



# Minutes

## Council Meeting

Tuesday 16 December 2025 at 6:00 pm

**Council Chambers (and by video conferencing)  
East Gippsland Shire Council Corporate Centre  
273 Main Street, Bairnsdale 3875**

*Councillors*

Jodie Ashworth (Mayor), Tom Crook (Deputy Mayor), Arthur Allen, Sonia Buckley (Online), Barry Davis, Joanne Eastman, Bernie Farquhar (Online), Ian Trevaskis, and John White

*Attachments referenced in these minutes can be located in the meeting agenda on East Gippsland Shire Council's [website](#).*

## Vision

To foster inclusive, connected, communities and places where all East Gippslanders prosper, and endeavour not to leave anyone behind.

## Our Strategic Themes

1. Community Wellbeing and Social Responsibility
2. Prosperity
3. Making the Most of What We've Got
4. Managing Council Well

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# 1 Procedural

## 1.1 Recognition of Traditional Custodians

Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth welcomed all to the Council meeting and acknowledged the traditional custodians.

*East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the Gunaikurnai, Monero and Bidawel people as the Traditional Custodians of this land that encompasses East Gippsland Shire, and their enduring relationship with country. The Traditional Custodians have cared and nurtured East Gippsland for tens of thousands of years.*

*Council values their living culture and practices and their right to self-determination. Council pays respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in East Gippsland, their Elders, past, present, and future.*

## 1.2 Apologies

Nil

## 1.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Cr Sonia Buckley declared a conflict of interest in relation to item 5.4.3 *Community Impact Grants 2025/26*, as a material interest due to her position on a committee that is a grant applicant.

Sarah Johnston General Manager Business Excellence declared a conflict of interest in relation to item 5.4.3 *Community Impact Grants*, as a general interest due to her position on a committee that is a grant applicant.

## 1.4 Confirmation of Minutes

### Motion

***That the minutes of the Council meeting held Tuesday 18 November 2025 and the Statutory Meeting held Thursday 20 November 2025 be confirmed.***

***Moved: Cr Joanne Eastman***

***Seconded: Cr Tom Crook***

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Tom Crook

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

## 1.5 Next Meeting

The next Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday 17 February 2026 at the Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street Bairnsdale commencing at 6.00 pm.

## 1.6 Requests for Leave of Absence

Nil

## 1.7 Condolences

### Motion

***That Council acknowledges the recent passing of Frank Grando, a valued member of East Gippsland Shire Council staff and extends its sincere condolences to his family.***

***Moved: Cr Barry Davis***

***Seconded: Cr Tom Crook***

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Barry Davis

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

### Motion

***That Council acknowledges the recent tragic events at Bondi Beach and extends its sincere condolences to the individuals, families, friends and their communities who have been affected.***

***Moved: Cr Ian Trevaskis***

***Seconded: Cr Arthur Allen***

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Ian Trevaskis, Cr Arthur Allen and Cr Sonia Buckley

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

## 1.8 Open Forum

### 1.8.1 Petitions

#### 1.8.1.1 Objection to Name Change of View Street, Lakes Entrance

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

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#### **Motion**

##### ***That Council:***

- 1. receives the petition;***
- 2. notes that the petition will be referred to General Manager Business Excellence for consideration and response; and***
- 3. notes that the Chief Executive Officer will arrange for Council Officers to write to the head petitioner advising them of these actions.***

***Moved: Cr Arthur Allen***

***Seconded: Cr Tom Crook***

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Arthur Allen and Cr Sonia Buckley

**Spoke against the motion:** Cr Joanne Eastman

**Closed the debate:** Nil

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

## 1.8.2 Questions of Council

Nil

## 1.8.3 Public Submissions

### 1.8.3.1 Use and Development of Land for Timber Production and the Removal of Native Vegetation at 400, 400A and 580 Aitkens Road, Bengworden

Mr George Konstandakos addressed Council on the Use and Development of Land for Timber Production and the Removal of Native Vegetation and spoke at item 5.4.1.

## 1.9 Items for Noting

In accordance with section 54(4)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, a copy of the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Performance Report is to be tabled and subsequently recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

### Attachments

1. 2024-25 Annual Performance Assessment Report [1.9.1.1 - 11 pages]

## 2 Notices of Motion

Nil

## 3 Deferred Business

Nil

## 4 Councillor Delegate Reports

### 4.1 Cr Arthur Allen

#### Representation Report

20/11/25 - I attended the South East Australian Transport Strategy Quarterly meeting at Leongatha. Updates were provided on current issues and guest speakers from Port of Hastings Authority who briefed delegates on their plans and aspirations for Hastings as an Assembly port for offshore turbines. The meeting also heard from Reid Mather about the importance of rail freight to the transport network.

20/11/25 – In the evening was the Statutory Council meeting and I congratulated Cr Jodie Ashworth on her election as Mayor, I know she will be fantastic.

21/11/25 - I attended the special forum organised by Rail Freight Alliance to examine the implications for freight into the Port of Melbourne due to the proposed reconfiguration of Sunshine rail yard.

22/11/25 - The Mayor and I attended the annual Marina Berth Holder meetings at Metung and Paynesville. Both were well attended meetings.

23/11/25 - I attended the presentation for the final of the Bream Classic at Metung and made a presentation on behalf of Council.

28/11/25 - The Mayor and I attended Lakes Primary School for the Messages from East Gippsland program where pupils from Nungurner joined students from Lakes for the day. Following on from that, I accompanied the Mayor to the start of the Great Alpine Rally, over 100 cars and over 1000 crews and others in town for the three-day event and on Sunday 30 November 2025, I attended the presentation event.

#### South East Australian Transport Strategy - Quarterly Meeting 20/11/25

Greg Pullen updated members on the meeting from NSW Councils that held the previous week. Most of the discussion related to the importance of the escarpment crossings and the need to upgrade the road through the Illawarra. Harvey Donelli outlined the Department of Transport and Planning's policy guidelines for prioritising projects and spoke at length of the need to convince Government to plan for the Traralgon Bypass now, rather than waiting for more certainty around the timelines for Loy Lang closing date.

Guest speakers were Peter Watts and Leon Morkam from the Port of Hastings Authority who outlined their plans to serve as the assembly and construction port for proposed offshore turbines. They expect to finish preparation of an Environmental Effects Statement by 2027. Interestingly, there will be no rail connection as part of the proposal. Reid Mather presented on the work of the Rail Freight Alliance and the opportunities for rail to compliment road in the movement of freight into and out of the region.

#### Rail Freight Alliance Forum 21/11/25

The special forum brought together speakers from rail freight operators and a major rail freight user to explore the implications for freight movement into Port of Melbourne, once the proposed major works at Sunshine are commenced. In essence it means that the current long trains running into the port will need to be diverted either at Ararat or Ballarat to Geelong then onto an already crowded corridor through to Port of Melbourne. In practical terms, this means a train from Boort for example, would be on a minimum turnaround of 42 hours if it were able to run unhindered. In reality it could blow out to 72 hours. Grain Corp estimates a minimum of \$1 dollar per tonne increase in freight costs which will increase should delays occur.

## **4.2 Cr Sonia Buckley**

### Year in Review (December 2024 – December 2025)

I am honoured to present this summary of my work over the past twelve months as Councillor and former Deputy Mayor, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) Representative and Chair of the Road Safety Committee within East Gippsland Shire Council. It has been a year defined by passion for our region, persistent advocacy, and a deep respect for the people who call East Gippsland home.

### My Commitment to Community and Leadership

From the outset, I committed to serving with integrity, transparency, and a strong voice for rural and regional Victorians. In my former role as Deputy Mayor, I supported the Mayor in representing our shire — at community forums, attending stakeholder briefings and many other events. As well as attending several MAV events to represent our Region and the Australian Local Government Association conference in Canberra to advocate for East Gippsland. I always aimed to carry out these duties with a spirit of unity, ensuring every decision remained grounded in fairness, community values and a vision of shared prosperity.

As Chair of our Road Safety Committee, I applied that same sense of responsibility to protecting the lives and livelihoods of our residents. Whether working with Victoria Police, the Department of Transport and Planning, or community groups, I pushed for real, practical improvements — from road signage and intersection safety upgrades especially around school crossings to ensuring communication, data and planning with a highlight to rural road maintenance reflected the unique risks our region faces. We face challenges with funding to ensure much needed upgrades to roads as well as identifying the need for education programs for safe driving, data reflects that distraction is one of the key issues associated with fatalities.

