

MINUTES

Meeting of Council

Held at the
Civic Centre
511 Burwood Highway
Wantirna South
On
Monday 15 December 2025



The Agenda for the Meeting of Council, Monday 15 December 2025, forms part of these Minutes and is attached in full at the end of the Minutes.

These Minutes are considered draft until adopted and confirmed at the next Meeting of Council.

The meeting commenced at 7.05 pm.

PRESENT:

Cr Paige Kennett (Mayor)	Chandler Ward
Cr Chris Duncan (Deputy Mayor)	Collier Ward
Cr Peter Lockwood	Baird Ward
Cr Robert Williams	Dinsdale Ward
Cr Meagan Baker	Dobson Ward
Cr Parisa Considine	Friberg Ward
Cr Susan Pearce	Taylor Ward
Cr Glen Atwell	Tirhatuan Ward
Matt Kelleher	Acting Chief Executive Officer
Grant Thorne	Director – Infrastructure
Nicola Ward	Acting Director - City Liveability
Judy Chalkley	Director – Connected Communities
Liesl Westberry	Interim Director - Customer and Performance
Navec Lorkin	Chief Financial Officer
Andrew Dowling	Manager, Governance and Risk
Saskia Weerheim	Head of Governance

THE MEETING OPENED WITH A STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Custodians of the land, and meets on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. We pay our respects to elders both past and present.

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1 Apologies And Requests For Leaves Of Absence

An apology was received from Councillor Lisa Cooper.

2 Declarations Of Conflict Of Interest

Councillor Baker foreshadowed transparency statements for Items 6.1 – Report of Planning Applications Decided Under Delegation 1 November 2025 to 30 November 2025 and Item 8.8 – Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan.

Councillor Duncan foreshadowed declaring a conflict of interest for Item 8.4 – Knox Youth Advisory Committee – Annual Report.

3 Confirmation Of Minutes

The Chairperson, Councillor Paige Kennett invited Councillors to raise any opposition to the Minutes of the Meetings of Council held on 20 November 2025 and 24 November 2025. There being none, the Chairperson declared the Minutes be confirmed.

4 Presentations, Petitions And Memorials

MEMORIAL – BONDI

The Chairperson, Councillor Kennett, acknowledged the tragic events in Bondi on behalf of Council, noting that:

- While details are still emerging, it is important that we pause to recognise the seriousness of what has occurred and the devastating loss of innocent lives.
- Violence of this nature is profoundly unsettling and has shaken people's sense of safety—not only those directly harmed, but also many others who will carry the impact of this experience. We especially acknowledge the Jewish community, for whom this tragedy will be particularly devastating.
- Acknowledged the first responders and helpers and thank them for their courage and care during this difficult time.
- Recognised that this will be a difficult time for many in the wider community, and we hold in our thoughts all those who may be feeling vulnerable or fearful. As our community comes to terms with these events, we encourage compassion, care, and unity in supporting one another.

On behalf of Council, Cr Kennett extended heartfelt condolences to the victims, their families, and all those affected by this deeply distressing incident.

5 Reports By Councillors

5.1 Councillor Baker

Councillor Baker reported attending the following:

- Community Development Fund and Leisure Minor Capital Works celebration event and acknowledged recipients' commitment and contributions to the community.
- Knox Disability Advisory Committee meeting.
- MAV Masterclass: *Speaking with Impact* in Bendigo.
- A meeting to discuss Your Library Service Review.
- Knox Pavillion Bus Tour.
- Mountain District Learning Centre.
- Knox Carols.

Councillor Baker also:

- Although unable to attend the Environmental Volunteer Celebration, extended her appreciation to environmental volunteers for their services to Knox.

5.2 Councillor Duncan

Councillor Duncan reported attending the following:

- Opening of Wantirna Dog Park, a project initiated by his predecessors, former Councillor Jackson Taylor and progressed by former Councillor Marcia Timmers-Leitch, and delivered under the current Council term.
- Environmental Volunteers Celebration with Councillor Baker. Councillor Duncan highlighted volunteers contribute approximately 20,000 hours saving nearly \$1 million in labor costs to Knox.
- Recreation and Leisure Committee meeting where he stepped down as Chair. Councillor Duncan noted that Councillor Pearce is now the Chair.
- Community Development Fund and Leisure Minor Capital Works celebration event.
- Youth Advisory Committee end-of-year break-up.
- Eastern Region Group meeting.

Councillor Duncan also:

- Completed mandatory Mayor and Deputy Mayor training with Councillor Kennett.

5.3 Councillor Lockwood

Councillor Lockwood reported attending the following:

- Knox Carols - highlighting the strong attendance. Councillor Lockwood expressed his congratulations to the events staff, performers and MC for the excellent delivery of the event.
- Book launch at the Youth Hive. The Youth Literacy Society organised a writing competition and the winners' stories are now available in the lobby. Councillor Lockwood recognised the encouragement for creativity and writing among Knox youth.

