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Surf Coast Shire Ordinary Council Meeting

Tuesday, 22 October 2024 at 6pm

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CR PATTISON: Hello. Good evening and welcome to our October Council meeting. I'm Mayor Liz Pattison. This meeting is being live streamed, so a big welcome to those tuning in online, and of course welcome to my fellow Councillors. Live captioning will accompany the live stream of this meeting and we hope that this assists those with hearing difficulties.

I'd like to acknowledge that we are gathered on Wadawurrung country. I pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging. The Surf Coast Shire local government area spans the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud peoples of the Maar Nation.

Tonight is an online meeting and I am joining from Torquay, which is on Wadawurrung country. The Wadawurrung people have nurtured and protected these lands and waterways for thousands of generations and I'm so grateful that we can be here today living and working in such a beautiful part of the world. The Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to walking with traditional owners of these lands on a journey of genuine reconciliation and I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands from which each of us are joining the meeting and also to acknowledge Aboriginal people who are viewing this meeting.

The process for our meeting - Councillors are familiar with our Governance Rules and meeting procedures and allocated speaking time, so we'll move into our agenda for tonight and let's get under way.

I'd like to recite the Pledge as a sign of our commitment: "As Councillors we carry out our responsibilities with diligence and integrity and make fair decisions of lasting value for the wellbeing of our community and environment."

We have an apology tonight from Councillor Wellington. Do I have a mover and a seconder, please? Moved by Councillor Schonfelder and seconded by Councillor Hodge. All those in favour, please raise your hand. And the motion is carried unanimously.

We now move on to Confirmation of Minutes. Can I please have a mover and a seconder to confirm the minutes of the Council meeting held on 16 September 2024? Councillor Hodge moved and seconded by Councillor Bodsworth. All those in favour. And the motion is carried unanimously.

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We now move on to Leave of Absence Requests. Are there any Councillors seeking leave of absence for the three days left of our Council term? No?

We will now move on to Declarations of Conflicts of Interest. If a Councillor or an officer has a conflict of interest, they must declare it now and do so just before the item is discussed. Do we have any conflicts of interest to raise? No.

No presentations. No. And we don't have any submissions. So we move on to Public Questions. We have one public question, but because we're at an online meeting, I will read out the public question and then our CEO will respond. So we have one community member, Naomi Stewart from Torquay, who has two questions in relation to 26 Silvereye Street Torquay. So I'll read out the first question and then our CEO will respond. So this is on behalf of Naomi Stewart: "Just after the September Council meeting, we were advised through FOI from Triple Zero that there have been 72 callouts to the Highton Haven facility at 329 Roslyn Road between 1 July 2023 to 30 July 2024. The breakdown is as follows - 31 Police, 31 Ambulance and 10 Country Fire Authority. Given these stats and that Torquay doesn't have 24-hour police, Ambulance is from Geelong and the CFA is run by volunteers that are already stretched, the community is now even more concerned with the proposed 12-unit facility at 26 Silvereye Street. This evidence proves the community's concerns about traffic, impacts on community amenity and protecting the children's innocence. MPs Richard Riordan and Bev McArthur have raised their concerns within the Upper and Lower Houses of Victorian Parliament. It appears that Council may have been more focused on meeting their social housing target, but may have missed an opportunity to do due diligence on this proposal. Will Council now advocate for the relocation as it appears that Mind Australia have not provided accurate information about this issue and may not have acted in the best interests of the community, nor their residents?" I'll pass this to our CEO to respond, please.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thanks, Mayor Pattison. Thank you for your question, Naomi. Council has been advocating to Mind Australia that they undertake ongoing engagement with local community members, including regular information updates. As part of this, we facilitated a meeting with Mind Australia and local community members so that people could discuss their concerns directly with representatives from Mind Australia. Given Council doesn't have a planning or approval role, we haven't assessed the merits or otherwise of the project location, nor has Council been involved in proposing a

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different location. We continue to encourage direct engagement between Mind Australia and community as this project progresses.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. And now Naomi's second question - please note that this question was not read out nor in the minutes last month. "Council has advised they are currently developing plans for the public open space (known as Reserve 1 - Stretton Estate) in Silvereye Street Torquay. When will these plans be finalised? Will Council bring forward these works to provide the community with an appropriately developed open space considering they are a DCP project that has already been funded and should have been provided when the land was titled?" I'll pass this one to our CEO.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thanks, Naomi, for your question and also apologies for the unintended error from our last Council meeting, where we didn't actually respond to this question.

