stakeholder relationships'
Supplier/ Contractor	Person or company supplying goods, services or works to the Council.
Value	Value means the face value or estimated retail value.

9. REVISION HISTORY

Approved By	Approval Date	Sections Modified	CM9 Ref#
Council Meeting	*21 August 2024*	*Administrative review and new section added section 3.11*	*D6769924*
Council Meeting	*<Date>*	*Updated Council's Gift Register to be published on Council's website on a six-monthly basis following Audit and Risk Internal Audit process*	*D2012426*

5.3. AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE - 17 MARCH 2026 MINUTES

Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity
Department:	Financial Strategy

Council Plan
Objective - Leading with Integrity

Council's risk management and governance is strengthened by effectively monitoring and reporting on the activities and advice provided by the Audit and Risk Committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 17 March 2026 (refer to **Attachment [5.3.1]**) are provided to Council for noting.

Audit and Risk Committee members at the meeting included:

- Ms Marilyn Kearney (Audit and Risk Committee Chair)
- Ms Jen Johanson
- Mr Mick Jaensch
- Cr Sarah Gilligan (Council member)
- Cr Bron Beach (Council member)
- Cr Nathan Hersey (Mayor) (Ex-officio Council Member)

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the Audit and Risk Committee Minutes – 17 March 2026 (Attachment [5.3.1]).

REPORT

The matters considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at the 17 March 2026 meeting are contained in **Attachment [5.3.1]**.

CONSULTATION / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Audit and Risk Committee Minutes for 17 March 2026 (**Attachment [5.3.1]**) have been presented to the Audit and Risk Committee for feedback and were formally accepted by the Audit and Risk Committee at the 16 June 2026 Meeting.

RESOURCES / FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Budget allowances for Council's three Independent Audit and Risk Committee Members' attendance fees are included within Council's current and forward budgets.

RISKS

Council must establish an Audit and Risk Committee under s.53 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Committee supports Council in discharging its oversight responsibilities as set out in the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, including risk management.

STAFF DISCLOSURE

All officers involved in the preparation of this report have considered and determined that they do not have a conflict of interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Minutes Audit and Risk Committee Meeting 17 March 2026 [**5.3.1** - 14 pages]

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Council's Good Governance Framework
Pillar 7. Risk & Compliance

Council Policy / Strategy / Plans
Documents are available on Council's website at the following LINK.

Audit and Risk Committee Charter (C08)

Legislative Provisions
Local Government Act 2020

Regional, State and National Plan and Policies
Nil

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Audit & Risk Committee Minutes

17 March 2026
Council Chambers, Leongatha
& via Video Conference
Commencing at 9:00 AM

South Gippsland Shire Council

Come for the beauty, Stay for the lifestyle

AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Committee will provide advice and recommendations to the Council, contributing to a systematic and disciplined approach to evaluating and improving the effectiveness of financial management, risk management, internal controls and governances processes within Council. This includes oversight responsibilities of monitoring, reviewing, endorsing and advising related to:

- **Financial and Performance Reporting**
- **Strategic Risk Management**
- **Fraud prevention systems and control**
- **Maintenance of a sound internal control environment**

Reviewing Council's performance with regard to compliance with its policies and legislative and regulatory requirements.

Ensuring that Council's policies and procedures comply with the overarching Governance Principles, the Local Government Act and regulations and any Ministerial Directions.

Audit & Risk Committee Confidentiality

Closed Information – not in public interest to be released

The Chief Executive Officer designates Audit & Risk Committee Minutes, Agendas and associated documents (attachments) as 'internal working documents – not to be released without prior Executive approval' in accordance with Council's *Public Transparency Policy (C75)* and is classified as closed (or confidential) information.

The grounds for designation have been made as the information is in draft form and may cause unnecessary confusion if released prior to any formal decision made, or provided by third party suppliers that have contractual rights associated with the information.

Open (Public) Information – not confidential

The Chief Executive Officer designates that the following agenda items and related documents and associated attachments as open (public) information and are not confidential.

Agenda Items:

- **Nil**

Minutes of the Meeting

The Chief Executive Officer has designated the Minutes of this meeting held on 17 March 2026 as confidential, until they are made public in the Agenda of the next Council Meeting, which is anticipated to be 15 July 2026.

Allison Jones,

Chief Executive Officer

AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date Time	**17 March 2026** 9:00 AM	Location	**Council Chambers, Leongatha and via Video Conference**

Attendees	**Ms Marilyn Kearney (Audit and Risk Committee Chair)** **Ms Jen Johanson** **Mr Mick Jaensch** **Cr Sarah Gilligan** **Cr Bron Beach**
Ex-officio Member	Cr Nathan Hersey (Mayor)
Support Staff	Allison Jones, Chief Executive Officer; Michelle Jorgensen, Executive Manager Culture and Capability; Tony Peterson, Executive Director Strategy and Integrity; Lucas Gardiner, Executive Director Empowering Communities; David Fice, Executive Director Infrastructure Sustainability; Taryn Macfarlane, Manager Financial Strategy; Rhys Matulis, Manager Governance and Integrity; Simon Dean, Manager Digital and Technology; Emma Harry, Manager People & Culture; Jareth Goss, Manager Infrastructure Delivery; Christian Stefani, Manager Regional Partnerships; Christine Legg, Coordinator Communications, Engagement & Advocacy; Jade Harry, Procurement & Assurance Coordinator; Stephanie Pettau, Coordinator Accounting; Lynn Behmer, Assurance & Compliance Officer; Philippa Lloyd, Executive Assistant Strategy and Integrity; Sophie Dixon, Manager Community, Customer & Visitor; Lyndal Peterson, Manager Community Health & Safety
Internal Audit	Crowe Australasia: Andrew Zavitsanos, Cass Pelino
External Audit	Victorian Auditor General's Office: Chris Wong, Audit Manager, Local Government; Travis Derricott, Sector Director
Disclosure of Interest	*All officers involved in the preparation of this agenda have considered and determined that they do not have a conflict of interest in the matter.*