Councillor Lockwood also:

- Provided an update on the Boronia Station Pavillion construction, highlighting that preparation is underway with construction scheduled to commence in the new year.
- Acknowledged the staff, Councillors and community who contribute to the Knox Multicultural Advisory Committee, Knox Interfaith Network, Knox Arts & Culture Advisory Committee, and Environment Advisory Committee.

5.4 Councillor Considine

Councillor Considine reported attending the following:

- Chaired the Early Years Advisory Committee meeting.

5.5 Councillor Atwell

Councillor Atwell reported attending the following:

- Your Library Limited AGM & Board Meeting, his first as the new Council representative alongside Councillor Lockwood. Councillor Atwell acknowledged Councillor Baker's past contributions to the Board and expressed his commitment to representing Council's views and supporting Knox libraries.
- Knox Carols where Councillor Atwell attended the second half of the program and the fireworks display. He praised performances including of MC Bernard Curry, Knox Factor, Cat's Dance Academy, and Royal Australian Navy Band. Noted the Navy Band's exclusive annual support for Knox Carols as a mark of event prestige.
- Rowville Primary School Assembly where Councillor Atwell presented the Tirhatuan Award to a student for outstanding community spirit and contribution. He congratulated Principal Ann Babbage and Assistant Shay White for another fantastic year.
- Makers and Bakers Market Christmas edition which was organised by the Rotary Club of Rowville Lysterfield. He noted this was the busiest market of the year, showcasing locally made arts, crafts, and baked goods. Councillor Atwell encouraged community members to visit future markets in 2026.

Councillor Atwell also:

- Highlighted the Rowville Fire Brigade Santa Run which is a tradition across Rowville streets. Councillor Atwell commended the CFA volunteers for organising this community event.

5.6 Councillor Williams

Councillor Williams reported attending the following:

- Knox Carols with fellow Councillors, commending the event's success and strong community attendance.
- Youth Advisory Committee final event of the year, celebrating achievements and welcoming new members.
- Guy Turner Tennis Club's 50th anniversary celebration, acknowledging its growth and contribution to the community.
- Bayswater CFA Christmas Party, with volunteers and residents.

- Hillsong Church Prepare and Pack initiative, helping assemble care packs for those in need.
- Knox Community Chess Enthusiasts Christmas breakup, recognising volunteer contributions, particularly Eddie.
- Co-launched *Fables from the Foothills* with Councillor Lockwood at Knox Youth Hive, showcasing youth creativity.
- Community pop-up sessions for the Marie Wallace Playground renewal project.
- Tormore Pavilion launch with Councillor Lockwood and the Mayor.
- Wantirna Dog Reserve with Councillor Duncan and the Mayor.

Councillor Williams also:

- Presented the Dinsdale Award at Bayswater West Primary School assembly.
- Visited Christmas markets at Temple Homes and participated in festive community activities.
- Acknowledged International Volunteers Day, recognising the vital role of Knox volunteers.
- Commended the Lions Club of Wantirna for its fundraising efforts.
- Viewed local Christmas light displays and encouraged community participation.
- Extended festive greetings to the community: *Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and a safe New Year.*

5.7 Councillor Pearce

Councillor Pearce reported attending the following:

- Chaired Quarry Reference Group meeting at Waverley Golf Club.
- Her son's high school graduation.
- Makers and Bakers Market and purchased locally made goods.
- Polish Christmas Market and enjoyed traditional dishes and decorations.
- Knox Carols event with fellow councillors.

Councillor Pearce also:

- Met with residents regarding planning, footpaths, and rubbish issues.
- Preparing to present the Taylor Award at Heany Park Primary School
- Extended festive greetings to residents.

5.8 Councillor Kennett

Councillor Kennett reported attending the following:

- Opening of the Kings Park Dog Park and Wantirna Reserve Dog Park.
- Knox Carols event - thanked staff for organising a successful evening.
- Wally Tew Pavilion construction site tour.
- Environmental Volunteer End of Year Celebration.
- Huawei Cup Youth Storytelling Competition at the Chinese Association Chinese School in Wantirna.
- Radio Eastern 98.1 FM Mayoral Segment.
- Visited Parliament House and met with Jackson Taylor MP and Daniela DeMartio MP.