I understand that our General Manager of Community Life emailed you through the answer to this question after the meeting, which I can read out and I hope is helpful. So the email sent to you said, "Hi Naomi, thanks for your second question, which is along the lines of a question from the August Council meeting. The design of this open space is proceeding this financial year and construction is expected in 2025/2026. We will have a clearer picture of the project plan and completion dates around the middle of 2025." Naomi, thanks for your continued interest both in terms of this open space and also the Haven Home.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. So that's the end of our public questions. There are no Petitions for tonight's meeting and there are no Notice of Motions, so now we can get into the one report that we have for our Council meeting, which is the Surf Coast Shire Council Annual Report 2023-24. The purpose of this report is to present the Surf Coast Shire Council's Annual Report to Council for noting. We have a recommendation before us. Does anyone wish to move a motion? Councillor Stapleton - is that as per the recommendation? Yes. And can I have a seconder, please? Thank you, Councillor Bodsworth. Would you like to speak, Councillor Stapleton?

CR STAPLETON: I will take the opportunity. Thank you, Mayor. I love getting the Annual Report each year. It's such a great way to understand the extent of what Council does and how resources are allocated. It tells the story of our achievements and performance over the past financial year. It covers all the absolute basics, like roads, rates and rubbish, which Council will always do as

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part of its day-to-day operations, but if you want to look beyond the basics to see what Council actually delivers for the community in terms of services, infrastructure and programs, you'll find it's a real eye opener.

The Annual Report is divided into multiple sections, including Council's performance and financial statements, an overview of the organisation, governance and more, but a little bit I really like is the pie chart on page 14 of the Annual Report, which shows how Council spent \$100 of rates over the year according to each of the seven Council themes.

The biggest part of the pie, more than half, or \$52, was spent under the theme of Healthy Connected Communities. This included things like upgrades to community infrastructure, such as the Torquay Scouts, the Anglesea Netball Pavilion and flooring replacements at the Globe Theatre in Winchelsea and Stribling Reserve in Lorne. There have been a range of pathway, road safety and cycling projects completed and there was a major independent review of the unsealed road network. More than \$168,000 has been spent on community projects through the grants program and we continue to provide some support to community houses who do such a great job of connecting people across the shire.

The second largest portion of the \$100 pie was allocated to the theme of Sustainable Growth, accounting for \$19, or 19% if you like, of the spend. There have been many achievements in this area, not the least of which includes progress on affordable housing for those who need it in our shire.

This portion of the pie was also responsible for processing a total of 552 planning permits, while completing significant strategic planning projects like the Planning Scheme Review and the Urban Futures Strategy, which will guide where growth can occur in a sustainable way.

This portion of the pie also focuses on our important visitor economy and I'm really excited that we're pursuing accreditation to become a certified eco destination. This will hopefully attract visitors who value and respect the Surf Coast and, in particular, the natural environment as much as the locals do.

There are other chunky parts of the pie which I encourage you to take a look at, like environmental leadership and the arts, that have both delivered significant achievements in the past year, but I will leave those for others to possibly talk about, and the final portion of the pie that I would like to mention is the small amount of just \$1 out of every \$100 of the rate pie which is

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allocated to the theme of First Nations reconciliation. With this rather small contribution from the overall budget, Council has been able to achieve a lot. Our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan is on track to be delivered by the end of the year and we have seen some very moving and educational events take place, like the Journey on Wadawurrung Country exhibition and the successful Wadawurrung-led Pilk Purriyn truth-telling event.

There has been a significant amount of cultural awareness training for staff and also for Councillors and while there is still much to learn by Council and the community in this space, it is evident that we can work towards reconciliation in a meaningful way with only a minimal financial allocation from Council. I believe it's an investment worth making.

Finally, I'd like to add that financial sustainability is at the heart of Council being able to effectively function and to support the aspirations of our community. Council generated an accumulated unallocated cash surplus of \$1.9 million at year end and is holding cash and investments that have been allocated to deliver future projects and commitments.

