Unconfirmed Minutes Statutory Meeting

Thursday 12 November 2026 at 6.00 pm

Council Chambers
East Gippsland Shire Council Corporate Centre
273 Main Street, Bairnsdale 3875

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

Attachments referenced in these minutes can be located in the meeting agenda on East Gippsland Shire Council's website, with summaries of Council Briefings also available under Council Briefings.

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 Chief Executive Officer presiding

In accordance with section 25(3)(a) of the *Local Government Act* 2020 (Act) the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ms Fiona Weigall, chaired the meeting until the Mayor was elected.

1.2 Recognition of Traditional Custodians

Ms Fiona Weigall CEO welcomed all to the Council meeting and acknowledged the traditional owners.

Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and custodians of this land and pays deep respect to all First Nations peoples and communities with enduring cultural connections to East Gippsland, who have cared for and nurtured Country for tens of thousands of years.

We honour and celebrate the rich diversity, living cultures, and ongoing contributions of all First Nations peoples who live, work, visit, and play across East Gippsland.

We also acknowledge the many First Nations communities who, together, continue to shape and contribute to the region we know as East Gippsland. The place where we, as Local Government, deliver services and support to our community.

1.3 Apologies

Nil

1.4 Next meeting

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

2 Term of Office of Mayor

Section 26 of the Act requires that before the election of the Mayor, a Council must determine by resolution whether the Mayor is to be elected for a one or two year term.

The next election of the Mayor is to be held on a day that is close to the end of the term as resolved by Council as is reasonably practicable.

Motion

That Council determines the Office of the Mayor to be for a one-year term.

Moved: ***Cr Barry Davis***
Seconded: ***Cr Sonia Buckley***

Spoke for the motion: 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, Cr John White
Against: Nil
Abstained: Nil

3 Election of Mayor

The Act, pursuant to section 25, requires a*t a Council meeting that is open to the public the Councillors must elect a Councillor to be the Mayor of the Council.*

Any Councillor is eligible for election to the office of Mayor.

Section 25 of the Act stipulates that *the Mayor must be elected by an absolute majority of the Councillors*. An absolute majority as defined by section 25(7) of the Act *means the number of Councillors which is greater than half the total number of the Councillors of a Council*. Governance Rule 6.4 requires that the election of the Mayor must be carried out by show of hands.

Ms Fiona Weigall CEO called for nominations from Councillors for the position of Mayor.

Cr Arthur Allen nominated Cr Jodie Ashworth.

Cr Jodie Ashworth accepted the nomination.

Cr Barry Davis nominated Cr Bernie Farquhar.

Cr Bernie Farquhar accepted the nomination.

Cr Ian Trevaskis nominated Cr Sonia Buckley.

Cr Sonia Buckley accepted the nomination.

As there was more than one candidate, Ms Fiona Weigall CEO provided each nominated Councillor with an opportunity to speak to their candidacy for the position of Mayor.

Following the candidacy speeches, Ms Fiona Weigall CEO conducted the voting process in the order in which nominations were received.

Cr Jodie Ashworth received three votes, with votes cast by Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth and Cr Tom Crook.

Cr Bernie Farquhar received three votes, with votes cast by Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman and Cr Bernie Farquhar.

Cr Sonia Buckley received three votes, with votes cast by Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White.

An absolute majority was not obtained on the first vote, with each candidate receiving three votes, Fiona Weigall CEO invited a motion to adjourn the meeting for 10 minutes before conducting a second vote.

Procedural note

Cr Joanne Eastman called for a motion of adjournment.

Motion

That Council adjourns the meeting for 10 minutes.

Moved: ***Cr Joanne Eastman***
Seconded: ***Cr Tom Crook***

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, Cr John White
Against: Nil
Abstained: Nil

Procedural Note

The meeting was adjourned at 6.24 pm.

The meeting was re-commenced at 6.28 pm.

Ms Fiona Weigall CEO conducted a second vote for the three candidates in the order in which they were nominated.

Cr Jodie Ashworth received three votes, with votes cast by Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth and Cr Tom Crook.

Cr Bernie Farquhar received three votes, with votes cast by Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman and Cr Bernie Farquhar.

Cr Sonia Buckley received three votes, with votes cast by Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White.

An absolute majority was not obtained on the second vote, with votes equally divided. Ms Fiona Weigall CEO advised that the elimination of one candidate was required to be determined by lot in accordance with Council's Governance Rule 6.5.

In accordance with Governance Rule 6.5, where three or more candidates receive an equal number of votes, the candidate to be eliminated must be determined by lot.