- Community engagement pop-up at the Ferntree Gully Station to hear from community on shared path improvements.
- Audit and Risk Committee Meeting.
- Marie Wallace Playground Renewal community engagement on-site pop-up session.
- Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee meeting
- 2025 Grant Celebration Event - Community Development Fund and Leisure Minor Capital Works
- MAV Mayors Mandatory Training
- Miller Tennis Club to meet with members and the committee.
- Tormore Pavilion Construction Site Tour with Mary Doyle MP & Jackson Taylor MP.
- Millers Homestead Horticultural and Landscape Plan community engagement.
- Infolink's Christmas Hamper and Gifts Volunteer duties.
- The Basin Boronia News Christmas Party at Millers Homestead.
- Seniors Celebration Gathering with the Victorian Senior Unity Association at the Knox Library.
- The Knox 4th Scouts to celebrate the unveiling of the Scouts new shed.
- Eastern Region Group Meeting.

Councillor Kennett also:

- Attended various meetings in relation to parking and footpaths.

The Chairperson, Cr Kennett, noted a change to the order of business as the Acting Chief Executive Officer withdrew Item 8.2 – The Basin Parking Management Plan from the Agenda as there was some ambiguity in the Plan's attachments. Officers will refine the attachments before the item is presented again, which is expected to be at the Council meeting on Tuesday, 27 January 2026.

6 Planning Matters

6.1 Report of Planning Applications Decided Under Delegation 1 November 2025 to 30 November 2025

SUMMARY

Details of planning applications considered under delegation are referred for information. It is recommended that the items be noted.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the planning applications decided under delegation 1 November to 30 November 2025 as set out in the officers' report.

Councillor Baker has made a transparency statement in full to the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Matt Kelleher. Councillor Baker noted that as the report is for noting only and there is no decision is required, she advised that she does believe she has a conflict of interest.

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Baker

SECONDED: Councillor Atwell

That Council note the planning applications decided under delegation 1 November to 30 November 2025 as set out in the officers' report.

CARRIED

7 Public Question Time

Public Question Time commenced at 7.31 pm.

The following questions were raised with Council:

7.1 Question One - Stephen Herbut

If this facility proceeds with a BAL-12.5 construction in what is demonstrably a BAL-FZ environment, and with floor levels too low for flood protection, does Knox Council accept that as Responsible Authority, it is accountable for this planning outcome?

The Acting Director City Liveability, Nicola Ward responded by noting that:

- The proposed Aged Care Facility at 2-8 St Elmo Avenue Ferntree Gully has been the subject of a long and contested history within its local community.
- A Planning Permit P/2023/6138 was issued on 24 October 2024 at the Direction of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) after the application was initially refused by Council. The permit was amended on 30 July 2025, also at the direction of VCAT, to correct several errors contained in the VCAT order for the application.
- Concerns have been raised regarding the Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) on multiple occasions, and council officers have met with Mr Herbut on several times to discuss his concerns. Specifically referenced Council's detailed letter dated 16 January 2025 from Paul Dickie, Manager City Planning and Building. This correspondence and previous advice extensively discusses the issues raised by Mr Herbut in the context of the issued Planning Permit.
- There are two distinct regulatory systems influencing the development – the planning system, which relates to the permit that has been issued, and the building system. With the Planning Permit issued, the regulatory system that takes over is the building system. Council has no responsibility or accountability for matters that a private Relevant Building Surveyor will be assessing and for which the oversight is the state Building and Plumbing Commission.
- The site is not covered by the Bushfire Management Overlay under the Planning Scheme. Council's position as outlined in the January letter and at this time is clear and has not changed. There are no further planning matters to consider.
- The site's location is a Bushfire Prone Area under the Building Regulations. The issues raised will be a matter for the private Building Surveyor to consider at the time of the development, along with other building matters.
- In summary, VCAT has determined the planning outcome after a hearing where matters were examined. Council has issued the permit as it is required to do.

7.2 Question Two - Stephen Herbut

Knox Council is saying that responsibility now belongs to the Relevant Building Surveyor.

There are however several pathways that the Responsible Authority could take.

For example, Section 87 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 has provisions for action when it is determined that material misstatements or material mistakes exist after a Planning Permit has been issued.

As the Responsible Authority for this development on a complex, bushfire-prone site, what evidence would be sufficient to trigger Council to investigate whether material misstatements or material mistakes exist?

The Acting Director City Liveability, Nicola Ward responded:

- As advised at a recent meeting with you on 21 November 2025, the Council officer's opinion is that it is highly unlikely any application to VCAT to cancel or amend the permit under Section 87 of the Planning and Environment Act would succeed. As indicated earlier, the site is not located within the Bushfire Management Overlay.
- Council does not propose to pursue any action under Section 87 because of the cost Council would incur in pursuit of a matter with a very low expectation of success.
- Reiterated that the consistent advice of Council officers is that the Bushfire Prone Area requirements along with other building-related matters are required to be assessed by the private Relevant Building Surveyor. Council has no role in this respect.
- Council officers will continue to respond to any relevant matters for Council should they arise.

7.3 Question Three - Robert Mason

The Council's Election Period Policy defines a candidate as anyone who, "within 12 months of the next election period, has publicly declared their intention to run". By this definition, many incumbent councillors may already be considered candidates.