### Key Milestones for Council — What We Achieved Together

(Not acting as a spokesperson) My view was this year our Council has marked several important milestones; I'm proud to have contributed to and supported many of them:

- We adopted a refreshed long-term strategic direction via our Council Plan 2025–29, aligning with the broader vision set out in Community Vision 2040 — a plan shaped by thousands of residents' voices.
- We saw Council deliver real on-the-ground results and community-led infrastructure, as documented in our 2024–25 Annual Report. That report highlights our continued commitment to community wellbeing, resilience, service delivery, and financial sustainability even under rising costs and weather events.
- Our shared services initiative with Wellington Shire Council — consolidating data-centre and ICT infrastructure — earned statewide recognition with a LGPro Award for Excellence (Innovation Management). That achievement represents stronger cybersecurity, better disaster-recovery, cost-efficiency, and environmental benefits for our ratepayers.
- We delivered important community infrastructure via recovery and rebuild projects following the 2019/20 bushfires — such as the rebuild of the Genoa Pedestrian Bridge — that foster community connection and resilience.
- We continued to champion sustainable tourism and environmental stewardship — examples include our shire's role in achieving certification as Victoria's first ECO Destination Certification, reflecting our commitment to nature-based tourism, environmental care, and long-term resilience.
- These milestones — which can be verified on the East Gippsland Shire Council website and in our public reports — show the breadth and depth of what Council has achieved this past year. I am proud to have played my part.

### Standing Up for Rural Communities — Our Fight Against the ESVF Levy

One of my strongest and most persistent advocacies this year has been our fight against the state's new Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund (ESVF) — effectively the rebranded levy replacing the old Fire Services Property Levy.

From December 2024, Council — with my full support — clearly stated that this levy would place a heavy and unjust burden on our rural households, farmers, small businesses and volunteers. We championed that emergency services should be funded through consolidated state revenue, not by a punitive property-based tax disguised as a levy.

In my previous role as Deputy Mayor, I co-signed a letter to the Premier underscoring the levy's unfairness and the risks it posed — not just financially, but to community trust and volunteer retention.

We also joined with the broader local government sector via the MAV and regional councils to press the State Government for a fairer, more equitable funding model. Our advocacy contributed to a temporary rate freeze for primary production properties — a short-term relief, though we remain committed to seeing the levy abolished or significantly reformed.

This fight has been, and remains, about fairness, recognition of rural hardships, and protecting the backbone of our community — our volunteers, farmers and small businesses.

### Governance, Representation and Community Voice

Beyond these headline achievements, I have continued to work behind the scenes — ensuring Council remains transparent, accountable, and responsive. I have:

- Supported open governance and proper processes for Councillor inclusion in stakeholder briefings and decision-making.
- Raised concerns about political interference and procedural fairness during Council election cycles.
- I have actively supported new Councillors by ensuring they are well-informed about code of conduct processes and conflicts of interest, promoting a culture of accountability and integrity within Council.
- Sought to leverage my personal experience to ensure that the Omeo District was declared drought affected, advocated for change in criteria, actioned a request for rotary to arrange hay relief donations.
- Contributed to the Equine Tourism Feasibility study to ensure pathways for better land and wild horse management to better the economy, protect sensitive environments and agricultural enterprise.
- Ensured that Cultural Heritage was embedded into the Council plan to preserve the Australian way of life and honour our traditions.

### Looking Ahead — My Commitment for the Year to Come

As we move into the next term, I remain fully committed to:

- Continuing our fight against unfair levies like the ESVF and holding state decision-makers accountable for equitable funding of emergency services.
- Strengthening road safety, disaster resilience, and infrastructure — particularly for rural and remote communities.
- Ensuring Council remains guided by the community's values through the ongoing implementation of the Council Plan and Community Vision 2040.
- Expanding sustainable development, tourism, and environmentally responsible industry that supports both our livelihoods and our landscape.
- Upholding transparency, fairness, and representation in all governance decisions — so that every East Gippslander feels heard and respected. Ensure the transparency portal for the East Gippsland shire is implemented.

- Additionally, I am committed to conducting regular reviews of public toilet facilities across the shire, ensuring they meet high standards of cleanliness and accessibility for all community members and visitors.
- Furthermore, I am dedicated to opening up the budget submissions process, ensuring an all-round opportunity for public consultation so every community member can have their say on how resources are allocated.

### In Closing

I remain deeply grateful for the trust that the community has placed in me, and for the opportunity to represent you, to fight for fairness, and to help shape the future of East Gippsland together. The past twelve months have had challenges — but also meaningful progress.

I'm proud of what we have accomplished — and more determined than ever to keep working hard, with conviction, and respect for our community.

If you wish to review the milestones, decisions and projects referenced in this report, I encourage you to visit the East Gippsland Shire Council website, where full Council minutes, media releases and the 2024–25 Annual Report are publicly available.

Thank you for giving me the honour of serving you.

### **4.3 Cr Ian Trevaskis**

#### Timber Towns Victoria Meeting - Representative Report

There were no presentations at this meeting therefore topics were raised and discussed.

The first thing of importance is that the federal governments new environmental laws may impact private native forest logging. Trying to find out if this impacts the private Cabbage Tree coup we signed off on. As I'm writing have found out that it has been approved prior to the new legislation and is now for sale with a permit to log. John who is 80 years old just hasn't enough energy left to continue.

The importation of timber was touched on regarding bio-security issues. The risk of unwanted pests hasn't been fully looked into.

The blue gum plantations destined for paper that were left after Chinese import bans some almost 30 years ago in the Barbara area have matured into very usable hardwood timber.

Whitehead Timber is in the process of using it.

Cr Tim Meyer from West Wimmera said his Council has to clear roadside timber where needed to facilitate the transportation of 100 metre wind turbine blades from Portland to somewhere up north. Hope the locals can at least get firewood.

#### **4.4 Cr Jodie Ashworth**

20/11/25 – Statutory Meeting  
22/11/25 – Annual Berth Holder Meetings (Metung and Paynesville)  
24/11/25 – Quarterly Financial Report Briefing  
25/11/25 – Councillor Briefing Session  
27/11/25 – Paynesville Classic Boat Rally – Art Competition Awards  
28/11/25 – Launch Messages from East Gippsland  
28/11/25 – 2025 Lovells Alpine Rally of East Gippsland  
02/12/25 – Councillor Briefing Sessions  
04-05/12/25 – MAV Mayor and Deputy Mayor Mandatory Training  
08/12/25 – Councillor Support and Chief Executive Officer Weekly meetings  
08/12/25 – Youth Ambassadors End of Year Event  
09/12/25 – Councillor Professional Development Sessions  
09/12/25 – Councillor and Executive Leadership Team End of year Christmas Celebration  
11/12/25 – Crooke Street Wetlands Official Opening  
11/12/25 – Chat with Council – REG FM  
11/12/25 – Lakes Entrance Action & Development Association Meeting  
15/12/25 – Koala Trail Digital Tour Guide  
16/12/25 – Councillor Briefing Session and Council Meeting

#### **4.5 Cr Joanne Eastman**

I was pleased to represent the Councillors at a function held by the Friends of the Paynesville Library Inc. to celebrate the contribution of its outgoing President Fiona Seaton. The event was attended by a large and enthusiastic group of people who acknowledged the years of work Fiona has put into the library since moving to East Gippsland. Between the Shire staff and the very active Friends Group, the Paynesville library offers more than a comprehensive catalogue – it is a friendly meeting place for both residents and visitors of all ages and a vital community hub that has been fortunate to have such a committed, hardworking and passionate group of supporters. Well done to all.

I was fortunate to attend the Youth Ambassador's Annual Breakup Dinner with the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer. The group provides opportunities for young people to step up into leadership roles and act as a bridge between the Shire and youth in raising awareness of issues facing young people and advocating for action.

I attended the opening of the Crooke Street Wetlands Project with several interested community members and agency representatives. The Project is the culmination of years of hard work and a truly integrated project co-designed and supported by Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, East Gippsland Water and the Shire. Eric Sjern from the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee gave a highly informative talk on the ecology of the area and the positive impact the wetlands will have on environmental health. The project is a critical part of infrastructure designed to address the increase in pollution associated with expanding urban development. It has replaced an open drain feeding directly into Jones Bay with a series of specially constructed wetlands that prevents pollutants and litter going into the bay, and reduce phosphorous and nitrogen, replaced weed and invasive species with natives and is providing habitat for an increasing number of native species.

