



Community Engagement Report

Draft Annual Community Plan 2025/26
Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025–2035

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1.0 Background

Council welcomed feedback **between 15 May to 9 June 2025** on the proposed Draft Annual Community Plan 2025/26 (ACP) and Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025–2035 (LTFP).

Section 122(6) of the Local Government Act 1999 (Act) requires councils to adopt processes to ensure that members of the public are given a reasonable opportunity to be involved in the development and review of its strategic management plans (one of which is the LTFP)

Section 123(3) of the Act requires councils to follow the relevant steps of their public consultation policies before adoption their annual business plan (or ACP in the Alexandrina Council context). Further subsection (4) sets out specific notification and engagement requirements.

Council hosted four Public Meetings across the region, in line with the Section 123(4)(a)(i)(A) giving the opportunity for community members to learn about the ACP and ask questions in person.

Consultation was combined with online engagement through Alexandrina Council's My Say platform, hard copy submission form and written submissions via email or post. Project staff at Council were available to take enquiries and have in depth discussions throughout the engagement period.

Engagement Snapshot

Community consultation commenced on **15 May 2025** and closed on **9 June 2025**.

What we asked

Do you have any feedback on the Draft Annual Community Plan 2025/26?

Do you have any feedback on the Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025–2035?

How we engaged:

- Social media campaign
- My Say Alexandrina page and online survey
- Council website
- Four Public Meetings held across the region



2.0 Engagement Methods and Outcomes

Audience	Method	Message	Outcome/ Date
Residents & Ratepayers	My Say project page	Online survey Timeline Key dates Presentation video Presentation slides	37 survey submissions 997 total visits 613 document downloads
	Website	Save the dates – Public Meetings	- Latest News article published 28 April - Event's listed on 'What's On' 29 April
	Website	Consultation announcement	- Latest News article published 15 May - ACP web page updated - Council's Strategic Plans page updated
	Social media	Consultation announcement and updates	See section 6.0
	Video	Public Meeting Presentation video	Played 24 times. Total time watched 4.15 hrs, average watch time 10.36 minutes
	Local Displays – Council Office, library, community noticeboards	Consultation announcement	Posters distributed across region
	Newspapers	Consultation announcement	- The Victor Harbor Times – 29 April 2025 - The Courier – 30 April 2025 - Southern Argus – 1 May 2025 - Fleurieu Sun - 1 May 2025
	Newspapers	Consultation commencement	15 May 2025 - Southern Argus - Fleurieu Sun
	E-newsletter My Say Subscribers	Consultation announcement	- Sent to 1,340 subscribers 894 (54.7%) open rate 137 clicks

	Goolwa – Public Meeting Wednesday 21 May, 10am - 11am at the Goolwa Council Chambers, 11 Cadell Street, Goolwa		14 attendees
	Strathalbyn – Public Meeting Wednesday 28 May, 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm at the Strath Neighbourhood Centre, 6 Parker Ave, Strathalbyn		31 attendees
	Mount Compass – Public Meeting Wednesday 4 June, 6.30 pm – 7.30 pm at the Mount Compass Memorial Hall, 5 Peters Terrace, Mount Compass		31 attendees
	Port Elliot – Public Meeting Thursday, 5 June, 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm at the Port Elliot RSL, 10 The Strand, Port Elliot		27 attendees
Associations and Council Committees and Advisory Groups	Email	Consultation announcement	Direct email sent to 118 contacts
Internal Staff	Connect Intranet Announcement	Consultation announcement	20 May
Council Members	Meeting	Endorse and release Draft Annual Community Plan 2025/26 and Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 for Consultation for Consultation	12 May
Audit and Risk Committee	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting	Short form version of the LTFP and ACP	28 April

	Audit and Risk Committee Meeting	Full draft ACP and draft LTFP presented for further review	30 May
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3.0 Consultation Response Overview

During the consultation, **a total of 54 responses** were received across both the My Say platform and via email/hard copy.