Given this, why is the Council considering allocating ratepayer funds to activities that could be perceived as election campaigning—such as listening posts—up to six months before the official election period?

The Council's primary responsibility is to provide good governance for the benefit of the municipal community. How does the Council justify applying different standards to incumbent councillors who become candidates, compared to other candidates?

The Interim Director Customer and Performance, Liesl Westberry responded noting that:

- Councillor Listening Posts are intended to support Councillor engagement with, and representation of their communities but also to operate within clear policy settings.
- Those policy settings recognise the importance of good governance and the need to strike a fair and proportionate balance between supporting Councillors to perform their representational role through their term - and ensuring fairness and equity as a Council election approaches.
- That is why the controls on Councillor Listening Posts in the Councillor Expenses and Support Policy and Procedure extend well beyond the statutory election period prescribed under the Local Government Act 2020.

- Under the policy, Listening Posts must cease in the six months prior to, and during, the election period, meaning the prohibition applies from January in a standard election year.
- Listening Posts will also be subject to the Council's Election Period Policy, which makes it clear that Council resources, events and activities must not be used at any time for election campaign purposes, or in a way that could improperly influence the outcome of an election. Importantly that provision applies at all times, not just during the election period.
- In that context, Council and the community can be assured that any planning for Councillor Listening Posts in the lead-up to an election will be carefully considered against Council Policies and the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020, to ensure councillors can continue to perform their representational role as set out in the Act, while at the same time maintaining and promoting fairness, transparency and confidence in the electoral process.
- This consideration would particularly take into account if, prior to a Councillor Listening post, any Councillor had publicly declared an intention to run and so become a "candidate" within the meaning of the election period policy.

Question Time Concluded at 7.45pm.

8 Officer Reports

8.1 Mobility and Access Action Plan

SUMMARY

The Knox Mobility and Access Action Plan is a 10-year strategy to improve accessibility by upgrading paths and parking, connecting people with disability to local services, and fostering partnerships and advocacy to enhance transport options.

After Council's endorsement of the draft Knox Mobility Access Action Plan (KMAAP) on 28 July 2025, a comprehensive public exhibition and engagement process was undertaken from mid-September to mid-October 2025. As part of the consultation, the community was asked to rank each action based on how much they think it could improve Knox's accessibility. Overall, feedback from the community was highly positive, with valuable input received on action priorities and additional recommendations. In response, minor refinements have been made to the draft plan to reflect community input and strengthen alignment with local accessibility priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Adopt the Knox Mobility and Access Action Plan, as set out in Attachment 1.
2. Note that the Knox Mobility and Access Action Plan has been informed by community engagement processes.

Councillor Lockwood left the Chamber at 7:46 pm during the discussion on and returned to the Chamber at 7.48pm before the vote on Item 8.1.

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Baker

SECONDED: Councillor Pearce

That Council:

1. **Adopt the Knox Mobility and Access Action Plan, as set out in Attachment 1.**
2. **Note that the Knox Mobility and Access Action Plan has been informed by community engagement processes**
3. **Request that officers provide an annual progress summary on the implementation of the Knox Mobility and Access Action Plan in the Annual Capital Works report to Council**
4. **Continue to involve people with disability and carers in the scoping and design of mobility projects, through co-audits or targeted consultation, to ensure lived experience informs implementation.**
5. **Request that officers identify and pursue external funding opportunities from State and Federal Governments, Grant funding streams and other partners to support the delivery of the Knox Mobility and Access Action Plan.**

CARRIED

8.2 The Basin Parking Management Plan

The Chairperson, Councillor Kennett, noted that Item 8.2 – The Basin Parking Management Plan was withdrawn from the agenda by the Acting Chief Executive Officer. A revised report is expected to be presented at the Council meeting on Tuesday, 27 January 2026.

8.3 Review of Tree and Vegetation Controls within the Knox Planning Scheme

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek a resolution of Council to commence the planning scheme amendment process to implement the recommendations of the Stage 1 review of the Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO) Review Project. The amendment relates specifically to Vegetation Protection Overlay – Schedule 2 (VPO2), which protects significant exotic and non-indigenous native trees across Knox.

Stage 1 is predominantly an administrative update to the VPO2 to make corrections to the relevant planning scheme maps and the list of trees set out in the VPO2 ordinance in the Knox Planning Scheme. The proposed corrections seek to remove references to trees that no longer exist on specific sites.

Officers intend to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit a planning scheme amendment to implement Stage 1 of the VPO Review Project by making the recommended changes to VPO2. The wider VPO Review Project involves reviewing the vegetation protection framework within the Knox Planning Scheme.