The Errinundra to Snowy (E2S) Wellbeing Spaces Governance Group meeting once again demonstrated the amazing work this small group of dedicated and passionate community members and groups have done under the auspices of Orbost Regional Health. The success of the Nurse-Led Care project to date, as highlighted in the Lartner Evaluation Report, has led to an extension of funding till June 2027. This will enable the group to continue with the exemplary specialist nurse and allied health visits that are so valued by, and valuable to, the communities of Bendoc, Tubbut and Goongerah. By taking health services to these remote communities, the E2S Wellbeing Spaces has resulted in earlier detection and treatment of health issues, better management of chronic conditions, reduced travel and costs and improved mental wellbeing and a stronger sense of belonging for the more than 30% of residents who have used the services.

I represented Council at the very well attended official opening of the East Gippsland Art Gallery's latest exhibitions. The first exhibition features the work of Aboriginal artist Jennifer Mullett that explores identity through the symbolism used in paintings, artefacts, contemporary pieces and the storytelling of the Gunaikurnai, Bidawel and Ngarigo (Monaro) people. The other exhibition, 'Finer Things', featured small-scale artworks from several regional artists and demonstrated the breadth and depth of talent people we have in our region.

## 5 Officer Reports

### 5.1 Chief Executive Officer

#### 5.1.1 Councillor Representation Register 2024-2028 - Annual Review 2026

Authorised by Chief Executive Officer

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#### Motion

*That Council endorses the Councillor representation on various committees as shown in the Councillor Representation Register for the 2026 calendar year provided at Attachment 1, with the following amendments:*

- a) to appoint Cr John White to the Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee, with Cr Barry Davis as substitute; and*
- b) to appoint Cr Sonia Buckley as a delegate to the East Gippsland Local Community Road Safety Group, rather than a substitute.*

**Moved:** Cr Sonia Buckley

**Seconded:** Cr Arthur Allen

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Sonia Buckley

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook, Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

## 5.2 Assets and Environment

### 5.2.1 CON2026 1745 Expression of Interest for Construction and Operation of Compost Facility

Authorised by General Manager Assets and Environment

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#### Confidentiality Notice

The information contained in the confidential attachments to this report are confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because they relate to: (a) Council Business Information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations, if prematurely released.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item could prejudice Council's position in commercial negotiations which have not yet commenced.

#### Motion

##### *That Council:*

- 1. endorses the selection of the nominated respondents to the Expression of Interest process as recommended in Confidential Attachment 1, to participate in a selective Request for Tender process for Contract CON2026 1745 for Council's proposed Organics Composting Facility;***
- 2. approves an exemption under section 7.4 of the Procurement Policy to enter into a selective Request for Tender process, noting that it would be disadvantageous and unreasonable to proceed to a public request for tender process following a successful public Expression of Interest process, allowing progression to a selective Request for Tender;***
- 3. notes that the selective Request for Tender for the proposed Organics Composting Facility will be undertaken as separable portions to allow future determination of preferred delivery models; and***
- 4. resolves that the Confidential Attachments to this report and all discussions relating to those attachments remain confidential.***

**Moved:** Cr John White

**Seconded:** Cr Barry Davis

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr John White

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

**5.2.2 CON2026 1748 Old Slipway Seawall Storm Damage Repairs, Lakes Entrance**

Authorised by General Manager Assets and Environment

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**Confidentiality Notice**

The information contained in **Confidential Attachments 1 (CON2026 1748 Contract Award Summary), 2 (Tender Evaluation Report) and 3 (Probity Report)** in this report are confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because they relate to: (a) Council Business Information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations, if prematurely released.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage, by disclosing financial information to competitors.

**Motion**

***That Council:***

- 1. accepts the tender submitted by Carter Marine Group Pty Ltd for CON2026 1748 Old Slipway Seawall Storm Damage Repairs, Lakes Entrance for the Contract amount specified in the CON2026 1748 Contract Award Summary provided at Confidential Attachment 1;***
- 2. authorises the General Manager - Assets and Environment to approve variations to CON2026 1748 Old Slipway Seawall Storm Damage Repairs, Lakes Entrance up to the contingency amount specified in the CON2026 1748 Contract Award Summary provided at Confidential Attachment 1, subject to the conditions specified in that summary;***
- 3. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to finalise the terms and to execute the necessary contract documents;***
- 4. notes that the successful tenderer and contract amount will be published on Council's website following execution of the contract documents and after unsuccessful tenderers have been formally notified; and***
- 5. resolves that the Confidential Attachments to this report and all discussions relating to them remain confidential.***

**Moved: Cr Arthur Allen**

**Seconded: Cr Tom Crook**

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Arthur Allen

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

**5.2.3 CON2026 1751 Spillway and bridge replacement at Livingstone Park, Omeo**

Authorised by General Manager Assets and Environment

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**Confidentiality Notice**

The information contained in **Confidential Attachments 1 (CON2026 1751 Contract Award Summary) and 2 (Tender Evaluation Report)** is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (g) Private Commercial Information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that—(ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage, by disclosing financial information to competitors.

**Motion**

***That Council:***

- 1. accepts the tender submitted by Jarvis Norwood Constructions Pty Ltd for CON2026 1751 Spillway and bridge replacement at Livingstone Park, Omeo for the Contract amount specified in the Contract Award Summary provided at Confidential Attachment 1;***
- 2. authorises the General Manager - Assets and Environment to approve variations to CON2026 1751 Spillway and bridge replacement at Livingstone Park, Omeo up to the contingency amount specified in the CON2026 1751 Contract Award Summary provided at Confidential Attachment 1, subject to the conditions specified in that summary;***
- 3. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to finalise the terms and to execute the necessary contract documents;***
- 4. notes that the successful tenderer and contract amount will be published on Council's website following execution of the contract documents and after unsuccessful tenderers have been formally notified; and***
- 5. resolves that the Confidential Attachments to this report and all discussions relating to them remain confidential.***

**Moved:** Cr Sonia Buckley

**Seconded:** Cr Tom Crook

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Sonia Buckley and Cr Tom Crook

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

### **5.3 Business Excellence**

#### **5.3.1 Endorse updated Procurement Policy**

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

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#### **Motion**

##### ***That Council:***

- 1. adopts the draft Procurement Policy, as presented at Attachment 1;***
- 2. gives approval for the Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) to approve minor contract variations up to \$20,000 (ex GST) for contracts approved by Council prior to the adoption of this Policy, to enable nonmaterial variations to be managed efficiently and service provision to continue for community, provided that:***
  - a. the variation can be funded within the existing approved budget; and***
  - b. the variation does not materially alter the scope or intent of the contract;***
- 3. notes that this approval in recommendation 2 applies only to existing contracts approved by Council before the adoption of the new Procurement Policy; and***
- 4. notes that the Audit and Risk Committee will review the Procurement Policy at its first meeting in 2026, subject to the Policy being adopted by Council.***

***Moved: Cr Joanne Eastman***

***Seconded: Cr Barry Davis***

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Barry Davis and Cr Sonia Buckley

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook, Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

### **5.3.2 Audit and Risk Committee Matters**

Authorised by General Manager Business Excellence

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#### **Confidentiality Notice**

The information contained in **Confidential Attachment 4** to this report is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (f) Personal Information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item would unreasonably disclose personal information of applicants for the East Gippsland Shire Council Audit and Risk Committee.