The financial statements were approved in principle at the September Council meeting and it is great to note that we received very positive feedback from VAGO on these. It is a credit to all the officers and especially to Gabby, our Financial Manager, as they do an enormous amount of work all year, but particularly at this time of year, to pull all of this together. So thank you. It's very much appreciated and I'll leave it there. Cheers.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. Councillor Bodsworth, would you like to speak?

CR BODSWORTH: Thanks, Mayor. I've almost lost the knack of Zoom after so long.

So the Annual Report highlights performance against our Council plan and budget. So the Council plan set out an agenda. As we remember, it was formulated through a deliberative engagement process. It set out an agenda that reflected community vision, priorities and aspirations. This is the last of this Council's Annual Reports against that agenda and it highlights a high-performing Council, a strong performance by the organisation, high quality standards, and highly engaged, active, effective community. The report and audits show a sound financial position against a backdrop of strict revenue constraints, broadening scope of activities and sustained inflation that's challenging the whole local government sector.

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I want to call out some particular major progress on work that's particularly important to our community. So we have the Surf Coast Aquatic & Health Centre construction to begin later this year and also the rebuilt Winchelsea Pool to reopen this summer. We have rental housing affordability and availability projects in Winchelsea, Aireys and Anglesea, including excellent community deliberative and co-design processes tackling a really big issue that's hugely important to our communities.

Another one of those is cycling and walking improvements, helping people get around safely, economically, efficiently, happily and independently. Note the chart - the other pie chart this is - on page 26 showing expenditure on footpaths and cycleways at 4% against roads at 37%. That's roughly the proportion of spending on active transport that's recommended in a major report released yesterday by the Australia Institute and covered in the news yesterday.

On First Nations representation, as Councillor Stapleton mentioned, I particularly want to mention the foundational work of building trusting, constructive relationships with First Nations people in our area.

The development of the Circular Economy Action Plan reflects our community's commitment to sustainability and circularity, effecting cultural change. We have actions to protect Karaaf Wetlands, formulated in partnership with the community and other agencies. We also have, following on from that, specific Surf Coast stormwater design and performance guidance for developers.

We've got a cooperative approach to Painkalac Creek estuary management, the Planning Scheme Review and Urban Futures Strategy that Councillor Stapleton mentioned also including great qualitative aspects around sustainability, healthy, happy, affordable neighbourhoods.

And we've also had the handover of crown land reserves to the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, which our staff played a great role in, including the Bells Reserve after 53 years of Council management.

So I'm going to leave it at that. There's more that I could talk about, but particularly the cultural pieces that underpin all this, which is a culture of cooperation on the Council and within the organisation and a focus on the important work at hand. So I thank you all for that.

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CR PATTISON: Thanks, Councillor Bodsworth. Would any other Councillors like to speak? Councillor Barker?

CR BARKER: Thanks, Mayor. Just a quick question to start off with. Why was the format of the document changed from showing the income and expenditure in simple terms on operating performance from the 22-23 report to the 23-24 report?

CR PATTISON: I'll have to hand that one to Robyn - sorry, our CEO. Your speaker is a little unclear. I don't know - we had this problem once before. I don't know if you have any headphones because there's a little bit of disturbance. We can kind of hear it, but I'm just letting you know, Councillor Barker.

CR BARKER: Can you hear? If I speak louder, is that better?

CR PATTISON: A bit better, yes, yes.

CR BARKER: The question is why was the income and expenditure changed in the format where it showed on the 22-23 Annual Report, but it is omitted from the 23-24 Annual Report?

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: So Councillor Barker, you're referring to the summary report at the front?

CR BARKER: Correct.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: And you'll notice that throughout that summary report we make reference to a note of 2.1.2 in the financial report for further commentary on the budget variances and capital works and we did that because the notes were quite significant and so we wanted to make sure that we could explain variances clearly, which is why we've got the notes - I think in at least three places we've got the note that says please refer to that section 2.1.2. So we're not in any way trying to hide anything. It's purely so that we are quite transparent and can go through and explain exactly what the variances were because it's quite complex. I don't know if our Acting General Manager of Strategy and Effectiveness wanted to add anything to that.