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Allison Jones
Chief Executive Officer

1. IN CAMERA - CONFIDENTIAL AUDIT & RISK REPORTS

1.1. IN CAMERA COMMITTEE ONLY

In-Camera Committee attendance

1.2. IN CAMERA COMMITTEE WITH CEO

In-Camera Committee and Chief Executive Officer attendance

2. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

2.1. WELCOME

2.2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

2.3. ATTENDEES

Attendees	**As noted above at page 4, with the exception of the apologies at 2.4.**

2.4. APOLOGIES

Apologies	Victorian Auditor General's Office: Travis Derricott, Sector Director Crowe Australasia: Cass Pelino Stephanie Pettau, Coordinator Accounting

2.5. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST OR DUTIES

Ms Marilyn Kearney

- Chair & Independent Member – Audit and Risk Committee – Maribyrnong City Council
- Independent Member – Audit and Risk Committee – Merri Bek City Council
- Independent Member – Audit and Risk Committee – Mitchell Shire Council
- Chair & Independent Member – Audit and Risk Committee – Horsham Rural City Council
- Chair & Independent Member – Audit and Risk Committee – Banyule City Council
- Co-Chair – Moonah House, Women's Community Shelters MPS – Mornington Peninsula

Ms. Jen Johanson

- Chair – Audit and Risk Committee – Hume City Council
- Chair – Audit and Risk Committee – Brimbank City Council
- Chair – Audit & Risk Committee – City of Melbourne
- Chair - Finance Risk and Audit Committee - Education Services Australia
- Board Member – Education Services Australia
- Board Member – Generation Life Limited
- Chair – Audit and Risk Committee – Bank First
- Chair – Audit and Rem and Noms Committees

Mr Mick Jaensch

- Director – MIK2 Consulting Services
- Independent Member – Audit and Risk Committee – Bayside City Council
- Chair – Audit and Risk Committee – City of Greater Geelong
- Independent Member – Audit and Risk Committee – Brimbank City Council
- Chair – Audit and Risk Committee – Knox City Council
- Independent Member - Audit and Risk Committee – City of Casey

2.6. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES AND ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Discussion:

The Committee noted that the Minutes of the 16 August 2025 Audit and Risk Committee meeting were reported to Council at the 18 February 2026 Council meeting.

The Committee noted and confirmed the draft Audit and Risk Committee Meeting minutes of 2 December 2025.

The Committee noted the progress on the Audit and Risk Committee Action Items.

Actions:

Nil.

3. AUDIT REPORTS

3.1. VAGO STATUS REPORT

Discussion:

The committee received and noted the VAGO Status Report.

VAGO advised the Committee that the FY24-25 Local Government Report is expected to be tabled at State Parliament in the forthcoming week.

Actions:

Nil.

3.2. SCOPE FOR EXTERNAL AUDIT FOR NOTING AND FEEDBACK

Discussion:

VAGO thanked management for their assistance with the planning phase of the audit. VAGO advised that the upcoming audit's focus will be slightly different from the previous year in regard to audit of the Performance Statement, but VAGO does not foresee any issues.

Actions:

Nil.

3.3. EXTERNAL AUDIT PREPAREDNESS

Discussion:

Management introduced the report and provided the Committee with a broad overview of the process underway in preparation for the audit.

VAGO commended management on the preparation work undertaken last year and is anticipating another smooth audit.

Actions:

Nil.

3.4. REVIEW INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS (AS REQUIRED)

Discussion:

Crowe provided the Committee with an overview of the findings and recommendations of the recent Contract Management Audit. Crowe noted that they are comfortable with the management comments and timeframes.

Management spoke to the internal audit report and how they intend to address the recommendations.

The Committee noted the report and requested an update at the next meeting with Management's review of the Contract Management System (CMS) and how they will address items if not utilising the CMS.

Actions:

Update action in Contract Management Internal Audit Open Action items.

3.5. INTERNAL AUDIT OPEN ACTION ITEMS UPDATE

Discussion:

Management introduced the report and advised the Committee that an escalation matrix has been developed for any tasks that fall overdue.

The Committee noted the Internal Audit Open Action Items Report and commended management on the quality and scope of the included Data Analytics Report.

Actions:

Nil.

4. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REPORTS

4.1. ORGANISATIONAL AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT - 1 JULY 2025 TO 31 DECEMBER 2025

Discussion:

The Committee congratulated management for the organisation's achievement for on-time, on-budget delivery and the stated financial reserve decisions.

Actions:

Nil.

5. GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE REPORTS

5.1. COMPLIANCE REPORT

Discussion:

In introducing the report, management updated the Committee on the activities during the last quarter.

The Committee noted the report and discussed with management the recent Arbiter's report (related to another Victorian Council) and the enforcement of the Code of Conduct during the state election period.

Actions:

Nil.

5.2. ANNUAL STRATEGIC PEOPLE AND CULTURE UPDATE REPORT

Discussion:

Management introduced the report that covered the 2025 period, discussing the highlights such as enhanced leadership capability programs, compliance achieved for the Gender Equality Action Plan and the Psychological Safety programs and enhanced reporting mechanisms that have been implemented.