#### **Motion**

##### ***That Council:***

- 1. notes the confirmed Notes of the Councillors and Audit and Risk Committee Annual Joint Meeting held 7 October 2025 as provided at Attachment 1;***
- 2. endorses the revised Audit and Risk Committee Charter, provided at Attachment 2;***
- 3. determines the Sitting Fees payable to Independent Members of the Committee be set as follows:***
  - a. \$1,100 per Audit and Risk Committee Meeting for the Chair; and***
  - b. \$850 per Audit and Risk Committee Meeting for each Independent Member; and***
- 4. approves an annual adjustment in Sitting Fees commencing in 2027, calculated in accordance with the Consumer Price Index for the preceding twelve-month period;***
- 5. appoints the preferred candidates as the Independent Chair and Independent Member of the East Gippsland Shire Council Audit and Risk as detailed in Confidential Attachment 4;***
- 6. authorises the Chief Executive Officer, or delegate, to advise all candidates of the outcome of their Expressions of Interest;***
- 7. resolves that the outcome of the appointments be made public following notification of candidates in accordance with Recommendation 4; and***
- 8. resolves that Confidential Attachment 4, and all discussions relating to the appointment of the Audit and Risk Committee members, remain confidential.***

**Moved:** Cr Joanne Eastman

**Seconded:** Cr Arthur Allen

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Joanne Eastman and Cr Arthur Allen

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

## 5.4 Place and Community

### 5.4.1 Use and Development of Land for Timber Production and the Removal of Native Vegetation at 400, 400A and 580 Aitkens Road, Bengworden

Authorised by General Manager Place and Community

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#### Public Submission

Mr George Konstandakos

#### Motion

##### *That Council:*

- 1. endorses the submission in relation to the use and development of land for timber production and the removal of native vegetation at 400, 400A and 580 Aitkens Road, Bengworden (application reference PA2503991), as provided at Attachment 1;*
- 2. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to lodge the submission on behalf of Council; and*
- 3. requests the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to prepare a Position Paper on Timber Plantation Establishment and Management in East Gippsland for presentation at a future Council meeting.*

**Moved:** Cr Arthur Allen

**Seconded:** Cr Tom Crook

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Tom Crook and Cr Joanne Eastman

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook, Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

## 5.4.2 Open Space Strategy 2025-2035

Authorised by General Manager Place and Community

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### Motion

***That Council adopts the East Gippsland Shire Council Open Space Strategy 2025-2035 as presented at Attachment 1.***

***Moved: Cr Tom Crook***

***Seconded: Cr Barry Davis***

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Tom Crook

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

### 5.4.3 Community Grants Impact 2025/26

Authorised by General Manager Place and Community

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#### **Confidentiality Notice**

The information contained in **Confidential Attachment 1 and 2** is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (a) Council Business Information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations, if prematurely released.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item could undermine the integrity and fairness of the assessment process and compromise Council's ability to manage funding allocations transparently.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

Cr Sonia Buckley and Sarah Johnston General Manager Place and Community, having declared a conflict of interest in relation to 5.4.1, left the meeting at 7.14 pm and were absent during the discussion on this item.

#### **Motion**

##### ***That Council:***

- 1. approves the 15 applications for funding through the East Gippsland Shire Council Community Impact Grants Program, as provided at Confidential Attachment 1, to the value of \$135,308.05;***
- 2. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to advise all applicants the outcome of this funding round and publicise the results on Council's website and via media release; and***
- 3. resolves that all attachments to this report and any discussions relating to them remain confidential.***

**Moved:** Cr Tom Crook

**Seconded:** Cr John White

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Tom Crook and Cr John White

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Tom Crook, Cr Barry Davis,  
Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

#### **5.4.4 Seeking further Direction on Planning Scheme Amendment C170egip**

Authorised by Chief Executive Officer

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#### **Attendance**

Cr Sonia Buckley and Sarah Johnston General Manager Business Excellence returned to the meeting at 7.19 pm.

#### **Procedural Note**

Cr Joanne Eastman moved her own motion.

#### **Motion**

##### ***That Council***

- 1. notes that the proposed Planning Scheme Amendment C170egip relies on the East Gippsland Rural Land Use Strategy that was commenced almost a decade ago and therefore doesn't reflect recent changes in the region's primary industries and the increase in non-agricultural activity occurring within the Farm Zone;***
- 2. confirms its understanding that there are a range of views held across the East Gippsland community about the adopted East Gippsland Rural Land Use Strategy;***
- 3. requests that Officers report to Council on how a comprehensive review of the Rural Land Use Strategy could be undertaken to ensure that the Strategy considers contemporary trends and District-based needs. This report should also provide indicative timeframes; engagement requirements; and costs, so that these can potentially be built into the 2026/27 Annual Budget and Action Plan;***
- 4. defers any decision on Planning Scheme Amendment C170egip until such time as the report requested in Recommendation 3 is received and fully considered by Council;***
- 5. requests that the Chief Executive Officer ensures that the East Gippsland Rural Land Use Strategy (2023) is not further implemented or used to inform decision making until such time as the report requested in Recommendation 3 is fully considered by Council; and***
- 6. authorises the Chief Executive Officer or delegate to provide a public statement on this decision.***

**Moved:** Cr Joanne Eastman  
**Seconded:** Cr Barry Davis

**Spoke for the motion:** Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Barry Davis and Cr Sonia Buckley  
**Spoke against the motion:** Nil  
**Closed the debate:** Nil

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook,  
Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and  
Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

## 6 Urgent Business

Nil

### Motion

***That Council resolves to move into confidential business pursuant to section 66(2) of the Local Government Act 2020.***

***Moved: Cr Tom Crook***

***Seconded: Cr John White***

**Spoke for the motion:** Nil

**Spoke against the motion:** Nil

**Closed the debate:** Nil

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**For:** Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook, Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White

**Against:** Nil

**Abstained:** Nil

The meeting was closed to the public at 7.37 pm.

## 7 Confidential Business

### 7.1 Property Matter

The information contained in this report is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (a) Council Business Information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations, if prematurely released.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item may prejudice Council in commercial negotiations which have not yet commenced.

### 7.2 Contract Matter

The information contained in this report is confidential under section 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* because it relates to: (g) Private Commercial Information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that—(ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

Pursuant to section 66(5)(b) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, if released, the information discussed or considered in relation to this agenda item may result in disadvantage to the businesses involved and confidentiality is necessary to protect the legitimate commercial interests of the parties.

## 8 Close of Meeting

Mayor Cr Jodie Ashworth declared the Council Meeting closed at 7.49 pm.



# **Audit and Risk Committee**

## **2024/25 Annual Performance Report**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the outcomes of the Audit and Risk Committee's annual performance review for the 2024/25 financial year. In accordance with section 54(4) of the Local Government Act 2020 and the Audit and Risk Committee Charter (the Charter), the Committee is required to undertake an annual assessment of its performance against the Charter's provisions and report its findings to Council.

To support this requirement, the Chief Executive Officer will table the review outcomes for Council's consideration at the next practicable meeting.

The Committee met in October to consider the results of the performance review, which was informed by a survey designed to capture feedback on key elements of the Charter and the Committee's operations. The survey was distributed to Committee members, Councillors, and Senior Officers, achieving a response rate of nearly 69%. While the sample size limits detailed quantitative analysis, the qualitative feedback provides valuable insights into the Committee's strengths and areas for improvement.

### Committee Observations and Key Findings

The Committee's annual performance review for 2024/25 found that, overall, the Committee is meeting the expectations of its members, Council officers, and observers. Survey responses and facilitated discussions indicate that the Committee is generally effective in fulfilling its Charter responsibilities, particularly in areas such as compliance management, audit oversight, and fostering a professional and collaborative culture.

However, the review also identified several opportunities for improvement. These include:

- Strengthening financial risk management and early warning systems;
- Enhancing the robustness of financial controls and reporting;
- Encouraging more active participation and open discussion during meetings;
- Ensuring that audit recommendations are both timely and impactful; and
- Maintaining ongoing review of the Charter and membership arrangements to ensure continued alignment with best practice and Council expectations.

The Committee is committed to addressing these areas for improvement and will continue to monitor its performance to ensure it remains an effective and independent source of assurance for Council.

### Annual Performance Review Process

The 2024/25 Audit and Risk Committee performance review was undertaken through a structured, multi-step process:

1. **Survey Distribution:** A performance questionnaire was completed by Committee members, Councillors not serving on the Committee, and Senior Officers. The survey focused on key elements of the Committee's Charter and operational effectiveness.
2. **Facilitated Discussion:** On 17 October 2025, the Committee held a dedicated members-only session to reflect on the survey findings. This session was independently facilitated by Mr John Watson, providing an impartial perspective. The Chief Executive Officer also participated, offering organisational insights to support the Committee's deliberations.
3. **Report Preparation:** A summary report capturing the outcomes of the survey and facilitated discussion was prepared and circulated electronically to Committee members in October 2025 for review and endorsement.
4. **Council Reporting:** A formal Council Report, incorporating the performance review and Committee feedback, will be tabled by the Chief Executive Officer at the next practicable Council meeting.

## Survey Methodology

The evaluation questionnaire completed by survey respondents covered the following areas of the Committee’s operations:

- Monitoring and Reporting Responsibilities
- Assurance and Controls
- Financial Controls and Reporting
- Compliance Management
- Performance of Auditors
- Committee Meetings
- Thinking Ahead

The evaluation questionnaire was distributed to three stakeholder groups: Committee Members (both Independent and Councillor members), Senior Officers, and Councillors (Observers). The feedback collected was used to assess the Committee’s performance against the Charter.