Summary of community engagement outcomes in comparison to previous years

Activity	2025	2024	2023
Public Meeting Sessions	4	3	6
Public Meeting attendance	103	119	213
My Say Survey contributions	37	309	42
Written submissions	17	10	33
Total submissions	54	319	75

Overall feedback – Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025–2035

Positive Themes

- Recognition of improvements:
 - Welcomed reduction in rate increases compared to previous years.
 - The Continuous Improvement Plan and Service Review Framework is seen as valuable.
- Support for new direction:
 - Encouragement for ongoing financial discipline and strategic focus.
- Value in engagement:
 - Appreciation for consultation efforts and workshops.
- Financial Discipline Emerging:
 - Slowing rate increases and reviewing discretionary spending welcomed.
 - Recognition that efficiencies and cuts are being attempted following recent years.
 - Support for aligning rate increases closer to CPI and long-term financial sustainability goals.

Negative Themes

- Rates & Financial Transparency:
 - Ongoing concern about rate increases, perceived as still high despite reductions.
 - Requests for plain English summaries of major budget line-item changes.
 - Frustration at perceived lack of real reductions or clarity in financial decisions.
- Engagement & Transparency Issues:
 - Community input seen as too late in the process.
 - Concerns about discretionary spending on services not aligned with "core business".

Overall feedback – Draft Annual Community Plan 2025/26

Positive Themes

- New Direction & Leadership:
 - Strong support for the new CEO, CFO, and Council Members, praised for restoring focus on core responsibilities and engaging openly. Welcomed Council Member and Executive presence at Public Meetings.
- Clear effort to return to financial sustainability
- Improved Transparency
 - In comparison to past plans, budget documents described as easier to read.
- Engagement Efforts
 - Gratitude for community consultation sessions, presentations, and opportunity to provide input.
- Recognition of Need for Change
 - Many acknowledge that difficult but necessary steps are being taken to correct past financial mismanagement.

Negative Critical Themes

- Ongoing Rate Rise Concerns:
 - Widespread frustration that rates are still increasing (even if slowed), compounding past large rises.
 - Doubts about justification for the "sustainability factor" above CPI.
 - Claims of "reductions" seen as misleading — just smaller increases, not actual cuts.
- Transparency & Communication Gaps:
 - Budget language and presentation still seen as unclear or inconsistent.
 - Missing key details: line-by-line comparisons, project costs, rate-in-the-dollar figures.
 - Accusations of "spin" undermining trust.
- Accountability & Spending Priorities:
 - Questions about large past expenditures and current debt.
 - Criticism of projects like Lot 10 and economic development spending lacking clarity or value.

- Repeated calls to prioritise essential infrastructure and deliver small, high-impact local improvements.

What we heard – Most Raised Themes/ Comments across the whole consultation

Support for Community Groups

- Many submissions advocated for continued or increased support for local groups and facilities, especially in smaller towns.
- Support for irrigation upgrades at Mount Compass Cricket Club.
- Mixed views on funding for non-Council-owned hall carparks.
- Suggestions to reallocate funds from larger projects to grassroots initiatives.
- Call for increases to business and grant funding opportunities.

Rates and Affordability

- A significant number of submissions expressed concern about rising rates, the fairness of the primary production differential rate, and the cumulative impact of past increases.
- There is cautious support for the Council's new direction, but concerns remain about long-term financial sustainability.
- Support for efforts to reduce debt and improve planning.
- Criticism of the sustainability factor added to CPI-based increases.
- Calls for a full rating review, especially regarding primary producers and accommodation properties.
- Concerns about cost of living pressures
- Support for a "back to basics" approach focusing on core services, sustainable budgeting, and meaningful consultation.
- Criticism of past overspending and lack of meaningful cuts.
- Calls for more disciplined financial management and service reviews.
- Strong opinions on cost of living pressures and affordability.

Financial Management

- There was strong interest in improving Council's financial discipline.
- Support for reducing debt and improving long-term planning.
- Criticism of past overspending and lack of accountability.
- Suggestions for better procurement practices and cost control.
- Support for the Continuous Improvement and Service Review Frameworks.

Transparency

- There is a strong demand for clearer, more honest communication from Council, especially regarding budget decisions and rate increases.
- Many submissions praised the improved clarity and structure of the budget documents, but others criticised the lack of transparency and questioned the legitimacy of claimed reductions.
- Concerns about misleading presentation of rate reductions.
- Calls for transparency in project costs, asset valuations, and financial decisions.
- Concerns about missing or hard-to-compare information in current documents.