The Committee discussed with management their methods of measurement to stated goals and how successful results in the People Matter Survey can be replicated across other areas of the organisation.

Management advised the Committee on the Enterprise Agreement process that is underway and the timeline to completion. The Committee requested that they be provided with updates on this item.

Actions:

Management to provide an update to the Committee on the Enterprise Agreement progress.

6. RISK REPORTS

6.1. QUARTERLY RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

Discussion:

Management summarised the content of the report, providing insight to the Committee on the work undertaken to formulate the Strategic Risks and the continuing work on the Risk Framework.

The Committee noted the report, seeking management's comments on the risk impact of the war in the Middle East and the process for Operational Risks that are either overdue or dealing with legacy planning issues.

The Committee commended management on the quality of the report and suggested that perhaps a section on Risk Culture could be added in future.

Actions:

Management to consider adding an item on Risk Culture in future reports.

6.2. BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN UPDATE

Discussion:

Management highlighted aspects of the Plan to the Committee and the proactive approach being taken by the organisation in preparing for potential events.

Management further advised the Committee on the upcoming plans for reviewing the Plan and its Sub-Plans.

The Committee noted the report and commended the organisation's growing maturity in dealing with these types of events.

Actions:

Nil.

6.3. INSURANCE CLAIMS AND PROGRAM UPDATE REPORT

Discussion:

Management introduced the report, informing the Committee of the recently completed internal Insurance Review Strategy and the insurance renewal process that is underway.

The Committee noted the Insurance Claims and Program Update Report.

Actions:

Nil.

6.4. CYBER SECURITY REPORT (INCLUDING PROGRESS TOWARDS ESSENTIAL 8)

Discussion:

The Committee noted the report and discussed with management emerging trends, perceived threats from AI and management of external providers.

Actions:

Management to include details of standard KPIs and penalties commonly detailed in IT provider contracts.

6.5. POLICY REVIEWS (OR CIRCULATED OUT OF SESSION)

Discussion:

The Committee noted the Policy Reviews report and discussed with management the tabled C06 Community Engagement Policy and the process followed for its formation.

Actions:

Management to circulate the following policies out of session:

- C75 Public Transparency Policy
- C15 Debt Management Policy
- C53 Hardship Policy

7. GENERAL BUSINESS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.1. DIRECTORATE REPORT - EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Discussion:

The Executive Director Empowering Communities tabled a presentation to the Committee, summarising the Directorate's composition, work being undertaken to improve the safety of officers and the key strategic and operational risks.

The Committee thanked management for the thorough and insightful report.

Actions:

Nil.

7.2. ARC ANNUAL SURVEY REPORT AGAINST CHARTER

Discussion:

The Committee noted the report and management's comments on areas targeted for improvement.

Actions:

Nil.

7.3. ARC WORK PLAN

Discussion:

Taken as read.

Actions:

Nil.

7.4. REVIEW AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING PERFORMANCE

Discussion:
The Committee discussed with management the recruitment process to cater for Ms. Johanson's end of tenure.

The Committee Chair advised the Committee that she would be presenting the Bi-Annual Audit and Risk Chair Report at a Councillor briefing this week.

Action:
Nil.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business for discussion.

9. MEETING CLOSED

NEXT MEETING

The next Audit & Risk Committee Meeting is scheduled to be held on 17th June 2026 (Online).

The meeting concluded at 11:50am.

5.4. INSTRUMENT OF APPOINTMENT - S11A PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT ACT 1987 - PLANNING SERVICES

Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity
Department:	Governance and Integrity

Council Plan
Objective - Leading with Integrity

Council's governance is strengthened by maintaining currency in the authorisations to Officers with the functions they are required to perform on behalf of Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report recommends that Council adopts S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation (*Planning and Environment Act 1987*) for staff member, Brandon Lamb, Statutory Planner (**Attachment [5.4.1]**) under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolves, in the exercise of the powers conferred by s.147(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, s.224 of the *Local Government Act 1989* and s.313 of the *Local Government Act 2020*:

1. **The members of Council staff referred to in the Instruments of Appointment and Authorisation (Attachment [5.4.1]) be appointed and authorised as set out in the instrument and detailed in this report; and**
2. **The Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation come into force immediately when signed by Council's Chief Executive Officer. It will remain in force until such time as Council determines to vary it, or it is revoked by Council's Chief Executive Officer in the event:**
    a. **the officer resigns from Council; or**
    b. **is appointed to a position where this appointment and authorisation is not required or suitable.**

REPORT

Appointing appropriately qualified officers to make decisions in accordance with enabling legislation contributes to the effective functioning of Council. Authorisations provide powers to officers to administer and enforce any Act, regulations or local laws which relate to the functions and powers of the Council. It is important to ensure that formal Instruments are arranged for new staff, updated to reflect changes in personnel, or amended to reflect changes in the legislation.

A S11A Instrument has been prepared for the new staff member listed below and are presented for adoption. This authorisation will enable the officer to fulfil the required legislative compliance duties inherent in the role.

- **Brandon Lamb** – Statutory Planner

The Instrument is contained in (**Attachment [5.4.1]**).

CONSULTATION / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Nil

RESOURCES / FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Nil

RISKS

Failure to adopt, update or revoke an Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation could result in a decision of an employee being invalidated or Council being held liable for the actions of former employees.

STAFF DISCLOSURE

All officers involved in the preparation of this report have considered and determined that they do not have a conflict of interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachments are available on Council's website at the following LINK.

1. S11A - Instrument of Authorisation - Statutory Planner - Brandon Lamb [**5.4.1** - 1 page]

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Council's Good Governance Framework
Pillar 3. Decision Making

Council Policy / Strategy / Plans
Documents are available on Council's website at the following LINK.