All Victorian councils are required to maintain their respective planning scheme, including the preparation of amendments to implement relevant strategic work, and correct anomalies and errors. This includes both mapping and ordinance (i.e. written) components of the scheme. The proposed amendment will improve the operation of the VPO2.

In addition, local councils are required to undertake periodic reviews of their planning scheme under Section 12B of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act). The planning scheme reviews of 2015, 2018 and 2023 identified the need to revisit the effectiveness of the VPO Schedules in the Knox Planning Scheme. The 2023 review report also recommended the VPO Schedules be reviewed within the next 1-2 years as a '*high priority*.'

Officers propose to undertake the correctional planning scheme amendment with notice exemptions pursuant to Section 20(2) of the Act. This provision of the Act allows local councils to seek exemptions from standard notice requirements where this can be justified. In this case, officers will rely on the administrative nature of the amendment, and its limited impact on the community to confine notice to directly affected property owners and occupiers, and Prescribed Ministers. Officers propose to seek exemptions from public notice requirements including written notice in a local newspaper and in the Victorian Government Gazette.

Officers appointed technical consultants, ENSPEC, to confirm that particular trees listed in the VPO2 Schedule and VPO2 maps were no longer present on specific sites. ENSPEC's findings are provided in the technical report provided at Attachment 1 of this report.

ENSPEC recommended that 26 entries be deleted from the VPO2 schedule and maps. On further review, officers advise that 27 of the 29 assessed sites are proposed to be deleted from the VPO2 Schedule and 24 sites from the maps. This difference is due to further technical analysis comparing the results of ENSPEC's report with a previous consultant report prepared by Practical Ecology in 2020, and mapping systems. Practical Ecology formulated a list of trees proposed to be deleted from the VPO2, which ENSPEC consultants verified via site inspections and aerial imagery.

Attachments 2 and 3 of this report provides the documentation required to be submitted to the Minister for Planning as part of the amendment. This includes ENSPEC's technical report, proposed mapping and ordinance changes, and a draft Explanatory Report.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolve to:

1. Adopt the ENSPEC Report (Attachment 1) dated January 2025.
2. Endorse the draft planning scheme amendment documents (Attachment 2 and 3) to be submitted to the Minister for Planning.
3. Write to the Minister for Planning to request authorisation to prepare and exhibit an amendment to the Knox Planning Scheme in accordance with Sections 8A(4) and 20(2) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to implement the recommendations contained in the ENSPEC Report.
4. Following receipt of authorisation from the Minister for Planning, exhibit the amendment in accordance with any conditions, or exemptions granted, by the Minister for Planning.
5. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer (or such person nominated by the Chief Executive Officer) to:
 - a. Undertake administrative changes to the amendment that do not change the intent of the amendment.
 - b. Undertake any changes required under the Minister for Planning's authorisation prior to the commencement of exhibition.

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Pearce

SECONDED: Councillor Baker

That Council resolve to:

1. Adopt the ENSPEC Report (Attachment 1) dated January 2025.
2. Endorse the draft planning scheme amendment documents (Attachment 2 and 3) to be submitted to the Minister for Planning.
3. Write to the Minister for Planning to request authorisation to prepare and exhibit an amendment to the Knox Planning Scheme in accordance with Sections 8A(4) and 20(2) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to implement the recommendations contained in the ENSPEC Report.
4. Following receipt of authorisation from the Minister for Planning, exhibit the amendment in accordance with any conditions, or exemptions granted, by the Minister for Planning.
5. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer (or such person nominated by the Chief Executive Officer) to:
 - a. Undertake administrative changes to the amendment that do not change the intent of the amendment.
 - b. Undertake any changes required under the Minister for Planning's authorisation prior to the commencement of exhibition.

CARRIED

8.4 Knox Youth Advisory Committee - Annual Report and Recruitment

SUMMARY

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is an important Advisory Committee to Council, providing an opportunity for young people to have a voice and provide direct input into community engagement processes.

This report provides Council with an overview of the recruitment for the membership of the 2026 Committee, as well as the Annual Report for achievements during the 2025 calendar year.

Between September and October 2025, a recruitment process was conducted to fill vacancies for the YAC. This report seeks approval for the appointment of recommended applicants for a two-year term from February 2026 to January 2028.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolve to:

1. Thank all the community members who took the time to apply for the Youth Advisory Committee.
2. Thank the outgoing members of the Youth Advisory Committee for their valuable contributions as presented in the Confidential Attachment 1.
3. Note the achievements of the Knox Youth Advisory Committee for the calendar year of 2025 as set out in the Officers' report.
4. Appoint the following 14 applicants to the Youth Advisory Committee 2026, and the return of 11 current members as presented in Confidential Attachment 1.

Pursuant to Section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) and Chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Knox City Council, Councillor Duncan declared a general conflict of interest in this item on the grounds that a family member is an applicant for consideration.