- Requests for clearer breakdowns of spending changes year-over-year.

Stormwater Management

- This was a major concern, especially in flood-prone areas like Middleton and Channon Street, Port Elliot.
- Urgent calls for infrastructure upgrades and flood mitigation.
- Requests for use of updated hydrological data in planning.
- Concerns about development in flood-prone zones and septic system risks.

Community Engagement

- Feedback highlighted both appreciation for improved consultation and criticism of past processes.
- Positive feedback on recent workshops and open forums.
- Suggestions to involve more residents earlier in the budgeting process.

Arts and Culture

- There is a desire for more equitable distribution of arts and cultural initiatives across the region.
- Criticism that arts funding is Goolwa-centric.
- Concern that events like “Drawing on Country” is valuable for community but no longer available to communities outside of Goolwa.

Economic Development

- Criticism, particularly around the Business Hub and perceived inefficiencies.
- Calls to disband or restructure Economic Development functions.
- Criticism of poor return on investment and lack of transparency.
- Suggestions to shift responsibility to local Chambers of Commerce.

Equity

- Many comments focused on fairness in service delivery and rate distribution.
- Concerns about the primary production differential rate being unfair to residential ratepayers.
- Calls for more equitable investment across smaller towns and rural areas.
- Suggestions to review and rebalance funding for arts, infrastructure, and services.

Environment and Climate Change

- Both support and opposition.
- Support for sustainable initiatives like solar panels.
- Mixed support for street tree planting.
- Criticism of climate emergency declarations and related spending.
- Requests for clearer cost-benefit analysis of environmental programs.

Infrastructure

- Feedback focused on the need for better maintenance and equitable investment across the region.

- Requests for improved roads, footpaths, and drainage.
- Concerns about infrastructure neglect in smaller towns.
- Suggestions for prioritising essential over aesthetic upgrades.
- Middleton Skate Park drew strong opposition due to location, design, and lack of consultation.
- There were also calls to prioritise maintenance over new capital projects and to explore cost-effective solutions.
- Criticism of new asset investments while existing assets remain underfunded.
- Concerns about infrastructure (e.g., Milang jetty, Channon Street stormwater).
- Suggestions to repurpose or sell assets like the Fleurieu Aquatic Centre.

Staff

- Several comments addressed staffing costs and efficiency.
- Concerns about high wages and lack of productivity.
- Suggestions for better performance management and KPIs.
- Calls for transparency in staffing costs and roles.

Top specific projects mentioned

- Rating Review to consider differential rating for Primary Production
- Strathalbyn Swimming Pool – Season extension (2025/26 Trial)
- Burgess Oval Mount Compass – Cricket Club irrigation upgrade
- Consider the scope and location for the Middleton skate park
- Strathalbyn – Sunter Street power outlets to support 'Christmas Where the Angas Flows'
- Strathalbyn – 'Christmas Where the Angas Flows' – Increased support for road closures from \$10,000 to \$20,000. Did suggest this could be from the grant funding program
- Questioned Council's Tourism and Economic Development investment
- Roadside Vegetation Management
- Arts and culture equity across region
- Channon Street, Port Elliot Stormwater Management
- Community halls need more support
- Grant Funding Program Review

Public Meetings – what we heard

At the public meetings, Alexandrina Council CEO Andrew MacDonald guided attendees through a comprehensive presentation covering the following key topics:

1. Essential Services Commission of SA (ESCOSA) – February 2025 Report
2. Council's Planning Process (A new approach)
3. Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025–2035 (Setting a sustainable framework)
4. Draft Annual Community Plan 2025/26 (Balancing restraint and delivery)

5. Continuous Improvement Program (More work to be done)

Following the presentation, attendees were invited to ask questions and provide feedback. Members of the Council's Executive Team were on hand to assist with responses and engage in discussion.

The feedback captured during the Q&A session was recorded on butcher's paper.

