

SUMMARY

Proposed Community Plan 2021-25 and Long Term Financial Plan 2021-31

Our Proposed Community Plan 2021-25

Earlier this year we invited the community to share its ideas and priorities for Council to focus on delivering over the next four years.

More than 1300 people joined the conversation to give Council a clear understanding of the community's priorities.

There were two key questions to consider:

- What should Council focus on over the next four years to make sure the City of Whittlesea is a connected community, with liveable neighbourhoods, a vibrant local economy and sustainable environment?
- How should Council's \$2 million Community Recovery Fund be spent to help our community recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic?

5535 comments from 1329 people helped shape the Community Plan 2021-25.

You told us your priorities were:

- More parks and playgrounds
- Roads as a priority
- Support for local business
- Biodiversity including planting more trees, conserving habitats and looking after wildlife
- Improving waste management

The proposed Community Plan clearly articulates what Council plans to achieve between 2021 and 2025, how it will prioritise its resources and effort, and how it will measure success by meeting the needs of its community. The plan incorporates the Council Plan, Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, Disability Action Plan and Pandemic Recovery Actions.

In developing the Community Plan, Council considered the community's goals and aspirations set out in *Whittlesea 2040*, which was developed in 2018 with significant input from people who live, work, study, visit and those who do business in the City of Whittlesea.

The plan lists actions that will contribute to each of the Whittlesea 2040 goals.

Connected community

Over the next four years we will continue to work to foster an inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported. Our community priorities are: public safety, festivals, events, arts and markets, social connection – access and inclusion, sports facilities and infrastructure and community groups and community infrastructure.

Liveable neighbourhoods

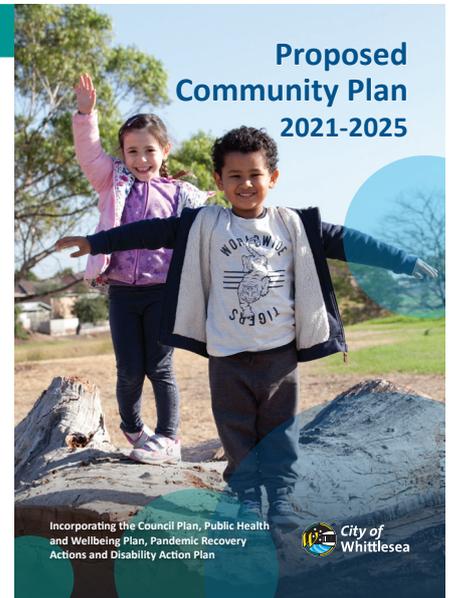
Over the next four years we will ensure our City is well planned and that our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play. Our community priorities are: new and upgraded parks and playgrounds, transport improvements, local shops, social and affordable housing, clean streets and spaces, traffic management and road safety.

Strong local economy

Over the next four years we will seek to make our City a smart choice for innovation, business growth and industry investment as well as supporting local businesses to be successful, enabling opportunities for local work and education. Our community priorities are: supporting local business, local employment, economic development, delivering libraries, schools and early years education, technology and innovation and creating employment pathways.

Sustainable environment

Over the next four years we will prioritise our environment and take action to reduce waste, preserve local biodiversity, protect waterways and green spaces and address climate change.



Our community priorities are: waste management, biodiversity, community education and awareness, maintaining and increasing the number of trees, sustainable energy and infrastructure, water quality and security and climate change action and awareness.

High-performing organisation

Over the next four years we will work to ensure Council engages effectively with the community, delivers efficient and effective services and initiatives, makes decisions in the best interests of the community and delivers value to the community. Our community priorities are: customer service and responsiveness, communication and engagement with our community, service quality and Council performance.

We will use the community vision *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all* indicators to measure our progress on the Community Plan. We will report on these annually to the community. During 2021-25 we will review and update these measures to ensure they align with the identified community priorities outlined in this plan.

Our Proposed Long-Term Financial Plan 2021-2031

The City of Whittlesea Financial Plan 2021-2031 shows how Council will fund these projects and others over the next 10 years.