Councillor Duncan left the meeting at 7.54pm before the following discussion and vote.

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Williams

SECONDED: Councillor Pearce

That Council resolve to:

1. Thank all the community members who took the time to apply for the Youth Advisory Committee.
2. Thank the outgoing members of the Youth Advisory Committee for their valuable contributions as presented in the Confidential Attachment 1.
3. Note the achievements of the Knox Youth Advisory Committee for the calendar year of 2025 as set out in the Officers' report.
4. Appoint the following 14 applicants to the Youth Advisory Committee 2026, and the return of 11 current members as presented in Confidential Attachment 1.

CARRIED

Councillor Duncan returned to the Chamber at 7.56pm following the vote on Item 8.4.

8.5 Response to Notice of Motion 189 - Keeping Knox Safer Forum

SUMMARY

At its meeting held on 29 September 2025, Council endorsed Notice of Motion 189 – Keeping Knox Safer Forum. The Notice of Motion proposed an independently facilitated Round Table with representation across relevant internal Departments, Victoria and Transit Police, State Government, local support agencies, schools and community to understand the safety issues being experienced in the Knox community. The Motion requested that the Forum focus on identifying issues and explore possible solutions relating to youth counselling, family violence, substance abuse, the provision of rough sleeping, safe spaces, safe showers and safe food. The Motion requested that a report be generated by the independent facilitator and that this information would support the Local Safety Committee, which is a Victoria Police initiative that has been established in Knox, with the support of Council, to prevent and respond to community safety issues.

Subsequent to the Notice of Motion, Officers have identified an experienced facilitator and considered how the Round Table may progress.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Note this report in response to the 29 September 2025 Council Meeting Notice of Motion No. 189.
2. Approve a budget allocation of \$12,900+ GST to proceed with the Community Safety Roundtable

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Lockwood

SECONDED: Councillor Atwell

That Council:

1. **Note this report in response to the 29 September 2025 Council Meeting Notice of Motion No. 189.**
2. **Approve a budget allocation of \$12,900+ GST to proceed with the Community Safety Roundtable**

CARRIED

8.6 Kindergarten Policy

SUMMARY

This Policy review forms part of a scheduled three-year review process, to ensure that the Knox City Council Kindergarten Policy (Policy) remains current, effective and aligned with the evolving early years landscape. Since the last Policy adoption, in November 2022, significant changes have taken place through the State Government's "Best Start, Best Life" reforms, which introduced two years of funded kindergarten before school and reshaped the governance, funding and delivery responsibilities within the early childhood sector.

In this context, Knox City Council's role has evolved from that of a direct service provider under the Early Years Management (EYM) model to one focused on strategic planning, advocacy, partnerships and infrastructure management. This shift followed Council's resolution of August 2023 to transition from the EYM model to an Early Years Partnership approach, in line with statewide directions. As part of this decision, Council retained the direct management and delivery of kindergarten programs within its Early Years Hubs, while concurrently strengthening its system-level functions. Ongoing system-level Council functions include the current ownership and maintenance of early years facilities, administration of the Central Registration Scheme (CRS) and collaboration with the Department of Education and approved providers to promote equitable, high-quality and sustainable kindergarten services across the municipality.

This Policy has been structured in clear language, outlining Council's defined roles and responsibilities. The revised version clarifies Council's shift from a direct service provider to a strategic planner, advocate and partner; and introduces a strengthened framework of Guiding Principles that emphasise quality, inclusion, collaboration, adaptability and sustainability as foundations for decision-making and partnership across the sector to support Council's unchanged vision and aspiration for children accessing high quality kindergarten in the municipality.

Under Council's Community Engagement Policy, this Policy undertook a public consultation process in early November 2025 to ensure alignment with current sector needs, stakeholder expectations and Council's evolving role (See Attachment 4 – Consultation Report - 2025). It is important to note that the 2023 Council decision to transition from the EYM model was itself informed by extensive engagement with key stakeholders, including kindergarten providers, families and the Department of Education. Building on this foundation, Council officers implemented a community consultation process through the Have Your Say platform for a two-week period, asking for feedback via multiple modes focusing on the Guiding Principles, testing their relevance, clarity and shared ownership to ensure they reflect sector values and practice realities. In addition to the online consultation, feedback was also gathered through the Kindergarten Providers' Network bi-monthly meeting and the Early Years Advisory Committee (EYAC).

Alongside the Kindergarten Policy review, Council officers have undertaken the annual review of the Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme Procedure (Attachment 3 - Draft Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme Procedure - 2025), an operational procedure endorsed under CEO delegation ensuring responsive ongoing alignment with sector Best Start, Best Life reforms, demographic trends and service delivery outcomes. The procedural review coincided with the Department of Education's introduction of updated statewide Priority of Access (POA) criteria, released in November 2025. As a result, the Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme Procedure review incorporates the updated mandatory State Government POA requirements and the draft Council Local Priority of Access (LPOA).