Nil

Legislative Provisions
Local Government Act 2020
Local Government Act 1989
Planning and Environment Act 1987

Regional, State and National Plan and Policies
Nil

South Gippsland
Shire Council

S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation (*Planning and Environment Act 1987*)

In this instrument "**officer**" means -

Brandon Lamb

By this instrument of appointment and authorisation South Gippsland Shire Council -

1. under s 147(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* – authorises the officer to carry out the duties or functions and to exercise the powers of an authorised officer under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*; and

2. under s 313 of the *Local Government Act 2020* authorises the officer either generally or in a particular case to institute proceedings for offences against the Acts and regulations described in this instrument.

It is declared that this instrument -

- comes into force immediately upon its execution;
- remains in force until varied or revoked.

This instrument is authorised by a resolution of the South Gippsland Shire Council on 15 July 2026.

Lucas Gardiner
Acting Chief Executive Officer
South Gippsland Shire Council

Date:

9 Smith Street (Private Bag 4) Leongatha 3953 – DX 94026 Leongatha
Telephone: (03) 5662 9200 Facsimile: (03) 5662 3754
Email: council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au Website: www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au

5.5. SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC BRIEFINGS - 1 MAY 2026 - 31 MAY 2026

Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity
Department:	Governance and Integrity

Council Plan
Theme - Leading with Integrity

Council's transparency and governance is strengthened by regularly reporting on summaries of briefings held, that assist Council to make informed decisions in Council Meetings on behalf of the community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report to Council is to provide a summary of the information presented to Councillors between 1 May 2026 and 31 May 2026.

This aligns with the principles of the *Local Government Act 2020* and supports transparency around Council decisions and actions.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes this report, the Summary of Strategic Briefings – 1 May 2026 – 31 May 2026.

REPORT

Meeting Title	Details
Wednesday 6 May 2026	
Planning – Monthly Briefing	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: Clare Williams **Conflict of Interest:** Nil
2026/27 Annual Revaluations Update	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: Clare Williams

	Conflict of Interest: Nil
Planning Scheme Review 2026 (Legislative requirement)	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: Clare Williams **Conflict of Interest:** Nil
Draft Amendment C135sgip – Flood Study Implementation – Standing Advisory Committee Report	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: Clare Williams **Conflict of Interest:** Nil
Introduction, CEO Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae and Steve Finlay **Apology**: Clare Williams, John Kennedy **Conflict of Interest:** Nil
Myli - My Community Library	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae and Steve Finlay **Apology**: Clare Williams, John Kennedy **Conflict of Interest:** Nil
Organisational and Financial Performance Report - 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: Clare Williams **Conflict of Interest:** Nil

Wednesday 13 May 2026	
2025/26 Community Grants Program – Round 2	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Clare Williams, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: Nil **Conflict of Interest:** Nil
Proposed Media and Marketing Policy	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Clare Williams, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: Nil **Conflict of Interest:** Nil
Asset Management Masterclass	**Councillor Attending** Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: John Schelling, Clare Williams **Conflict of Interest:** Nil
Financial Sustainability Strategy Workshop	**Councillor Attending** Sarah Gilligan, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: John Schelling, Clare Williams **Conflict of Interest:** Nil
Wednesday 20 May 2026	
Integrated Planning - Draft 2026/27 Budget and Council Plan Actions Briefing	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Brad Snell, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: Sarah Gilligan, Clare Williams

	Conflict of Interest: Nil
Councillor Insights	**Councillor Attending** John Schelling, Brad Snell, Clare Williams, Bron Beach, Nathan Hersey, Scott Rae, Steve Finlay and John Kennedy **Apology**: Sarah Gilligan **Conflict of Interest:** Nil

STAFF DISCLOSURE

All officers involved in the preparation of this report have considered and determined that they do not have a conflict of interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Council's Good Governance Framework
Pillar 3. Decision Making

Council Policy / Strategy / Plans
Documents are available on Council's website at the following LINK.

Public Transparency Policy (C75)

Legislative Provisions
Local Government Act 2020

5.6. DOCUMENTS SEALED, CONTRACTS VARIED, AWARDED OR EXTENDED BY CEO - 1 MAY - 31 MAY 2026

Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity
Department:	Financial Strategy

Council Plan
Theme - Leading with Integrity

Council's transparency of financial decisions made and overall financial sustainability is strengthened by regularly reporting on documents sealed, contracts awarded, varied or extended under the CEO's delegation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report to Council is to document the following actions undertaken by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) which occurred during the period 1 May 2026 to 31 May 2026. Council's *Procurement Policy (C32), General Local Law 2024* and *Planning and Environment Act 1987* requires the CEO to report to Council any of the following actions undertaken to the next appropriate Meeting:

- Documents sealed;
- Contracts awarded by Council after a public tender process;
- Contracts awarded after a public tender process within the CEO's delegation; and
- Contract variations approved by the CEO above contingency.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes this report Documents Sealed, Contracts Varied, Awarded or Extended by CEO – 1 May 2026 to 31 May 2026 those being:

1. **Documents Sealed:**
   a. **Nil**
2. **Contracts awarded by Council after a public tender process:**
   a. **Nil**

3. **Contracts awarded after a public tender process within the CEO's delegation:**

    a. **CON/458 for the Design and Construct of AFL Sports Floodlighting at Nyora & Leongatha Recreation Reserves awarded to REES Electrical Pty Ltd, trading as REES Sports Lighting for a Lump Sum of $514,540 ex GST. Signed by CEO 18 May 2026.**

4. **Contract variations approved by the CEO above contingency:**

    a. **Nil**

REPORT

Under the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), s.14 states that each Council is a body corporate with perpetual succession; and must have a common seal. Sealing a document makes it an official document of Council as a corporate body. Documents that require sealing include agreements, leases or any other contractual or legally binding document that binds Council to another party.