It is important to note that the scope for meaningful statistical analysis is limited due to the small and non-representative sample size. Of the 16 individuals invited to participate, 11 responded—representing a response rate of 68.75%.

Category	Number Surveyed	Responses Received
Committee Member (Independent and Councillor members)	7	7
Councillor (Observers)	6	1
Senior Officers	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>

It is noted that the responses received from a Councillor Observer and two Committee Members were incomplete.

By necessity, the primary focus of the evaluation is on considering and interpreting comments, especially the issues and suggestions they highlight.

## Survey Findings

In addition to the broad themes outlined in the Executive Summary, the survey responses offer valuable insights into the Committee’s performance and operations during the 2024/25 period. The feedback reflects a range of perspectives from Committee members, Senior Officers, and Councillor Observers, and provides a nuanced view of how the Committee is functioning in practice.

While the sample size limits the scope for detailed quantitative analysis, the qualitative responses highlight key strengths and areas for improvement. The following section summarises the feedback received across the main areas of performance, as defined by the Charter.

## ***Monitoring and Reporting Responsibilities***

This section asked respondents to assess how well the Committee understands Council's business and monitors key systems and activities, including financial reporting, governance, and risk management.

The survey results indicate that the Committee is generally perceived as performing at an "Adequate" level across most monitoring and reporting responsibilities, with a significant proportion of respondents also rating performance as "More than Adequate" in several areas. Notably, there is strong confidence in the Committee's oversight of accounting policies, compliance, and audit functions.

However, the responses also reveal areas for improvement:

- A minority of respondents feel the Committee's performance is "Less than Adequate" in financial reporting, governance, and early warning measures.
- Qualitative feedback suggests concerns about governance processes, particularly regarding changes to the Charter and meeting formats, and the need for more robust attention to financial risks.
- There is a call for greater transparency, consultation, and proactive risk management, especially in relation to financial risks and audit reporting.

### **Recommendations**

- Increased focus on financial risk management and early warning systems is recommended, responding to member feedback.

## ***Assurance and Controls***

Respondents were invited to evaluate the Committee's effectiveness in providing assurance over Council's risk management framework, internal controls, and the process for addressing identified risks.

The survey responses indicate that the Committee is generally perceived as performing at an "Adequate" level in providing assurance and overseeing controls. Most members feel the Committee is fulfilling its responsibilities in risk identification, risk management framework review, and internal control oversight.

However, there are areas for improvement:

- A quarter of respondents feel the Committee could do better in making recommendations to address risk and control deficiencies, and in scheduling audit reviews based on risk assessments.
- Qualitative feedback suggests that the Committee's recommendations could be more frequent and impactful, and that contributions from all members should be encouraged.

### **Recommendations**

- The Committee should consider strategies to increase the frequency and quality of recommendations addressing risk and control deficiencies.
- Encourage broader participation and input from all members to ensure a diversity of perspectives and expertise in identifying and addressing risks.
- Review the process for scheduling audit reviews to ensure alignment with risk assessments and Council priorities.

## ***Financial Controls and Reporting***

This question focused on the Committee's understanding and review of management information, specifically the effectiveness of financial controls and reporting.

The survey responses indicate that the majority of respondents feel the Committee is performing at an "Adequate" level in understanding and reviewing financial controls and reporting. This suggests a reasonable level of confidence in the Committee's oversight of financial management information.

However, the absence of any "More than Adequate" ratings, combined with a minority of responses indicating "Less than Adequate" or "Unsure/Unable to Respond", highlights opportunities for improvement.

Specifically:

- The Committee's review of financial controls and reporting could be more thorough or robust.
- The presence of "Unsure/Unable to Respond" responses may indicate a need for further clarity or communication regarding the Committee's role and activities in this area.

### **Recommendations**

- The Committee should consider ways to strengthen its oversight of financial controls and reporting.
- Regular feedback and discussion on financial reporting processes could help address any uncertainties and improve overall Committee performance.

## ***Compliance Management***

Respondents were asked to consider the Committee oversight of compliance, including its review of regulatory changes and management's assurances regarding legislative adherence.

The survey responses indicate a high level of confidence among Committee members in the Committee's oversight of compliance management. The majority of respondents feel the Committee is adequately reviewing developments in key legislation and regulations, as well as management's assurances regarding compliance.

The presence of "More than Adequate" ratings, though limited, suggests that some respondents view the Committee's performance in this area as exceeding expectations. Importantly, there were no responses indicating uncertainty or inadequacy, which reflects positively on the Committee's effectiveness in compliance oversight.

### **Recommendations**

- The Committee should continue its strong focus on compliance management, maintaining thorough review processes and clear communication regarding regulatory changes and management assurances.

## **Performance of Auditors**

This section sought feedback on the Committee's role in overseeing the performance and engagement of internal and external auditors. This included reviewing audit performance, meeting privately with auditors, establishing reporting lines, and approving audit plans.

The majority of respondents assessed the Committee's performance in overseeing audit functions as "adequate", suggesting that the Committee is meeting its core responsibilities in this area. The high proportion of "Adequate" responses across all four measures reflects a consistent perception of satisfactory performance.

However, the relatively high number of "Unsure/Unable to Respond" selections—particularly in relation to private meetings with auditors and structured reporting lines—may indicate limited visibility or engagement with these specific activities among some members. The absence of qualitative comments further limits insight into the rationale behind the ratings, making it difficult to assess whether there are underlying concerns or simply a lack of awareness.

### **Recommendations**

- Encourage respondents to provide qualitative feedback in future surveys to support continuous improvement and deeper understanding of Committee performance.
- Encourage the Committee to make the opportunity for Members only to meet with the Internal Auditors without management if requested by any Member or the Internal Auditors.

## **Committee Meetings**

Respondents assessed the conduct and effectiveness of meetings, including agenda management, participation, and the provision of meeting materials.

The survey responses indicate that Committee meetings are generally well-managed, with most respondents rating key aspects such as agenda structure, advance provision of materials, and meeting conduct as "Adequate" or "More than Adequate". This reflects positively on the Committee's administrative support and commitment to effective governance.

However, the feedback also highlights areas for improvement:

- Some respondents perceive a lack of openness to questions and robust discussion, suggesting a need to foster a more inclusive and participatory meeting culture.
- While Members Only sessions can provide a valuable forum for candid discussion among Committee members, their effectiveness is diminished if the insights and outcomes are not appropriately shared. Without visibility of these discussions, the Chief Executive Officer may be excluded from critical context, limiting the Committee's ability to influence organisational improvement and strategic decision-making.

### **Recommendations**

- Consider reviewing meeting practices to ensure all members feel encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussions.
- Ensure that key decisions and discussions, including those from Members Only sessions, are appropriately shared to maintain transparency and accountability.
- The Committee should adopt a practice if there is any matter discussed in a Members only session, for the Chair to report those matters in the full Committee meeting so that they can be recorded in the minutes.

## ***Other Matters***

Respondents were invited to provide any additional comments, suggestions, or feedback relating to the Committee's Charter, structure, or overall performance.

The open-ended feedback from respondents highlights a generally positive view of the Committee's professionalism and cohesion. Respondents appreciate the Committee's adherence to its role and value its contribution to Council governance.

However, the responses also identify several opportunities for improvement:

- There is strong support for regular review of the Committee Charter. Removing outdated references and clarifying applicability of governance rules will further strengthen governance.
- Respondents have called for increased attention to financial reporting indicating this should be a priority for future meetings.

## **Recommendations**

- Schedule an annual Charter review of the Committee's Duties and Functions and provide recommendations to Council for consideration.
- Prioritise financial reporting with a focus on enhancing the depth of review, clarity of financial information, and identification of emerging financial risks.

## ***What does the Committee do well?***

This question asked respondents to identify the strengths and positive aspects of the Committee's operations and contributions.

The feedback from respondents reflects a strong sense of professionalism, collaboration, and effectiveness within the Committee. Respondents appear to appreciate the Committee's respectful culture, its efficiency in addressing key issues, and its commitment to assurance and oversight functions.

The Committee's willingness to seek clarification, encourage questions, and support professional development are highlighted as strengths that contribute to robust governance and continuous improvement. Regular meetings and comprehensive consideration of agenda papers further reinforce the Committee's diligence.

## **Recommendations**

- Continue to foster a respectful and collaborative environment that encourages active participation and open discussion.
- Maintain the focus on assurance, compliance, and audit oversight, ensuring these remain central to the Committee's work.