The revised draft LPOA aims to support equity, transparency and responsiveness to local demand patterns, while reflecting Council's system-level role in administering the CRS for all external kindergarten providers in Knox and ensures consistency with State Government direction.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council resolve to:

1. Endorse the Kindergarten Policy as set out in Attachment 2, noting that:
 - a. It reflects the Knox City Council transition from being a direct kindergarten provider under an Early Years Management (EYM) model to a strategic role focused on planning, advocacy, partnerships and current facility management.
 - b. It states the Guiding Principles and outlines how service delivery principles are aligned.
 - c. Consultation has occurred with external kindergarten providers, Early Years Advisory Committee, and interested community members, with their feedback included in the development of the Kindergarten Policy.
2. Note that officers have revised the associated Kindergarten Central Registration Procedure and Local Priority of Access (LPOA) Criteria, noting:
 - a. The State Government's update to the State Priority of Access, inclusive of expanded criteria in Priority 1 and introducing a new Category, now Priority 2.
 - b. The LPOA revision is based on research, benchmarking and engagement with kindergarten providers, Early Years Advisory Committee, and the community.
 - c. Endorsement of the Central Registration Procedure will now be sought from the CEO in accordance with delegated authority as an operational procedure.

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Atwell

SECONDED: Councillor Considine

That Council resolve to:

1. Endorse the Kindergarten Policy as set out in Attachment 2, noting that:
 - a. It reflects the Knox City Council transition from being a direct kindergarten provider under an Early Years Management (EYM) model to a strategic role focused on planning, advocacy, partnerships and current facility management.
 - b. It states the Guiding Principles and outlines how service delivery principles are aligned.
 - c. Consultation has occurred with external kindergarten providers, Early Years Advisory Committee, and interested community members, with their feedback included in the development of the Kindergarten Policy.
2. Note that officers have revised the associated Kindergarten Central Registration Procedure and Local Priority of Access (LPOA) Criteria, noting:
 - a. The State Government's update to the State Priority of Access, inclusive of expanded criteria in Priority 1 and introducing a new Category, now Priority 2.
 - b. The LPOA revision is based on research, benchmarking and engagement with kindergarten providers, Early Years Advisory Committee, and the community.
 - c. Endorsement of the Central Registration Procedure will now be sought from the CEO in accordance with delegated authority as an operational procedure.

CARRIED

8.7 Councillor Expenses and Support Policy Incorporating Response to Notice of Motion No. 173 - Connecting Council with the Knox Community (Ward Meetings)

SUMMARY

This report presents Council with proposed amendments to the Councillor Expenses and Support Policy (the Policy), following a resolution of Council at its March 2025 Meeting in response to Notice of Motion No. 173 – Connecting Council with the Knox Community (Ward Meetings).

The report outlines the key areas of the Policy reviewed in light of Council’s resolution and incorporates feedback provided by Councillors. It also considers emerging issues and opportunities to ensure the Policy remains fit for purpose, transparent, and aligned with contemporary governance and community engagement expectations.

A revised draft Policy with tracked changes is included for Council consideration, reflecting proposed changes to support equitable access to resources, clarify entitlements, and enhance accountability and consistency in the provision of support to Councillors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

1. Note this report in response to Notice of Motion No. 173 - Connecting Council with the Knox Community (Ward Meetings).
2. Note feedback received through the community engagement period about proposed amendments to the Councillor Expenses and Support Policy.
3. Adopt the revised Councillor Expenses and Support Policy as set out in Attachment 3.

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Atwell

SECONDED: Councillor Williams

That Council:

1. **Note this report in response to Notice of Motion No. 173 - Connecting Council with the Knox Community (Ward Meetings).**
2. **Note feedback received through the community engagement period about proposed amendments to the Councillor Expenses and Support Policy.**
3. **Adopt the revised Councillor Expenses and Support Policy as set out in Attachment 3.**
4. **Receives a report by December 2026 (or at a later date determined in consultation with the Mayor) that reviews the Councillor Listening Post initiative, including participation levels, coverage across the municipality and wards, and community engagement insights and outcomes.**

CARRIED

8.8 Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan

SUMMARY

The draft Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan is presented to Council for adoption, in its capacity as Trustee for Ferntree Gully Cemetery. The Masterplan outlines a carefully considered and staged approach to the future development of the Cemetery. The plan has been designed to provide a sensitive pipeline of works that supports both future demand for interment and generates the necessary income to fund the cemetery's perpetual maintenance obligations.