Use of the *General Local Law 2024*, Part 5 - Administration, clause 65 – Common Seal of Council, states that if the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) uses the Common Seal in a manner described by sub-clause (5), this means on the authority of a Council resolution, then Council must be advised of such use on a regular basis.

In accordance with the *General Local Law 2024*, Part 5 - Administration, clause 65 (6), the following are presented to Council as documents sealed during the period from 1 May 2026 to 31 May 2026.

Documents Sealed

1. Documents Sealed under *General Local Law 2024*

    a. Nil.

Section 173 Agreements are prepared in accordance with s.173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987,* allowing Council to enter into agreements relating to the use or development of land, conditions to which the land be used or developed or any matter that relates to planning or planning schemes in Victoria. Section 174 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* requires that such an agreement be under seal and must bind the owner to the covenants specified in the agreement.

In accordance with the Instrument of Delegation and *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the following are presented to Council as documents sealed during the period from 1 May 2026 to 31 May 2026.

2. Documents Sealed under *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

    a. Nil.

Contracts Awarded, Varied or Extended

In accordance with Council's Procurement Policy, where contracts are awarded after public tender, they are to be reported publicly. Where contracts above the CEO's delegation are varied or extended, they are required to be reported to the next practicable Council Meeting.

3. Contracts awarded by Council after a public tender process:

    a. Nil.

4. Contracts awarded after a public tender process within the CEO's delegation:

    a. CON/458 for the Design and Construct of AFL Sports Floodlighting at Nyora & Leongatha Recreation Reserves awarded to REES Electrical Pty Ltd, trading as REES Sports Lighting for a Lump Sum of $514,540 ex GST. Signed by CEO 18 May 2026.

5. Contract variations approved by the CEO above contingency:

    a. Nil

STAFF DISCLOSURE

All officers involved in the preparation of this report have considered and determined that they do not have a conflict of interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Council's Good Governance Framework
Pillar 3. Decision Making

Council Policy / Strategy / Plans
Documents are available on Council's website at the following *LINK*.

Governance Rules (C82)
General Local Law 2024
Procurement Policy (C32)

Legislative Provisions
Local Government Act 1989
Local Government Act 2020
Planning and Environment Act 1987

6. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

6.1. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

6.1.1. INTERNATIONAL URBAN AND REGIONAL COOPERATION (IURC) WORLD CITIES SUMMIT REPORT - JUNE 2026

6.1 ONE GIPPSLAND - SMART CITY EXPO WORLD CONGRESS (SCEWC) 2026 REPORT	
Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity
Department:	Regional Partnerships

Council Plan
Developing a Sustainable Future

This report relates to Council's role in supporting regional advocacy through One Gippsland and the delivery of initiatives and actions from the Economic Development Strategy, which encourages new industry and investment in Gippsland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to receive a report from Mayor Nathan Hersey on his participation at the World Cities Summit (WCS) as Chair of One Gippsland. The Summit was held in Singapore from 14 to 16 June 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes this One Gippsland – World Cities Summit (WCS) 2026 and International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) (Attachment [6.1.1.1]) Report.

REPORT

At its meeting on 15 April 2026, Council resolved the following:

> *"That Council:*
>
> 1. *Endorse Councillor Hersey to attend the World Cities Summit 2026 (WCS 2026) from 14 to16 June 2026, in Singapore, as South Gippsland Shire Council's Councillor representative and Chair of One Gippsland;*
>
> 2. *Provides a financial contribution or reimbursement related to costs incurred by Councillor Hersey capped at $500.00 for his participation and attendance at the World Cities Summit 2026 (WCS 2026) in Singapore; and*

3. *Receives a report from Councillor Hersey on the outcomes from One Gippsland's participation, and how they align with Council objectives and strategies, at the World Cities Summit 2026 (WCS 2026) to Council after the travel occurs, as per Council's Councillor Support and Expenditure Policy (C51)."*

World Cities Summit

The International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) Program is an initiative of the European Union that promotes collaboration between cities and regions on sustainable urban and regional development, fostering partnerships between EU and non-EU communities.

One Gippsland accepted an invitation to participate in the IURC Program on a provisional basis and attended the World Cities Summit in Singapore from 14–16 June 2026.

The Summit brought together approximately 50 cities and regions from Europe, Asia and Australasia, providing an opportunity to share knowledge, exchange ideas and build relationships with international partners. Discussions explored emerging global trends and innovative approaches relevant to local government and regional development.

A key theme of the Summit was the importance of economic resilience and diversification, particularly in regions facing changing market conditions, workforce pressures and environmental challenges. These discussions were particularly relevant to regional and agricultural communities such as Gippsland, highlighting the need for long-term planning, collaboration and adaptation to support sustainable growth.

CONSULTATION / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

IURC has engaged with Council through its representation on One Gippsland and with other member Gippsland councils.

RESOURCES / FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Under its Councillor Support and Expenditure Policy (C51), Councillors undertaking international travel in relation to Council business require Council endorsement prior to the event, which was endorsed at the Council Meeting on 15 April 2026.

Most travel and accommodation costs related to the event were covered through the Program. A total of up to $500 in other incidental travel costs, for example to cover taxi fares and some meals, will be covered and reimbursed by Council.