## ***Areas for Improvement***

Respondents were encouraged to suggest specific tasks or functions the Committee could undertake in a better way to enhance its effectiveness.

The feedback indicates that while some respondents are satisfied with the Committee's current operations, others see opportunities for improvement, particularly in meeting management and the Committee's advisory role.

Key areas for enhancement include:

- Review the structure and timing of meetings to ensure sufficient time is allocated for discussion and consideration of key issues, rather than lengthy presentations.
- Strengthen the Committee's impact by providing more targeted guidance and recommendations to Council and staff.

### **Recommendations**

- Prioritise discussion and limit presentation time where possible.
- The Chair should encourage members to actively contribute questions and guidance, fostering a culture of open dialogue and continuous improvement.
- Leverage audit insights to support Council's strategic planning and risk management efforts, ensuring the Committee's work translates into tangible outcomes for the organisation.

## ***Council and Officer Support***

This section sought feedback on what Council or Council Officers could stop doing, start doing, do more, or do less to better support the Committee's work.

The feedback highlights several opportunities for Council and Council Officers to better support the Committee:

- There is a need to streamline meeting agendas and presentations, prioritising key issues and allowing sufficient time for discussion. This will help ensure meetings are productive and that members feel comfortable raising questions.
- Prompt and effective responses to Internal Audit findings are crucial for maintaining the integrity and impact of the Committee's oversight.

### **Recommendations**

- Keep presentations brief to ensure discussion is prioritised.
- Improve responsiveness to Internal Audit findings by establishing clear timelines for rectification and introducing periodic reassessment of audit recommendations that are more than two years old, to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with current organisational priorities.

## ***Committee Operations***

Respondents were asked to reflect on the Committee's operational practices and suggest changes to improve the way the Committee or its members work.

The feedback indicates that while some respondents are content with the Committee's current operations, others see opportunities for improvement, particularly in meeting culture and the Committee's advisory function.

Key areas for enhancement include:

- The Committee should foster a culture where questions and discussion are welcomed, ensuring all members feel comfortable raising issues and contributing to deliberations.
- Raising key priorities and concerns before meetings can help ensure that important topics receive adequate attention and discussion.
- The Committee can add value by providing more targeted advice and recommendations to Council, especially regarding risk and report adequacy.

## **Recommendations**

- Foster a culture where respectful questioning of officers is encouraged.
- The Chair should encourage more frequent and detailed advice and recommendations to Council.
- Committee members should continue to use the in-camera pre-meeting to advise the Chair of key focus areas within the agenda to assist with the flow of the meeting.

## ***Key Areas of Focus for the Next 12 Months***

Respondents were asked to identify priority areas for the Committee to focus on in the coming year, reflecting on emerging risks and strategic objectives.

The feedback from respondents highlights a clear set of priorities for the Committee over the next 12 months:

- The Committee should maintain a strong focus on financial sustainability, risk management, and capital works oversight. This includes monitoring project management practices and ensuring robust controls around major initiatives and change projects.
- Continued attention to strategic risk management and compliance with evolving legislation is essential. The Committee should ensure that risk frameworks and OH&S systems are regularly reviewed and updated.
- The Committee should be proactive in addressing concerns raised by Councillors and ensure that reviews lead to actionable outcomes. This will strengthen the Committee's impact and support Council's ability to deliver on its objectives.

## **Recommendations**

- Prioritise financial sustainability, risk management, and capital works as key agenda items.
- Continue to monitor and review project management, digital transformation, and change initiatives.
- Foster a culture of responsiveness to Councillor concerns and ensure that project reviews result in tangible improvements.
- Maintain oversight of compliance with changing legislation and strategic risk work.

## **Charter and/or Membership**

This section of the survey invited respondents to reflect on the current Charter and membership arrangements to identify any aspects they believe require review or improvement.

This question provided an opportunity for respondents to offer suggestions that could strengthen the Committee's effectiveness, independence, and alignment with best practice principles for audit and risk committees.

The feedback aligns well with the significant changes recently requested by Council, which are designed to strengthen the governance and independence of the Committee. These changes include:

- The move to a 5-Member model, including three independent members, the Mayor as ex-officio, and one councillor appointed annually. This directly addresses the Committee's call for a broader skill set and expertise, and supports best practice for audit and risk committees.
- Committee Chair to be appointed by the Council. This reinforces transparency and accountability in leadership selection, responding to feedback about Chair tenure and the need for clear, fair processes.
- The recruitment panel for independent members will include the CEO, Mayor, and a Councillor who sits on the Committee. This ensures a balanced and representative selection process, which supports the need for a skills-based recruitment and diversity.
- Sitting fees for independent members will be increased from 2026, recognising the expertise and time commitment required for effective oversight addresses concerns about the disconnect between attendance expectations and remuneration.

These changes are considered positive and align with best practice principles for audit and risk committees. They directly respond to member feedback about recruitment, skills alignment, leadership, and recognition of the Committee's work.

### **Additional Feedback from the Workshop**

In addition to the above, during the workshop there was discussion among those present about the appropriateness of the Annual Joint Meeting with Councillors.

There was clear consensus that this practice should not continue, as it was seen to impede the Committee's ability to engage in open and robust independent deliberations. Members expressed concern that the presence of Councillors during these sessions may unintentionally influence or constrain the Committee's discussions.

Discontinuing the joint meeting is viewed as a step toward preserving the Committee's independence and ensuring it can operate with the level of candour and objectivity required for effective oversight.

### **Recommendations**

- As part of the Charter update required to give effect to the changes requested by Council, the Committee also recommends that Council consider the following changes:
  - Section 1.5.6 and 1.7(a): remove reference to the Governance Rules;
  - Section 1.6(g): include a requirement for the Committee to endorse the proposed scope of each Internal Audit;
  - Section 1.6(m): include an annual review of the Charter as part of the Annual Performance review process;
  - Section 1.7: remove the requirement for the Committee to hold a joint meeting with Councillors each year;

- Include a new requirement for all Committee Members to pro-actively participate in the Annual Performance Review process should be embedded in the Charter; and
- Make any other changes throughout the Charter to ensure consistency with the changes described above (ie Governance Rule references, quorum etc).
- The Committee should monitor the impact of these changes on its effectiveness and independence, reporting back to Council as appropriate.

## Conclusion

The 2024/25 annual performance review demonstrates that the Audit and Risk Committee continues to provide valuable oversight and assurance to Council, operating in accordance with its Charter and legislative requirements. The Committee's strengths in compliance, audit oversight, and professional conduct are clear, and recent changes to its structure and Charter are expected to further enhance its effectiveness and independence.

The Committee acknowledges the areas identified for improvement and is committed to implementing the recommended actions, including strengthening financial oversight, fostering a more open meeting culture, and ensuring ongoing alignment with best practice. The Committee will monitor the impact of recent changes and report back to Council on its progress.

By maintaining a focus on continuous improvement, the Committee aims to support Council in achieving its strategic objectives and upholding the highest standards of governance and accountability.



# **Audit and Risk Committee**

## **2024/25 Annual Performance Report**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the outcomes of the Audit and Risk Committee's annual performance review for the 2024/25 financial year. In accordance with section 54(4) of the Local Government Act 2020 and the Audit and Risk Committee Charter (the Charter), the Committee is required to undertake an annual assessment of its performance against the Charter's provisions and report its findings to Council.

To support this requirement, the Chief Executive Officer will table the review outcomes for Council's consideration at the next practicable meeting.

The Committee met in October to consider the results of the performance review, which was informed by a survey designed to capture feedback on key elements of the Charter and the Committee's operations. The survey was distributed to Committee members, Councillors, and Senior Officers, achieving a response rate of nearly 69%. While the sample size limits detailed quantitative analysis, the qualitative feedback provides valuable insights into the Committee's strengths and areas for improvement.

### Committee Observations and Key Findings

The Committee's annual performance review for 2024/25 found that, overall, the Committee is meeting the expectations of its members, Council officers, and observers. Survey responses and facilitated discussions indicate that the Committee is generally effective in fulfilling its Charter responsibilities, particularly in areas such as compliance management, audit oversight, and fostering a professional and collaborative culture.

However, the review also identified several opportunities for improvement. These include:

- Strengthening financial risk management and early warning systems;
- Enhancing the robustness of financial controls and reporting;
- Encouraging more active participation and open discussion during meetings;
- Ensuring that audit recommendations are both timely and impactful; and
- Maintaining ongoing review of the Charter and membership arrangements to ensure continued alignment with best practice and Council expectations.