MS GABBY SPILLER: Through the Chair, I can add, Councillor Barker, if you particularly wanted that added into that section, we can, but as the CEO mentioned, because it required a lot of explanation and that's a summary area,

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we decided to refer it to the other section where all the detail was, but we could add that in if you so desire.

CR BARKER: If those two lines were inserted, I'd be happy to note the report.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Councillor Barker, can I - sorry, Mayor Pattison, can I just clarify those two lines? What are the two lines specifically, Councillor Barker?

CR BARKER: Under operating performance, if you have a look at page number 12 of the 22-23 Annual Report, you'll see that the income and expenditure is listed under operating performance as a summary, where it's been omitted in the 23-24 Annual Report.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: So there's just like a sentence - sorry, Mayor Pattison - just a sentence or two, Councillor Barker, that you're wanting inserted?

CR BARKER: It's part of a table. Under operating performance, it speaks to the overall operating performance, but then there's a table which the 23-24 report only (inaudible) the deficit surplus level and in the 22-23 report it includes the overall summary in the table of income and expenditure.

CR PATTISON: So I think from what Gabby - Ms Spiller had said, it's an administrative change that can be inserted if required, so I think we can cover that offline because it's not - it won't change significantly the report that's going out. It's an administrative line that can be inserted. So we'll resolve that, the specifics of which table, and the like. So would you like to continue speaking to the motion, Councillor Barker?

CR BARKER: Thank you, Mayor. We can agree that it's still an incorrect --

CR PATTISON: We can't hear you, Councillor Barker. You'll need to speak closer to your --

CR BARKER: We can agree that it's still an incorrect statement of what we spent. The concern for me is that 1% of spending represents around about \$10 million. So if you have a look at where \$1 out of \$100 was spent, that's replicating an actual spend of \$10 million. So I hope people can look at it in that lens.

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What is concerning is that when you look at where money has been spent compared between the 22-23 report and the 23-24 report, we've spent around about 53% on roads in 22-23 and that's down to 37% in 23-24. So if you're driving around and having a look at our roads and you've got any questions, all you need to do is look back on these reports to see why that is.

But there's a lot more to go into - I'm sure nothing is going to change too much, so if those lines could be added into the table with regards to income and expenditure, I'm happy to note the report. Thank you.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. Councillor Schonfelder, would you like to speak to the motion?

CR SCHONFELDER: Thank you, Mayor. I'd like to say that looking ahead for the 2024-2025 period, Council is dedicated to delivering on the final year of the current Council plan and part of the budget, of the 2024-25 revised budget, has a strong focus on delivering core services, but I'll just reiterate them, which includes the redevelopment and reopening of the Winchelsea Pool, the Surf Coast Aquatic & Health Centre year 1 construction, reconstruction of Anglesea Netball courts, supporting the 2025 Gran Fondo World Championships in Lorne, Aireys Inlet Top Shops Beautification Project, Newling Reserve Playground renewal in Moriac, Bob Pettitt Playground and Tennis Court renewal in Jan Juc, construction also of a regional bike route along a section of the Great Ocean Road.

Very happy about these initiatives and also happy about Horseshoe Bend Road being upgraded after a terrible storm that took place. Other roads have been upgraded, such as Coombes Road and the Fischer Street Merrijig Drive are just some examples. So very happy, Mayor, and I'd like to endorse this report. Thank you.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. Would any other Councillors like to speak?
Councillor Allen.

CR ALLEN: (Inaudible). I'm coming in and out, so I'll turn my camera off.

CR PATTISON: Sure.

CR ALLEN: It is my pleasure to support the acceptance of this Annual Report. Yes, there are things that may have been done differently. Yes, there are some matters that are perhaps under-resourced. However, I believe that, on

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balance, we as a team have very effectively achieved a balance between our statutory obligations and community expectations as expressed in the Council plan. It has been an honour for me to represent the Lorne ward and the broader Surf Coast community, to work over the past year and four years with a dedicated Council staff and, without exception, passionate Councillors.

Finally, to the new Council, my very best wishes as they work for the continued benefit of our communities. And finally, thank you for the wonderful support of the Governance team, who have worked very hard to allow me to vote for this very last time. Thank you. Thank you to Jake and the team.

CR PATTISON: Thank you, Councillor Allen. Appreciate you calling in from overseas. Councillor Hodge?