RISKS

South Gippsland Shire Council, as a member of One Gippsland, supported participation in the IURC Program and attendance at the World Cities Summit. Failure to attend may have limited opportunities to learn from international regions, develop partnerships, and identify opportunities in areas such as agri-food, renewable energy and regional development. Attendance also supported

One Gippsland's commitment to the IURC Program and ongoing international collaboration.

STAFF DISCLOSURE

All officers involved in the preparation of this report have considered and determined that they do not have a conflict of interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

1. World Cities Summit Councillor and IURC Report - [**6.1.1.1** - 6 Pages]

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Council's Good Governance Framework

Nil

Council Policy / Strategy / Plans

Documents are available on Council's website at the following LINK.

Councillor Support and Expenditure Policy (C51)

Legislative Provisions

Local Government Act 2020

Regional, State and National Plan and Policies

Gippsland Regional Plan

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

IURC & World Cities Summit Report 2026

South Gippsland
Shire Council

Representation

Cr Nathan Hersey attended the World Cities Summit 2026 and International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) discussions in his capacity as Chair of One Gippsland and Mayor of South Gippsland Shire Council.

World Cities Summit 2026, Including a Mayor's Forum

The World Cities Summit is a global platform for government leaders, industry experts and urban practitioners to address liveable and sustainable city challenges, share integrated urban solutions and strengthen international partnerships. The Summit brought together global leaders, industry experts, academia, young leaders, innovators, start-ups and entrepreneurs in conversation and ideas exchange on cities, address urban liveability and sustainability challenges.

The World Cities Summit 2026 had close to 4,200 delegates and trade visitors from 263 unique cities, including 112 mayors and city leaders at the Mayors Forum, from 14 – 16 June 2026.

International Urban and Regional Cooperation programme, including communities of practice sessions.

The International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) programme is a European Union initiative, supporting collaboration between cities and regions around the world. Gippsland has been participating in the programme though One Gippsland.

The IURC programme focuses on areas including clean energy, industrial modernisation, agri-food systems, blue economy, climate adaptation, innovation, social cohesion and regional transition.

Gippsland has been participating in two Communities of Practice through the programme, being ***Resilient Agrifood and Forestry*** and ***Energy - Just transition & low carbon technologies.***

The workshop brought together approximately 100 delegates from cities and regions across Europe, Asia, Australasia and Latin America alongside representatives from the European Commission and the Singaporean Government.

Alignment with Council Objectives

Mayor Hersey's participation aligns with Council's strategic priorities, particularly:

Council Plan 2025–2029 – Developing a Sustainable Future
Council is committed to long-term sustainability, responsible economic and social development, environmental stewardship, innovation and resilience. The Summit's focus on sustainable growth, renewable energy, climate adaptation and regional transition directly supports these priorities.

Economic Development Strategy 2021–2031 – Strategic Theme 1: Attracting and Retaining Investment
Participation supported opportunities to promote Gippsland as an investment-ready region, strengthen international relationships and explore future investment, trade and collaboration pathways.

Economic Development Strategy 2021–2031 – Strategic Theme 3: Developing Key Industry Sectors
The Summit provided access to sector-specific insights and international expertise relevant to Gippsland's key industries, including agriculture, renewable energy, circular economy, sustainable construction and regional innovation.

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

IURC & World Cities Summit Report 2026

Key Activities Undertaken:

Cr Hersey met Ms Low Ten Ling, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry of Singapore for a brief discussion and welcome to Singapore.

Tour of Gardens by the Bay and Roundtable Discussions

Cr Hersey attended a tour of Gardens by the bay and ecoWise Marina Power Tri-Generation System, which uses biomass fuel for cooling, heating and electricity generation. The tour provided an opportunity to see how waste materials can be converted into energy, including through the use of organic pellets. It offered practical insight into alternative energy generation and waste-to-energy approaches.

The tour was followed by a round table discussion with world mayors that focused on energy, including opportunities, challenges and the different approaches being taken to support energy transition and resilience.

Cr Hersey emphasised that it was vital to make sure the local areas that are impacted through a transition to renewable energy also receive the benefits, ie: local benefit sharing and community investment.

Mayors Forum

The flagship Mayors Forum, chaired by Singapore's Minister for National Development Chee Hong Tat, convened leaders from 103 cities worldwide to debate the translating of national climate ambitions into localised urban actions.

A central theme highlighted by Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong was prioritising practical, local solutions over ideology to navigate rising costs, economic anxiety and rapid energy transitions.

Mayors openly shared successes and structural setbacks, using the platform to shorten global learning curves, establish cross-border trust and form resilient international networks.

The forum included a significant discussion on housing, with a strong focus on affordable and social housing, and the role local government can play in supporting, enabling or directly contributing to housing development. A key area of discussion was liveability, with housing emerging as the issue of greatest interest. The forum also included a case study on the delivery of affordable housing, providing practical insights into different models and approaches.

The Lord Mayor of Melbourne participated in the panel discussion, which explored how different cities are adapting to housing pressures and identifying new ways to support housing supply and affordability.

Regenerative Cities Framework

The Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC) formally launched its publication, "Beyond Sustainability – Building a Regenerative Future for Our Cities". Moving past traditional sustainability models that focus on minimising damage, this framework offers city planners a structured approach to engineer net-positive, circular built environments. Developed using data-driven insights from over 100 experts, it equips local municipalities with clear metrics to hold real estate, energy and waste systems accountable to closed-loop standards.