Our overarching approach is to strike the right balance between spending on projects and services for the community and managing our financial reserves long-term to achieve our Whittlesea 2040 vision of *A Place for All*.

The landscape

Council embarks on our 10-year financial plan from a position of sound financial stability, possessing the necessary financial resources to continue to deliver on key community services and infrastructure investment. This level of stability has been developed through strong financial management practices that have enabled Council to maintain adequate cash reserves and sustainable levels of debt. The *Local Government Act 2020* places an emphasis on achieving the best outcomes for not just our current community, but also future generations. This principle has been incorporated in determining how Council best allocates its financial resources.

In developing the financial plan, consideration has been given to a wide range of financial challenges likely to impact Council and our community over the next decade; the most significant of which, in the short term, is undoubtedly the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to present many social and financial challenges globally, nationally and importantly, locally for our community.

To ensure that Council is appropriately prepared to meet the challenges ahead, responsible financial management and decision-making is critical. The following outlines a summary of some of Council's key approaches towards financial sustainability over the next 10 years:

- rate cap increase forecasted to align with current CPI information
- setting our waste charge at a sustainable level that adequately covers the cost of providing the service
- identification of efficiency savings in the operating budget that can be reinvested to further community benefit

- setting of Council's fees and charges at a level that achieves balance between community benefit and financial sustainability
- continuing to identify sources of alternative revenue streams and advocate for external funding to reduce the burden on our rate revenue
- continuing to monitor Council's investment in asset renewal to ensure an appropriate balance between new infrastructure for growth areas and asset renewal for established areas.

Our income

Rates and charges are Council's primary source of income and are subject to an annual cap under the State Government's Fair Go Rating System. The financial plan assumes an annual rate increase of 2 per cent over the life of the plan. City of Whittlesea continues to maintain one of the lowest average rates across Councils located outside the Melbourne fringe.

One of the key challenges for Council is to identify alternative sources of income to reduce our reliance on rates to fund service delivery to our community. This has taken on new significance with the introduction of rate capping, with increasing costs now routinely exceeding increases in available rate funding.

A summary of the sources of Council's average income received over the 10-year financial plan is shown below.



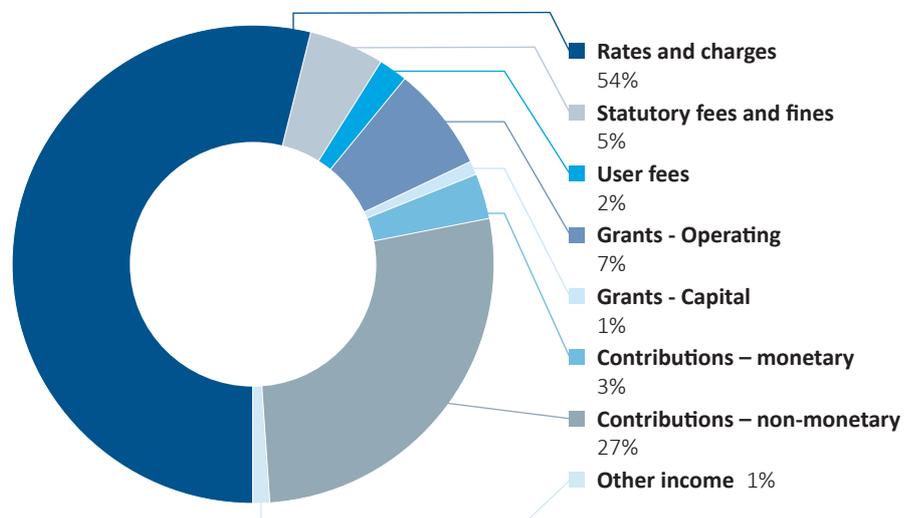
Our expenditure

Council incurs expenditure in delivering services and programs to our community. Our people, who deliver the broad range of services upon which our community rely, represent Council's greatest source of expenditure.