CR HODGE: Thank you, Mayor. It's one of those documents that shows everything - all our workings, all the services for dollar for dollar and where everything goes.

I suppose at the end of a term when you get your last Annual Report, you look back and think have we left it in a better place than we found it? And being on Council for quite a few years, I think we have. I really do think we've worked together well under the stewardship of Anne Howard, Acting CEO, and Robyn now and her team.

But I think one thing we've really got to look at is the empathy that we should have for our community. It's fantastic all the infrastructure and everything, but I think having a connected and healthy community is one of the most important things a Council strives for and one of the things I'd really like - I'm just going to highlight a case study of how we've supported the community house that does meals for people in the community once a month and it's free and we've worked with Feed Me Surf Coast and what's wonderful is the secondary college students that come in and do a lot of the cooking.

When you have this luncheon, we have men from the Men's Shed, we have a group of young adults with disabilities, and we also have couples that are perhaps lonely and we have widowed ladies come in. Now, this is a fabulous service because we do the grants for them and to me - I've been to several of these and it's just heartwarming to see.

I think you judge a Council - yeah, you can judge it by the potholes, yes, you can judge it by the pool, but to me you judge a Council of how they look after

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the people that perhaps need a little bit of help. We have a wonderful positive ageing committee. We have a wonderful all abilities committee, and we work well with Art of the Minds and mental health services and I think that's really, really important to look after these people that, you know, need a little bit of help.

So to me we have improved in these four years on that, especially with the grants going out. Feed Me Surf Coast, they do a fantastic job, the Lions, Rotary and the volunteers that can help out. If we can support them that support other people not in the best position, that's what a Council is all about.

So I'd like to thank the staff that have helped do that, Rose and the team and the girls that come to the community house. It's fabulous to see, fabulous to see that connected community and that's what we're all about.

So, you know, after another four years, I think we have improved that and I'd like to thank the officers and all involved. Thank you.

CR PATTISON: Thank you, Councillor Hodge. Councillor Gazzard, would you like to speak?

CR GAZZARD: Thank you. I'm getting sentimental. This is our last meeting, and especially hearing Councillor Hodge and Councillor Allen speak and Councillor Allen, you've done an exceptional job being a Councillor and I've felt very privileged to work with you. I hope to work with the rest of you again, but we'll see what happens with the election.

I'm very happy to note and endorse this report. I think the layout is excellent. I really like the goals, achievements and challenges layout. Well done to all the officers for all the hard work that's gone into this and the work you do all the time. So just looking at like the fast facts, so it's about 40,000 people, median age is 42. There were 362 babies born this year and what's very close to my heart is the maternal child health services. So I think 11,000 hours worked by the maternal child health nurses is really incredible and supporting young babies and parents in our community is such an important part.

In terms of waste collection, an amazing 1,129,896 kerbside bin lifts - I like seeing numbers like that - and although we're not quite meeting our target of 73% of diversion from landfill, we're pretty close at 71% and that was, for various reasons, slightly reduced.

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Our sealed local roads maintained to condition standards are above what our target is at 97% and I was really heartened to see 11,000 library members and improvement in participation in maternal child health nurse services by Aboriginal children is at 84%, which is excellent.

So yes, I echo what's been said and there's some obviously very important financial considerations in all of this, but I think we've been delivering excellent services as a Council. Thank you.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. We'll now put the motion - oh, sorry, actually, Councillor Stapleton, do you have any closing remarks?

CR STAPLETON: Thanks, Mayor. Not a lot, just to, yes, echo everything that everybody has said and, you know, there's almost 200 pages in this Annual Report, but it is laid out in a way that's really easy to read and digest and I'd definitely encourage everyone just to get online and have a look.

The results are also presented on the Victorian Government's Know Your Council website in November, so I think that's a good opportunity for the community to compare the data to previous years and against other Councils to get a more holistic picture. But yeah, it's a fabulous report, a lot in it and please get on and have a look. Thank you.

CR PATTISON: Thank you. We'll now put the motion to the vote. All those in favour. And the motion is carried unanimously.

And there's no urgent business, so that means that we will now end our last Council meeting at 6.32pm. Thank you, everybody, for tuning in and thank you all my fellow Councillors and officers for a wonderful term together. So thank you very much and good night.