The Committee is committed to addressing these areas for improvement and will continue to monitor its performance to ensure it remains an effective and independent source of assurance for Council.

### Annual Performance Review Process

The 2024/25 Audit and Risk Committee performance review was undertaken through a structured, multi-step process:

1. **Survey Distribution:** A performance questionnaire was completed by Committee members, Councillors not serving on the Committee, and Senior Officers. The survey focused on key elements of the Committee's Charter and operational effectiveness.
2. **Facilitated Discussion:** On 17 October 2025, the Committee held a dedicated members-only session to reflect on the survey findings. This session was independently facilitated by Mr John Watson, providing an impartial perspective. The Chief Executive Officer also participated, offering organisational insights to support the Committee's deliberations.
3. **Report Preparation:** A summary report capturing the outcomes of the survey and facilitated discussion was prepared and circulated electronically to Committee members in October 2025 for review and endorsement.
4. **Council Reporting:** A formal Council Report, incorporating the performance review and Committee feedback, will be tabled by the Chief Executive Officer at the next practicable Council meeting.

## Survey Methodology

The evaluation questionnaire completed by survey respondents covered the following areas of the Committee’s operations:

- Monitoring and Reporting Responsibilities
- Assurance and Controls
- Financial Controls and Reporting
- Compliance Management
- Performance of Auditors
- Committee Meetings
- Thinking Ahead

The evaluation questionnaire was distributed to three stakeholder groups: Committee Members (both Independent and Councillor members), Senior Officers, and Councillors (Observers). The feedback collected was used to assess the Committee’s performance against the Charter.

It is important to note that the scope for meaningful statistical analysis is limited due to the small and non-representative sample size. Of the 16 individuals invited to participate, 11 responded—representing a response rate of 68.75%.

Category	Number Surveyed	Responses Received
Committee Member (Independent and Councillor members)	7	7
Councillor (Observers)	6	1
Senior Officers	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>

It is noted that the responses received from a Councillor Observer and two Committee Members were incomplete.

By necessity, the primary focus of the evaluation is on considering and interpreting comments, especially the issues and suggestions they highlight.

## Survey Findings

In addition to the broad themes outlined in the Executive Summary, the survey responses offer valuable insights into the Committee’s performance and operations during the 2024/25 period. The feedback reflects a range of perspectives from Committee members, Senior Officers, and Councillor Observers, and provides a nuanced view of how the Committee is functioning in practice.

While the sample size limits the scope for detailed quantitative analysis, the qualitative responses highlight key strengths and areas for improvement. The following section summarises the feedback received across the main areas of performance, as defined by the Charter.

## ***Monitoring and Reporting Responsibilities***

This section asked respondents to assess how well the Committee understands Council's business and monitors key systems and activities, including financial reporting, governance, and risk management.

The survey results indicate that the Committee is generally perceived as performing at an "Adequate" level across most monitoring and reporting responsibilities, with a significant proportion of respondents also rating performance as "More than Adequate" in several areas. Notably, there is strong confidence in the Committee's oversight of accounting policies, compliance, and audit functions.

However, the responses also reveal areas for improvement:

- A minority of respondents feel the Committee's performance is "Less than Adequate" in financial reporting, governance, and early warning measures.
- Qualitative feedback suggests concerns about governance processes, particularly regarding changes to the Charter and meeting formats, and the need for more robust attention to financial risks.
- There is a call for greater transparency, consultation, and proactive risk management, especially in relation to financial risks and audit reporting.

### **Recommendations**

- Increased focus on financial risk management and early warning systems is recommended, responding to member feedback.

## ***Assurance and Controls***

Respondents were invited to evaluate the Committee's effectiveness in providing assurance over Council's risk management framework, internal controls, and the process for addressing identified risks.

The survey responses indicate that the Committee is generally perceived as performing at an "Adequate" level in providing assurance and overseeing controls. Most members feel the Committee is fulfilling its responsibilities in risk identification, risk management framework review, and internal control oversight.

However, there are areas for improvement:

- A quarter of respondents feel the Committee could do better in making recommendations to address risk and control deficiencies, and in scheduling audit reviews based on risk assessments.
- Qualitative feedback suggests that the Committee's recommendations could be more frequent and impactful, and that contributions from all members should be encouraged.

### **Recommendations**

- The Committee should consider strategies to increase the frequency and quality of recommendations addressing risk and control deficiencies.
- Encourage broader participation and input from all members to ensure a diversity of perspectives and expertise in identifying and addressing risks.
- Review the process for scheduling audit reviews to ensure alignment with risk assessments and Council priorities.

## ***Financial Controls and Reporting***

This question focused on the Committee's understanding and review of management information, specifically the effectiveness of financial controls and reporting.

The survey responses indicate that the majority of respondents feel the Committee is performing at an "Adequate" level in understanding and reviewing financial controls and reporting. This suggests a reasonable level of confidence in the Committee's oversight of financial management information.

However, the absence of any "More than Adequate" ratings, combined with a minority of responses indicating "Less than Adequate" or "Unsure/Unable to Respond", highlights opportunities for improvement.

Specifically:

- The Committee's review of financial controls and reporting could be more thorough or robust.
- The presence of "Unsure/Unable to Respond" responses may indicate a need for further clarity or communication regarding the Committee's role and activities in this area.

### **Recommendations**

- The Committee should consider ways to strengthen its oversight of financial controls and reporting.
- Regular feedback and discussion on financial reporting processes could help address any uncertainties and improve overall Committee performance.

## ***Compliance Management***

Respondents were asked to consider the Committee oversight of compliance, including its review of regulatory changes and management's assurances regarding legislative adherence.

The survey responses indicate a high level of confidence among Committee members in the Committee's oversight of compliance management. The majority of respondents feel the Committee is adequately reviewing developments in key legislation and regulations, as well as management's assurances regarding compliance.

The presence of "More than Adequate" ratings, though limited, suggests that some respondents view the Committee's performance in this area as exceeding expectations. Importantly, there were no responses indicating uncertainty or inadequacy, which reflects positively on the Committee's effectiveness in compliance oversight.

### **Recommendations**

- The Committee should continue its strong focus on compliance management, maintaining thorough review processes and clear communication regarding regulatory changes and management assurances.

## **Performance of Auditors**

This section sought feedback on the Committee's role in overseeing the performance and engagement of internal and external auditors. This included reviewing audit performance, meeting privately with auditors, establishing reporting lines, and approving audit plans.

The majority of respondents assessed the Committee's performance in overseeing audit functions as "adequate", suggesting that the Committee is meeting its core responsibilities in this area. The high proportion of "Adequate" responses across all four measures reflects a consistent perception of satisfactory performance.

However, the relatively high number of "Unsure/Unable to Respond" selections—particularly in relation to private meetings with auditors and structured reporting lines—may indicate limited visibility or engagement with these specific activities among some members. The absence of qualitative comments further limits insight into the rationale behind the ratings, making it difficult to assess whether there are underlying concerns or simply a lack of awareness.

### **Recommendations**

- Encourage respondents to provide qualitative feedback in future surveys to support continuous improvement and deeper understanding of Committee performance.
- Encourage the Committee to make the opportunity for Members only to meet with the Internal Auditors without management if requested by any Member or the Internal Auditors.

## **Committee Meetings**

Respondents assessed the conduct and effectiveness of meetings, including agenda management, participation, and the provision of meeting materials.

The survey responses indicate that Committee meetings are generally well-managed, with most respondents rating key aspects such as agenda structure, advance provision of materials, and meeting conduct as "Adequate" or "More than Adequate". This reflects positively on the Committee's administrative support and commitment to effective governance.

However, the feedback also highlights areas for improvement:

- Some respondents perceive a lack of openness to questions and robust discussion, suggesting a need to foster a more inclusive and participatory meeting culture.
- While Members Only sessions can provide a valuable forum for candid discussion among Committee members, their effectiveness is diminished if the insights and outcomes are not appropriately shared. Without visibility of these discussions, the Chief Executive Officer may be excluded from critical context, limiting the Committee's ability to influence organisational improvement and strategic decision-making.

### **Recommendations**

- Consider reviewing meeting practices to ensure all members feel encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussions.
- Ensure that key decisions and discussions, including those from Members Only sessions, are appropriately shared to maintain transparency and accountability.
- The Committee should adopt a practice if there is any matter discussed in a Members only session, for the Chair to report those matters in the full Committee meeting so that they can be recorded in the minutes.