Infrastructure & Underground Utility Planning

Singapore's Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Singapore Land Authority showcased the tangible results of their Major Infrastructure Workflow, a blueprint designed to overcome spatial challenges beneath high-density urban zones. Summit delegates analysed how Singapore unified disparate underground utilities into 272 kilometres of sub-surface corridors. The presentation detailed how non-invasive detection technology and predictive workflows pre-emptively saved roughly S$300 million in mid-construction rerouting costs.

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SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

IURC & World Cities Summit Report 2026

Providing Reliable and Efficient Municipal Service

Breaking down silos and better coordinating across agencies, optimising digital platforms and service providers to enable seamless end-to-end municipal operations, with clear accountability and shared performance targets. Strengthening integrated service delivery across essential sectors for example healthcare, transport, education, public safety, and social services, so that residents experience accessible, connected, and user-centric services throughout different stages of life. Investing in future-ready and adaptable infrastructure systems and leverage human capital and community and citizen engagement to withstand climate, demographic and demand pressures, while ensuring continuity and reliability of essential services.

Managing Water for Resilience

Embedding water security into planning and decision-making to ensure universal access to safe and reliable water supplies and strengthen resilience against future shocks. Accelerating integrated flood management and climate adaptation measures, including digitised approaches, that protect communities, critical infrastructure and economic activity from increasing water-related risks. Scaling nature-based solutions and regenerative urban approaches that improve water management, reduce flood and drought risks, enhance biodiversity and create more liveable urban environments by establishing processes that consider nature-based solutions.

Re-thinking the Urban Energy Transition

Integrating clean energy, electrification and decarbonisation goals into planning and governance, including community upskilling, while accelerating the diversification of energy sources and enhancing energy efficiency and demand management to strengthen energy security and resilience. Advancing net-zero building pathways by adopting green building standards for new developments and scaling energy-efficiency retrofits across existing buildings. Fostering regional cooperation and integrated energy systems by strengthening grid connectivity, enabling cross-border energy partnerships, and facilitating the exchange of clean energy resources.

Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize

The highly anticipated Prize Lecture celebrated global urban success stories, spotlighting London as the 2026 Prize Laureate alongside several Special Mention cities. Attended by London Mayor Sadiq Khan and Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, the ceremony and accompanying lectures provided masterclasses on how major metropolises successfully navigated massive housing shortages, intense heat vulnerabilities, and post-pandemic economic shifts. The laureates provided actionable blueprints, proving that bold political leadership can deliver an exceptional quality of life despite rapid urban growth.

Leadership Dialogue – Future of Cities and Regions

A key component of the trip was the Leadership Dialogue on the Future of Cities and Regions, which brought together elected leaders and senior representatives from Australia, Europe, Asia and Latin America.

Cr Hersey participated as a panellist alongside:

- Ana Abrunhosa, Mayor of Coimbra, Portugal;
- Nicholas Reece, Lord Mayor of Melbourne;
- Daniela Reina, Advisor to the Mayor of Cali, Colombia;
- Silvia Martínez Rocher, Valencia Region, Spain; and
- Dr Ashok George Verghese, Hindustan Group, India.

The discussion focused on the tangible benefits generated through cooperation and how international partnerships are helping cities and regions transform shared challenges into opportunities for innovation, resilience and sustainable development.

Cr Hersey shared the local energy diversification and thriving agricultural industry across Gippsland, using examples of the history and success for the region and the transition to new industries.

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

IURC & World Cities Summit Report 2026

Cr Hersey shared of the work One Gippsland is doing in conjunction with Food & Fibre Gippsland to create and promote the Gippsland Trusted brand and the ambitions to develop provenance traceability for the Gippsland region, helping to underpin the high-quality food produced from Gippsland and to promote it to the world.

Cr Hersey also shared of the region's experiences so far in energy diversification and the potential for exceptional growth and prosperity if the transition is undertaken well. This was done whilst also highlighting the concerns held by many in Gippsland, that if the transition is done poorly and without genuine local benefit, employment opportunities, infrastructure investment and without support and protection for existing industries that Gippsland could see the impacts without real benefit. This is something at the forefront of One Gippsland's ongoing advocacy efforts.

Learning from many others around the world, who have tackled population growth, industry transitions, housing and other impacts on local a local area was a valuable opportunity through the session.

Regional Transition and Economic Diversification

Cr Hersey highlighted Gippsland's experience in managing economic transition, particularly the transformation of the Latrobe Valley as the region moves away from coal-based energy generation.

Discussion centred on:

- Creating new employment opportunities;
- Supporting communities through transition;
- Building economic resilience;
- Developing sustainable industries; and
- Leveraging international partnerships to accelerate regional transformation.

Agri-Food and Regional Resilience

The workshop highlighted the increasing importance of agriculture and sustainable food systems in supporting regional resilience and economic diversification. Discussions reinforced opportunities for Gippsland to continue developing:

- Advanced agricultural practices;
- Sustainable food production;
- Food security initiatives;
- Export opportunities; and
- International collaboration across agri-food sectors.

Food & Fibre Gippsland represented the region as part of its industry leadership role in agriculture through One Gippsland. Food & Fibre Gippsland is actively collaborating with European regions on Resilient Agri-Food Systems and Forestry - a program engaging partners across Western Greece, Poland and Macedonia. The work is focused on two activities directly aligned with Food & Fibre Gippsland's strategic direction: Circular Economy and Zero Waste, and Regional Branding, Provenance and Traceability through the Gippsland Trusted program.

At the workshop, participating communities of practice voted on the most innovative work being undertaken across the 21 active collaborations. Gippsland's contribution to Resilient Agri-Food Systems and Forestry was recognised as the most innovative across all 21 communities - a proud result for the region and for the teams involved.