Goolwa

- Sustainability (Council)
- Residents need to be sustainable too (consider people on fixed incomes)
- Differential rate Primary Production (for and against)
- Community education on the differential rates

Strathalbyn

- Extend the trial for the Strathalbyn swimming pool for 2025/26
- Planning/ Development - Future design to consider factors like waste collection, road widths
- Christmas Where the Angas Flows request for: lighting in garden beds, electrical wiring extension, increase support for road closures
- Christmas Where the Angas Flows experiences a 25% increase in costs since last year to run the event
- Increase community/ business grants
- Waste transfer vouchers
- Fleurieu Aquatic Centre
- Differential rate Primary Production (for and against)
- Community education on the differential rates
- Drawing on Country event is missed
- Arts and culture equity across region

Mount Compass

- Hall - equity across region
- Non-Council owned hall insurance increases (request for more Council support)
- Support increases for non-Council owned halls needed
- Requests for Cricket Club irrigation project funding
- More youth engagement needed
- Prioritise road maintenance
- Prioritise rural roadside vegetation maintenance (safety concerns)

Port Elliot

- Rate Review is overdue
- Stormwater mitigation budget allocation prioritised
- FRWA - debt transparency (Alexandrina contribution not included in ACP)
- Solar panels at FRWA to reduce cost
- Dam not connected off Waterport Road
- Pressure from new developments on Watsons Gap
- Alexandrina and City of Victor to discuss infrastructure

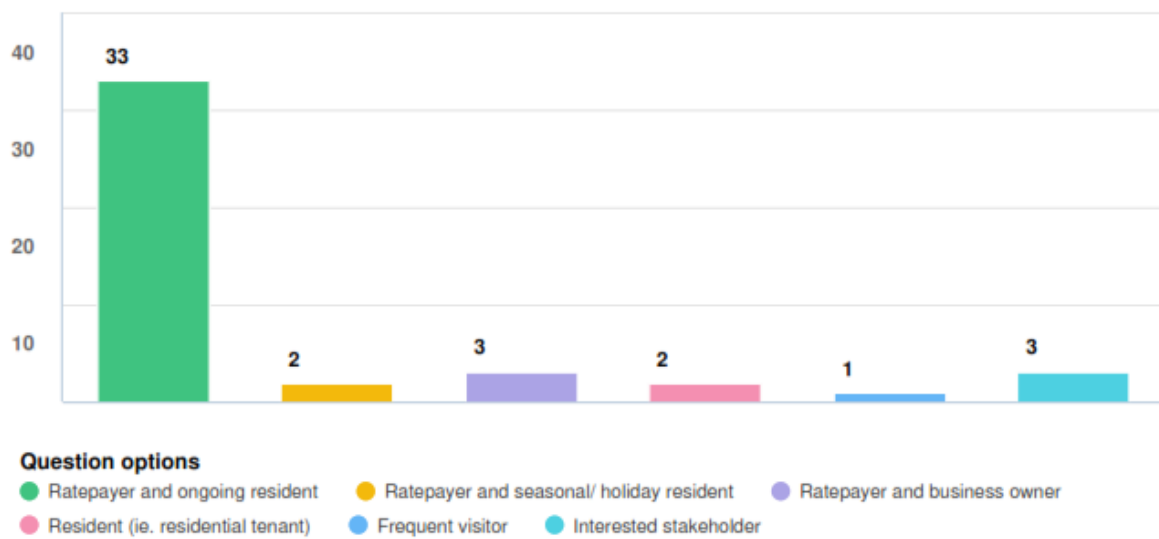
- Supply Middleton 2022 storm event map to resident
- Caravan parks - amenities (questioning funding equity)
- Middleton basketball court - gets muddy when it rains
- Skate park location (not supported)
- Originally was meant to be a beginner pump track
- Improve the existing skate amenity in Middleton
- Langhorne Creek and Mount Compass Hall car parks (for and against)
- Channon St, Port Eliot flooding concerns
- Productivity for staff
- Differential rates
- Use skate park funds for Middleton stormwater
- Build relationships with volunteer groups
- Seek funding opportunities