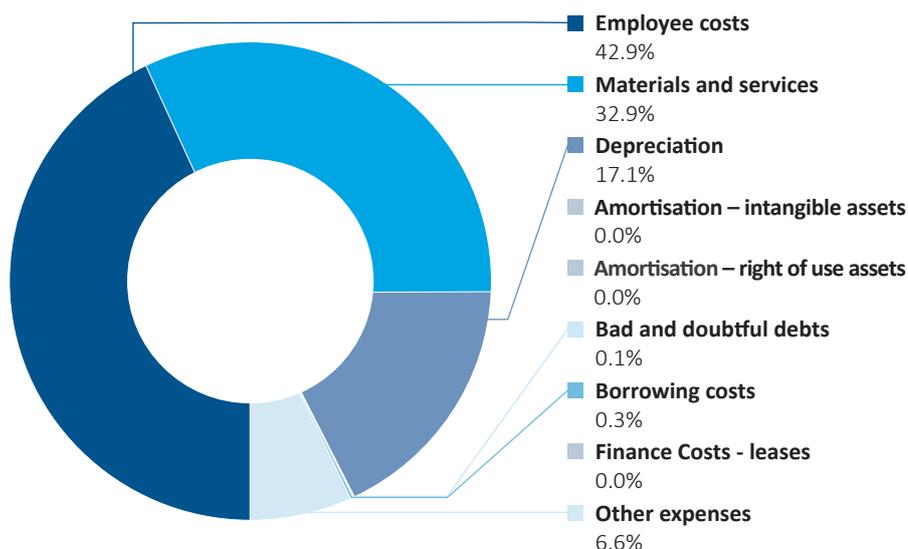
This is closely followed by expenditure for our goods and services (including our key service contracts) that further support service provision for our community.

A summary of Council's average expenditure incurred over the 10-year financial plan is shown on the following page.

Average income forecast over 10 years 2021-31



Average forecast expenditure over 10 years 2021-31



Our capital works program

Our capital works program details Council's investment in new assets and the renewal and upgrade of existing assets. As Council brings on new assets to support our growing community, there is a need to achieve a balance with required investment in the renewal and upgrade of our existing assets. Council will maintain an average capital works program of \$88 million over the financial plan.

A summary of Council's annual investment in our capital works program is shown below.

Our surplus

On paper, Council's forecasted surpluses over the life of the financial plan may seem large. However, the majority are in the form of developer contributions such as parks, playgrounds, roads and footpaths which Council then needs to maintain. Our cash result is a more accurate reflection of our surplus which, over the life of the plan, equates to \$12.5 million. This indicates that Council is investing the majority of available cash back into community infrastructure and services.

Our waste charge

The City of Whittlesea currently has one of the lowest waste charges in the state, due to absorbing rising costs associated with waste collection. In 2021/22, Council increased its waste charge by just 1.5 per cent, despite a State Government landfill levy increase of more than 60 per cent, representing a \$2.36 million subsidy for the community. To return to a cost-neutral position, Council will increase its waste charge by 12 per cent every year for the first five years of the financial plan, dropping to 5 per cent for the five years thereafter. Next financial year, this equates to an additional household charge of approximately \$14.

Our borrowings strategy

Borrowings are an important part of Council's financial strategy, and if managed soundly, play an integral part in generating long-term value for our community. Council has proposed borrowings throughout the financial plan to fund key infrastructure projects that will create intergenerational benefits. Council's proposed borrowings will continue to be reviewed throughout the plan to ensure they are sustainable and generating the expected value for our community.

Advocacy

Council will continue to advocate to both the State and Federal governments on behalf of our community for funding that will support key projects integral to the ongoing development of the municipality over the next decade.

This is a responsible and financially sustainable long-term plan that puts the City of Whittlesea in a strong fiscal position to provide for the needs of our rapidly growing community over the coming decade.

Capital works program

2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
73,659	76,417	62,128	72,777	90,703	115,718	71,350	71,302	86,711	122,832	110,918

More details

This is a summary of our Proposed Community Plan 2021-25 and our Proposed Long-Term Financial Plan 2021-31. More detail is available in the full versions at engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au

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