## ***Other Matters***

Respondents were invited to provide any additional comments, suggestions, or feedback relating to the Committee's Charter, structure, or overall performance.

The open-ended feedback from respondents highlights a generally positive view of the Committee's professionalism and cohesion. Respondents appreciate the Committee's adherence to its role and value its contribution to Council governance.

However, the responses also identify several opportunities for improvement:

- There is strong support for regular review of the Committee Charter. Removing outdated references and clarifying applicability of governance rules will further strengthen governance.
- Respondents have called for increased attention to financial reporting indicating this should be a priority for future meetings.

## **Recommendations**

- Schedule an annual Charter review of the Committee's Duties and Functions and provide recommendations to Council for consideration.
- Prioritise financial reporting with a focus on enhancing the depth of review, clarity of financial information, and identification of emerging financial risks.

## ***What does the Committee do well?***

This question asked respondents to identify the strengths and positive aspects of the Committee's operations and contributions.

The feedback from respondents reflects a strong sense of professionalism, collaboration, and effectiveness within the Committee. Respondents appear to appreciate the Committee's respectful culture, its efficiency in addressing key issues, and its commitment to assurance and oversight functions.

The Committee's willingness to seek clarification, encourage questions, and support professional development are highlighted as strengths that contribute to robust governance and continuous improvement. Regular meetings and comprehensive consideration of agenda papers further reinforce the Committee's diligence.

## **Recommendations**

- Continue to foster a respectful and collaborative environment that encourages active participation and open discussion.
- Maintain the focus on assurance, compliance, and audit oversight, ensuring these remain central to the Committee's work.

## ***Areas for Improvement***

Respondents were encouraged to suggest specific tasks or functions the Committee could undertake in a better way to enhance its effectiveness.

The feedback indicates that while some respondents are satisfied with the Committee's current operations, others see opportunities for improvement, particularly in meeting management and the Committee's advisory role.

Key areas for enhancement include:

- Review the structure and timing of meetings to ensure sufficient time is allocated for discussion and consideration of key issues, rather than lengthy presentations.
- Strengthen the Committee's impact by providing more targeted guidance and recommendations to Council and staff.

### **Recommendations**

- Prioritise discussion and limit presentation time where possible.
- The Chair should encourage members to actively contribute questions and guidance, fostering a culture of open dialogue and continuous improvement.
- Leverage audit insights to support Council's strategic planning and risk management efforts, ensuring the Committee's work translates into tangible outcomes for the organisation.

## ***Council and Officer Support***

This section sought feedback on what Council or Council Officers could stop doing, start doing, do more, or do less to better support the Committee's work.

The feedback highlights several opportunities for Council and Council Officers to better support the Committee:

- There is a need to streamline meeting agendas and presentations, prioritising key issues and allowing sufficient time for discussion. This will help ensure meetings are productive and that members feel comfortable raising questions.
- Prompt and effective responses to Internal Audit findings are crucial for maintaining the integrity and impact of the Committee's oversight.

### **Recommendations**

- Keep presentations brief to ensure discussion is prioritised.
- Improve responsiveness to Internal Audit findings by establishing clear timelines for rectification and introducing periodic reassessment of audit recommendations that are more than two years old, to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with current organisational priorities.

## ***Committee Operations***

Respondents were asked to reflect on the Committee's operational practices and suggest changes to improve the way the Committee or its members work.

The feedback indicates that while some respondents are content with the Committee's current operations, others see opportunities for improvement, particularly in meeting culture and the Committee's advisory function.

Key areas for enhancement include:

- The Committee should foster a culture where questions and discussion are welcomed, ensuring all members feel comfortable raising issues and contributing to deliberations.
- Raising key priorities and concerns before meetings can help ensure that important topics receive adequate attention and discussion.
- The Committee can add value by providing more targeted advice and recommendations to Council, especially regarding risk and report adequacy.

## **Recommendations**

- Foster a culture where respectful questioning of officers is encouraged.
- The Chair should encourage more frequent and detailed advice and recommendations to Council.
- Committee members should continue to use the in-camera pre-meeting to advise the Chair of key focus areas within the agenda to assist with the flow of the meeting.

## ***Key Areas of Focus for the Next 12 Months***

Respondents were asked to identify priority areas for the Committee to focus on in the coming year, reflecting on emerging risks and strategic objectives.

The feedback from respondents highlights a clear set of priorities for the Committee over the next 12 months:

- The Committee should maintain a strong focus on financial sustainability, risk management, and capital works oversight. This includes monitoring project management practices and ensuring robust controls around major initiatives and change projects.
- Continued attention to strategic risk management and compliance with evolving legislation is essential. The Committee should ensure that risk frameworks and OH&S systems are regularly reviewed and updated.
- The Committee should be proactive in addressing concerns raised by Councillors and ensure that reviews lead to actionable outcomes. This will strengthen the Committee's impact and support Council's ability to deliver on its objectives.

## **Recommendations**

- Prioritise financial sustainability, risk management, and capital works as key agenda items.
- Continue to monitor and review project management, digital transformation, and change initiatives.
- Foster a culture of responsiveness to Councillor concerns and ensure that project reviews result in tangible improvements.
- Maintain oversight of compliance with changing legislation and strategic risk work.

## **Charter and/or Membership**

This section of the survey invited respondents to reflect on the current Charter and membership arrangements to identify any aspects they believe require review or improvement.

This question provided an opportunity for respondents to offer suggestions that could strengthen the Committee's effectiveness, independence, and alignment with best practice principles for audit and risk committees.

The feedback aligns well with the significant changes recently requested by Council, which are designed to strengthen the governance and independence of the Committee. These changes include:

- The move to a 5-Member model, including three independent members, the Mayor as ex-officio, and one councillor appointed annually. This directly addresses the Committee's call for a broader skill set and expertise, and supports best practice for audit and risk committees.
- Committee Chair to be appointed by the Council. This reinforces transparency and accountability in leadership selection, responding to feedback about Chair tenure and the need for clear, fair processes.
- The recruitment panel for independent members will include the CEO, Mayor, and a Councillor who sits on the Committee. This ensures a balanced and representative selection process, which supports the need for a skills-based recruitment and diversity.
- Sitting fees for independent members will be increased from 2026, recognising the expertise and time commitment required for effective oversight addresses concerns about the disconnect between attendance expectations and remuneration.

These changes are considered positive and align with best practice principles for audit and risk committees. They directly respond to member feedback about recruitment, skills alignment, leadership, and recognition of the Committee's work.

### **Additional Feedback from the Workshop**

In addition to the above, during the workshop there was discussion among those present about the appropriateness of the Annual Joint Meeting with Councillors.

There was clear consensus that this practice should not continue, as it was seen to impede the Committee's ability to engage in open and robust independent deliberations. Members expressed concern that the presence of Councillors during these sessions may unintentionally influence or constrain the Committee's discussions.

Discontinuing the joint meeting is viewed as a step toward preserving the Committee's independence and ensuring it can operate with the level of candour and objectivity required for effective oversight.

### **Recommendations**

- As part of the Charter update required to give effect to the changes requested by Council, the Committee also recommends that Council consider the following changes:
  - Section 1.5.6 and 1.7(a): remove reference to the Governance Rules;
  - Section 1.6(g): include a requirement for the Committee to endorse the proposed scope of each Internal Audit;
  - Section 1.6(m): include an annual review of the Charter as part of the Annual Performance review process;
  - Section 1.7: remove the requirement for the Committee to hold a joint meeting with Councillors each year;

- Include a new requirement for all Committee Members to pro-actively participate in the Annual Performance Review process should be embedded in the Charter; and
- Make any other changes throughout the Charter to ensure consistency with the changes described above (ie Governance Rule references, quorum etc).
- The Committee should monitor the impact of these changes on its effectiveness and independence, reporting back to Council as appropriate.

## Conclusion

The 2024/25 annual performance review demonstrates that the Audit and Risk Committee continues to provide valuable oversight and assurance to Council, operating in accordance with its Charter and legislative requirements. The Committee's strengths in compliance, audit oversight, and professional conduct are clear, and recent changes to its structure and Charter are expected to further enhance its effectiveness and independence.

The Committee acknowledges the areas identified for improvement and is committed to implementing the recommended actions, including strengthening financial oversight, fostering a more open meeting culture, and ensuring ongoing alignment with best practice. The Committee will monitor the impact of recent changes and report back to Council on its progress.

By maintaining a focus on continuous improvement, the Committee aims to support Council in achieving its strategic objectives and upholding the highest standards of governance and accountability.