Public Meeting attendee statistics

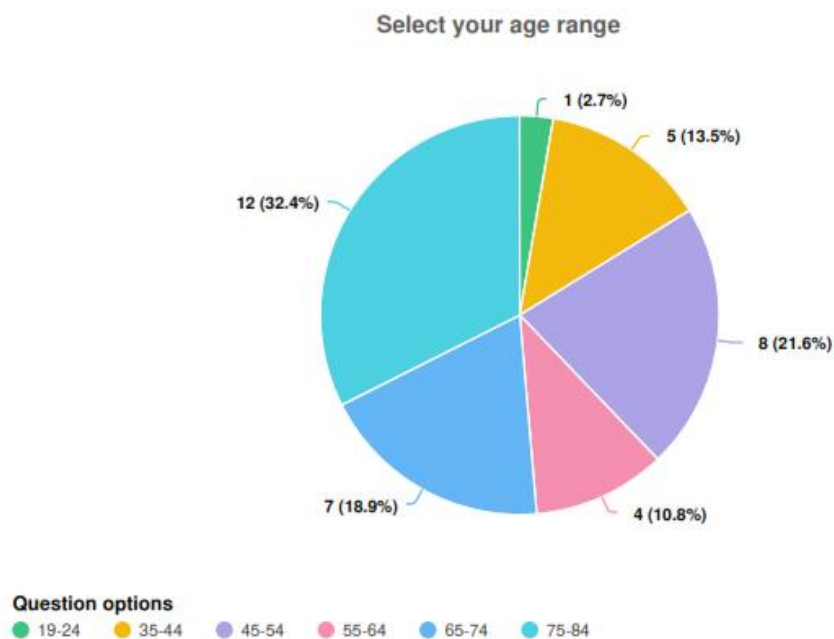
Public Meeting	Goolwa	Strathalbyn	Mount Compass	Port Elliot
Age range	65–74: 64% 75–84: 36%	35–44: 8% 45–54: 19% 55–64: 23% 65–74: 38% 75–84: 8% 85+: 4%	Under 18: 3% 19–24: 16% 35–44: 19% 45–54: 19% 55–64: 16% 65–74: 16% 75–84: 10%	35–44: 4% 45–54: 7% 55–64: 22% 65–74: 30% 75–84: 33% 85+: 4%
About the attendee (attendees could tick more than one)	Ratepayer and ongoing resident: 14	Ratepayer and ongoing resident: 31 Ratepayer and business owner: 2 Interested stakeholder: 1	Ratepayer/ ongoing resident: 18 Ratepayer/ business owner: 5 Resident (i.e. residential tenant): 2 Frequent visitor: 1 Infrequent visitor: 1	Ratepayer/ ongoing resident: 21 Ratepayer/ business owner: 7 Resident (i.e. residential tenant): 1

My Say Data

Who we heard from:



Age range:



4.0 Self-nomination to participate

It is important to acknowledge that involvement in the public consultation process is voluntary, with participants self-nominating to contribute. As a result, the feedback gathered should not be regarded as statistically representative of all perspectives.

5.0 Consultation images





6.0 Communication channels and media reach

Website		
Instagram Posts	Consultation Commencement 16 May 2025 - Views: 159 - From home: 147 - From profile: 9 - From other: 3 - Accounts reached: 138 - Interactions: 1 - Likes: 1 - Shares: 0 - Comments: 0 - Saves: 0 - Accounts engaged: 1 - Profile activity: 0	Port Elliot Public Meeting Postponed 26 May 2025 - Views: 365 - From home: 349 - From profile: 13 - From other: 1 - Accounts reached: 314 - Interactions: 2 - Likes: 1 - Shares: 1 - Comments: 0 - Saves: 0 - Accounts engaged: 2 - Profile activity: 0

	Strathalbyn Public Meeting 28 May 2025 - Views: 149 - From home: 142 - From profile: 1 - From other: 6 - Accounts reached: 131 - Interactions: 0 - Likes: 0 - Shares: 0 - Comments: 0 - Saves: 0 - Accounts engaged: 0 - Profile Activity: 0	Consultation Reminder 2 June 2025 - Views: 171 - From home: 157 - From profile: 10 - From other: 4 - Accounts reached: 142 - Interactions: 0 - Likes: 0 - Shares: 0 - Comments: 0 - Saves: 0 - Accounts engaged: 0 - Profile Activity: 1
Facebook Posts	Consultation Commencement 16 May 2025 - Views: 2,606 - Reach: 1,746 - Interactions: 18 - Reactions: 4 - Shares: 14 - Comments: 0 - Saves: 0 - Link clicks: 19	Port Elliot Public Meeting Postponed 26 May 2025 - Views: 4,490 - Reach: 3,274 - Interactions: 19 - Reactions: 5 - Shares: 14 - Comments: 0 - Saves: 0 - Link clicks: 6
	Strathalbyn Public Meeting 28 May 2025 - Views: 2,480 - Reach: 1,503 - Interactions: 6 - Reactions: 4 - Shares: 2 - Comments: 0 - Saves: 0 - Link clicks: 1	Consultation Reminder 2 June 2025 - Views: 4,083 - Reach: 2,252 - Interactions: 12 - Reactions: 4 - Shares: 8 - Comments: 0 - Saves: 0 - Link clicks: 18