The full Masterplan implementation cost is estimated at just over \$2.9 million in today's value (subject to final designs). Importantly, implementation will occur progressively through staged investment and reinvestment over many years. An indicative business case has been developed to support the Masterplan, which outlines expected yields and income for the entirety of the plan. The proposed approach ensures that the implementation costs of future projects can be funded by revenue generated from earlier projects. The Masterplan will be delivered by the Ferntree Gully Cemetery Trust independent of any Council funding, as the Cemetery operates as a separate legal and financial entity to Council. Therefore, no ratepayer funds will be used to deliver the proposed improvements. Revenue generation projections for each project will be further refined as part of detailed design works and provided to Council for visibility before each project proceeds.

Extensive community engagement has been undertaken, and the feedback has meaningfully shaped the Masterplan. In particular, the proposal for a new entrance has been removed in response to concerns raised through the engagement process.

The resulting approach offers a balanced, financially sustainable and community-informed direction for the ongoing planning and management of the Cemetery, ensuring it can continue to evolve in a way that is respectful and responsive to community expectations over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council, as Trustee for Ferntree Gully Cemetery:

1. Notes the feedback received from the community through Phase 2 of the engagement process (Attachment 1).
2. Notes the information provided in the Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan Business Case in Attachment 3.
3. Adopt the Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan in Attachment 2.
4. Note the next steps in relation to implementation of the Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan.

Councillor Baker made a transparency statement declaring her family having plots in the cemetery. Councillor Baker stated that as her interest is remote in nature, she does not believe she has a conflict of interest in relation to this item.

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Baker

SECONDED: Councillor Williams

That Council, as Trustee for Ferntree Gully Cemetery:

- 1. Notes the feedback received from the community through Phase 2 of the engagement process (Attachment 1).**
- 2. Notes the information provided in the Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan Business Case in Attachment 3.**
- 3. Adopt the Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan in Attachment 2.**
- 4. Note the next steps in relation to implementation of the Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan.**
- 5. Requests that officers provide Council, in addition to the cemetery's Annual Report, with an annual report on the implementation of the Ferntree Gully Cemetery Masterplan, detailing progress on staged projects, detailed design, financial performance, revenue generated, and associated community outcomes.**
- 6. Note that officers will seek relevant external grant funding where opportunities align with the Masterplan's priorities or other financial opportunities to reduce capital outlay and accelerate delivery of masterplan.**
- 7. Notes that all works will be undertaken using Cemetery Trust funds, ensuring no ratepayer funding is required unless endorsed by Council.**
- 8. Note that a fee review will be undertaken as new interment opportunities become available, and that any new and revised fees will be set by Council with consideration of affordability, competitiveness within the sector, and alignment with Council's long-term sustainability obligations.**
- 9. Acknowledge the presence of unmarked graves, including those of children, within the Cemetery, and note the inclusion of a dedicated feature in the Masterplan to respectfully recognise and commemorate these resting places.**

CARRIED

8.9 Council Resolutions Progress Report: July to September 2025

SUMMARY

This report provides Council with an update on the implementation of all Council resolutions from July to September 2025 along with resolutions with a status of in-progress from the balance of the current Council term, offering a clear overview of the progress made on decisions adopted by Council. By providing this information, the report supports transparency and accountability, enabling both Council and the community to monitor the effective implementation of Council decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council note the Council Resolutions Progress Report: July – September 2025 as attached.

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Williams

SECONDED: Councillor Duncan

That Council note the Council Resolutions Progress Report: July – September 2025 as attached.

CARRIED

8.10 Extension of Independent Member Contracts for the Transformation Governance Committee

SUMMARY

The Transformation Governance Committee provides oversight and governance of the Customer and Performance (C&P) Portfolio. The two-year contract term for the independent members of the Committee concludes in December 2025. Approval is sought to extend the Transformation Governance Committee independent member contracts for an additional six-month period, to support the continuation of the inherent Council knowledge that has been established with the three incumbent members. An Expression of Interest recruitment process would occur prior to the end of June 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the extension of the Transformation Governance Committee independent member contracts until 30 June 2026.

RESOLUTION

MOVED: Councillor Duncan

SECONDED: Councillor Pearce

That Council approve the extension of the Transformation Governance Committee independent member contracts until 30 June 2026.

CARRIED

9 Supplementary Items

Nil.

10 Notices Of Motion

Nil.

11 Urgent Business

Nil.

12 Questions Through the Chair

Nil.

13 Confidential Items

Nil.

The Chairperson, Councillor Kennett, thanked members of the public gallery and those joining the meeting online, noting the next Meeting will be held on Tuesday 27 January 2026.

On behalf of the Council, the Chairperson, Councillor, Kennett wished residents a Merry Christmas and peaceful New Year.

MEETING CLOSED AT 8.30pm

Minutes of Meeting confirmed at the
Meeting of Council
held on Tuesday, 27 January 2026

.....
Chairperson

The Agenda for this meeting is attached in full at the end of the Minutes.