The conference also provided a valuable opportunity to meet project colleagues from Western Greece, Poland and Macedonia face-to-face for the first time, deepen collaboration, and engage with global industry leaders in sustainable construction - including further conversations around Industrial Hemp, an area where Food & Fibre Gippsland is leading advocacy across Gippsland.

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

IURC & World Cities Summit Report 2026

Communities of Practice Marketplace

Delegates participated in an interactive Communities of Practice Marketplace, where representatives shared pilot projects, methodologies and lessons learned from international cooperation activities.

The marketplace provided opportunities to exchange knowledge on:

- Clean energy and decarbonisation;
- Circular economy initiatives;
- Regional innovation;
- Climate adaptation;
- Digital transformation; and
- Economic development strategies.

The workshop also explored approaches to project implementation, stakeholder engagement, monitoring frameworks and peer-learning models that can support successful delivery of future pilot projects.

Community of Practice (CoP) 4: Just Transition and Low Carbon Technologies

A meeting was held between Mr Bartosz Mądry, International Relations Officer at the Marshal's Office of the Łódzkie Region in Poland, Cr Hersey and Simon Johnson, CEO of Food & Fibre Gippsland.

This meeting was an opportunity to discuss the ongoing partnership between the two regions, focusing on collaboration under CoP 4, with Federation University Australia, a member of One Gippsland, serving as the lead academic institution.

Łódzkie highlighted the strengthening relationship between Federation University Australia and Łódź University of Technology through an upcoming academic networking session as part of CoP 4 activities.

Gippsland noted the challenge of identifying energy projects that deliver tangible benefits across the region's six local government areas, reflecting the complexity of achieving region-wide outcomes.

Looking ahead, Łódzkie advised that the CEO of WindTAK, a company operating in the wind energy sector, would be actively exploring potential partnerships with Gippsland's wind energy industry. The regions also discussed the Gippsland New Energy Conference (18–19 August), with Łódzkie indicating that participation was under consideration.

Gippsland suggested a future visit to the Latrobe Velley to showcase airport and drone facilities, while noting that opportunities for collaboration in this sector are constrained by Australia's national-level regulatory and policy responsibilities.

Summary

Participation in the 2026 World Cities Summit and ongoing participation in the IURC programme provided an opportunity for Gippsland to continue building relationships and to strengthen its international profile, whilst promoting the work through the IURC programme of;

1.Regional branding, through the Gippsland Trusted brand and plans for a regional traceability project to help market the region's food to Australia and the world. Promoting Gippsland's high value clean agricultural outputs on an international stage.

   a. Continued collaboration with and learning from regions in the European Union that have been through similar transformations or are facing similar issues, including the regions of Western Greece, Central Macedonia and Val d'Oise France.

2. Learning of regions throughout Europe that have successfully diversified energy production and seen benefits to industry and residents.

   a. Continued collaboration with the Łódzkie region in Poland.

The event demonstrated strong alignment between Gippsland's priorities and the work being undertaken by regions around the world in areas including economic transition, clean energy, innovation, agri-food development and community resilience.

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

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The workshop reinforced the value of international cooperation in addressing complex regional challenges and highlighted opportunities for future collaboration, pilot projects and knowledge exchange.

The relationships developed through the program continue to provide a platform for Gippsland to learn from international best practice, support economic diversification and pursue opportunities that contribute to long-term regional prosperity.

Finanical Considerations

Any expenditure associated with Cr Hersey's participation was undertaken in accordance with Council's *Councillor Support and Expenditure Policy* and was in line with the Council resolution.

Most travel and accommodation costs related to the event were covered by the World Cities Summit organisers through the invitation The Honourable Chee Hong Tat, Minister for National Development, Singapore and with the return economy class flights covered under the IURC Programme.

Expense	Amount
Taxi	$43.20 AUD
Food	$94.24 AUD
Parking	$80.80 AUD
Total	$218.24 AUD

6.2. REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

6.3. COUNCILLOR UPDATES

7. CLOSED SESSION

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), section 66 provides that if a council or delegated committee determines that a meeting is to be closed to the public to consider confidential information, the Council or delegated committee must record in the minutes of the meeting that are available for public inspection –

a) the ground or grounds for determining to close the meeting to the public by reference to the grounds specified in the definition of ***confidential information*** in section 3(1); and

b) an explanation of why the specified ground or grounds applied.

The Act defines ***confidential information in*** s.3(1)(a)-(l), and includes information that may prejudice or impact; commercial negotiations, the security of Council, land use planning, law enforcement, legal privilege, personal information, private commercial information, confidential meeting information, internal arbitration, Councillor conduct panel information and information specified under s.77 of the previous *Local Government Act 1989*. Once confidential information has been considered and decided in a closed session of a Council Meeting, a further resolution to resume open Council is required.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council pursuant to section 66(5)(a) and (b) of the *Local Government Act 2020* close the Council Meeting to the public to consider the following confidential information:

1. **Per s.3(1)(f) Agenda item 9.1 – PERSONAL INFORMATION - Appointment of Committee Member of the Audit and Risk Committee - July 2026, designated as personal information,**
    a. **being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs;**
    b. **The grounds for designation have been made to protect the privacy of an individual's personal information.**
2. **Per s.3(1)(g) Agenda items 9.2 – PRIVATE COMMERCIAL INFORMATION - Award Contract CON/459 – Microsoft Licencing, designated as private commercial information,**
    a. **being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that –**
        i. **Relates to trade secrets; or**
        ii. **If released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.**

8. MEETING CLOSED

NEXT MEETING

The next Council Meeting open to the public will be held on Wednesday, 19 August 2026 commencing at 2:00pm in the Council Chambers, Leongatha.