Public Notices

1. The Victor Harbor Times (29 April)
2. The Courier (30 April)
3. Southern Argus (1 May)
4. Fleurieu Sun (1 May)



ALEXANDRINA COUNCIL
Community Consultation

Draft Annual Community Plan 2025/26 and Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-35

Council will be seeking community feedback on the proposed Draft Annual Community Plan 2025/26 (formerly known as Annual Business Plan and Budget) and revised Draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025-35. Community consultation will commence from Thursday 15 May 2025 at 5 pm and closes 6 June 2025 at 5 pm.

Council is hosting four (4) Public Meetings across the region, in line with the *Local Government Act 1999 Section 123 (4) (a) (i) (A)*, for community members to learn about the budget and ask questions in person. The meetings are being held on:

- Wednesday 21 May 2025, 10 am – 11 am at the Goolwa Council Chambers, 11 Cadell Street, Goolwa
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When consultation commences, full copies of the Plans will be available to view at the Council Offices or by visiting mysay.alexandrina.sa.gov.au/acp2025-26

Submissions will be accepted by Council until 5 pm, Friday 6 June 2025. Council will consider feedback received at the Council Workshop on 23 June 2025. The amended draft Plans will be considered at the Special Council Meeting on 7 July 2025 for adoption.

For more information contact Chief Financial Officer, Andrew Alderson on 8555 7000.



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Public Notices

1 May 2025

- The Southern Argus
- Fleurieu Sun



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The Courier Articles

1. 30 April
2. 14 May

Council plan name changed to be 'more accessible'

SCOTT MURPHY

The Alexandrina Council has agreed to change the name of its upcoming annual business plan and budget to "distinguish" it from previously criticised annual financial planning documents.

A report received by the council this month said its annual financial planning documents which, among other things, outline rates increases, services and spending, would be called the Annual Community Plan 2025/26.

The original terminology may still be used for official legislative purposes.

The report said the change in title aimed to "reflect a broader community focus and more accessible language" while maintaining "legislative compliance".

The decision comes following a scathing review by the Essential Services Commission of SA (ESCOSA) which labelled the council's current financial performance as "unsustainable", prompting recently appointed chief executive Andrew MacDonald to overhaul the council's financial strategies.

Under the Local Government Act 1999, the council is required to provide opportunities for the community to provide feedback on its draft annual budget and business plan.

The ESCOSA review said the district faced "affordability risks for its community" citing high general rate increases over the last decade, urging it to consult with the community to determine what ratepayers were "willing to pay" and what services were required.

During 2023 and 2024, the council hosted what it called "budget roadshows" during which it gathered feedback and hosted workshops at venues across the district. However, while the council will continue to host public meetings at Goolwa, Pt Elliot and Strathalbyn next month and at Mt Compass in June, it implied it may not reference the word 'budget' in promotional material for the meetings.

The council's draft Annual Community Plan 2025/26, draft Long Term Financial Plan 2025–2035 and Community Engagement Plan will be presented to the council at a special meeting on May 12.

Public consultation is expected to begin on May 15 and continue until June 6.

Spending cuts to get council finances back on track

SCOTT MURPHY

Alexandrina Council rates would rise by an average of 3.05% under a draft annual budget and business plan that promises to consider the "current cost-of-living pressures".

The draft annual community plan 2025/26 was endorsed for public consultation at a meeting on Monday night and cuts back on "unnecessary" spending in some areas.

The budget is the result of a planning overhaul, sparked by an Essential Services Commission of SA review that labelled the council as "unsustainable", and aims to put the council on track to return to surplus by 2027/28.