The Manager Governance and Risk conducted the draw. Cr Sonia Buckley’s name was drawn and she was subsequently eliminated from the election.

A further vote was then required between the remaining candidates, Cr Jodie Ashworth and Cr Bernie Farquhar.

Cr Sonia Buckley left the Council Chamber at 6.32 pm.

Procedural note

Cr Tom Crook called for a motion of adjournment.

Motion

That Council adjourns the meeting for 5 minutes.

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 Tom Crook, Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman, Cr Bernie Farquhar, Cr Ian Trevaskis, Cr John White
Against: Nil
Abstained: Nil

Procedural Note

The meeting was adjourned at 6.34 pm.

Cr Sonia Buckley entered the Council Chamber at 6.35 pm

The meeting was re-commenced at 6.35 pm.

Ms Fiona Weigall CEO conducted a third vote between the two remaining candidates, Cr Jodie Ashworth and Cr Bernie Farquhar.

Cr Jodie Ashworth received five votes, with votes cast by Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Tom Crook and Cr John White.

In accordance with Section 25(6) of the Act, and with Cr Jodie Ashworth receiving an absolute majority of votes (five votes), Cr Jodie Ashworth was duly elected Mayor of East Gippsland Shire Council for a one-year term.

Procedural note

Cr Jodie Ashworth Mayor made a ceremonial speech outlining her priorities for the year ahead, and congratulatory statements were made by Councillors.

At this point in proceedings, Cr Jodie Ashworth Mayor took the Chair and presided over the remainder of the meeting.

4 Office of Deputy Mayor

4.1 Establishment of Office of Deputy Mayor

Section 21 of the Act provides *that the Deputy Mayor must perform the role of the Mayor and may exercise any powers of the Mayor if*:

a) the Mayor is unable for any reason to attend a Council meeting or part of a Council meeting; or

b) the Mayor is incapable of performing the duties of the office of Mayor for any reason including illness; or

c) the office of Mayor is vacant.

Motion

That Council establishes the office of the Deputy Mayor in accordance with section 27 of the Local Government Act 2020.

Moved: ***Cr Arthur Allen***
Seconded: ***Cr Joanne Eastman***

Spoke for the motion: Cr Arthur Allen 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, Cr John White
Against: Nil
Abstained: Nil

Following the resolution to establish the office of the Deputy Mayor, Cr Jodie Ashworth Mayor commenced proceedings to elect the Deputy Mayor.

4.2 Election of Deputy Mayor

The election of the Deputy Mayor was conducted by the Mayor in accordance with section 27 of the Act and the Governance Rules (Rule 6 – Election of Mayor), specifically, Governance Rule 6.4 which states that the election of the Deputy Mayor must be carried out by show of hands.

Cr Jodie Ashworth, Mayor called for nominations for the position of Deputy Mayor.

Cr Arthur Allen nominated Cr John White.

Cr John White accepted the nomination.

Cr Bernie Farquhar nominated himself.

Cr Joanne Eastman nominated herself.

Cr Tom Crook nominated himself.

As there was more than one candidate, Cr Jodie Ashworth Mayor provided an opportunity for nominated Councillors to speak to their candidacy for the position of Deputy Mayor.

Cr Bernie Farquhar withdrew his nomination.

Following the candidacy speeches, Cr Jodie Ashworth Mayor conducted the voting process for the remaining candidates in the order in which nominations were received.

Cr John White received four votes, with votes cast by Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White.

Cr Joanne Eastman received three votes, with votes cast by Cr Barry Davis, Cr Joanne Eastman and Cr Bernie Farquhar.

Cr Tom Crook received two votes, with votes cast by Cr Jodie Ashworth and Cr Tom Crook.

In accordance with the Governance Rule 6.5, the candidate with the fewest number of votes cast must be eliminated.

Cr Tom Crook received the fewest votes and was eliminated from the election.

Cr Jodie Ashworth Mayor conducted a second vote with the remaining candidates.

Cr John White received five votes, with votes cast by Cr Arthur Allen, Cr Jodie Ashworth, Cr Sonia Buckley, Cr Ian Trevaskis and Cr John White.

In accordance with Section 25(6) of the Act, and with Cr John White receiving an absolute majority of votes (five votes), Cr John White was duly elected as Deputy Mayor of East Gippsland Shire Council for a one-year term.

Procedural note

Cr John White, Deputy Mayor, made a ceremonial speech outlining his priorities for the year ahead, and congratulatory statements were made by Councillors.

5 Close of Meeting

Cr Jodie Ashworth Mayor declared the Council Meeting closed at 6.57 pm.