"(Next financial year) will be a year of restraint for the council, providing an opportunity to align its strategic plans and ensure long-term financial sustainability is achieved," the draft annual community plan said.

Almost 84% of the council's funds are sourced through council rates, which are anticipated to generate about \$59.6m in revenue next financial year – an almost \$2.8m rise compared with this year.

The rate increase is set at 0.85% above CPI.

Most other sources of income are projected to decrease next financial year, compared with this year.

This includes a \$1.13m decrease in projected operating grants and contributions, a \$164,877 decrease in expected statutory charges and an almost \$300,000 reduction in "other income", such as one-off items received this financial year. While employee costs are set to increase by more than \$900,000 to \$26.07m and depreciation cost is expected to increase by more than \$1m, ratepayers are expected to save more than \$1.46m on materials, contracts and other expenses, compared with this year.

The council's total capital expenses are also expected to be \$8.45m lower than this year, with less expected to be spent on open spaces, plant and machinery and stormwater, while more would be spent on buildings, structures and roads.

The draft plan still proposes an operating deficit of more than \$2.1m, despite finding significant savings.

Mayor Keith Parkes said the goal of this budget was to establish "a new long-term financial direction" for the council.

"We have a new chief executive officer and chief finance officer and we have adopted a refreshed, disciplined approach to financial planning," he said.

"In recent months, council members and our new executive management team have worked collaboratively to reform the council's finances."

"This has required strong financial discipline, resulting in the elimination of unnecessary spending, a substantial reduction in rate increases and the development of a sustainable long-term financial strategy – one that considers the current cost-of-living pressures."

Community consultation begins on Thursday, May 15, at 5pm and will run until June 6 at 5pm. There will be four public meetings across the district, including one at Strathalbyn on May 28.

The Southern Argus Articles

1. 15 May
2. 5 June

Alexandrina Council's draft budget heads to consultation...

REVISED RATE

By Giorgina McKay

A "financially secure" draft Annual Community Plan that also achieves "a strong downward pressure on rates" and eases cost-of-living pressures was adopted by Alexandrina Council on Monday night.

Councillors adopted the 2025/26 draft plan inclusive of a proposed 3.05 per cent average rate rise, comprising of a March Adelaide CPI of 2.2 per cent and 0.85 per cent for financial sustainability, reflecting the rising cost of maintaining public assets.

Council has also factored 1.8 per cent in for rates growth, representing anticipated revenue from new developments or improvements to existing properties.

The plan was developed through a series of collaborative workshops between elected members and staff over several months, which, when combined with the work council has done over the past six months to control its expenditure, has enabled a reduction in the previously forecasted rate increase.

The proposed rate increase will ensure council remains on track to achieve a surplus by 2027/28, is able to reduce its debt from \$46.6 million to \$37 million by 2035, and that it has financial capacity necessary to support its growing community, while also providing a strong downward pressure on rates and ease cost-of-living pressures.

CONTINUED PAGE 4

REVISED RATE: Council's draft budget heads to consultation

Continued from page 1

"In recent months, council members and our new executive management team have worked collaboratively to reform council's finances," Alexandrina Mayor, Keith Parkes, said in his budget message.

"This has required strong financial discipline, resulting in the elimination of unnecessary spending, a substantial reduction in rate increases, and the development of a sustainable long-term financial strategy – one that considers the current cost-of-living pressures.

"Council is confident that this plan, alongside the draft long-term financial plan 2025-2035, which is also open for public feedback, sets out a clear, responsible and achievable path to a financially secure future for council and most importantly, for the community we serve."

The plan has several major focuses, including a significant reduction in discretionary expenditure, continued delivery of all existing community services and programs, full funding for the renewal of essential assets such as roads, footpaths and buildings, and adoption of a continuous improvement program to further enhance council's service delivery and accountability arrangements.

It is still expected to have an operating deficit of approximately \$2.1 million, but council's borrowings will decrease by \$1.1 million, resulting in forecast total borrowings at June 30, 2026 of \$45.5 million.

The CWMS service charge for the financial year will increase to \$741 for occupied and \$547 for vacant – an increase of \$16 and \$22 respectively from last financial year.

The draft budget also accommodates 187 capital projects totalling \$20 million, including 15 new operating initiatives:

- \$88,000 Mt Compass Hall carpark seal.
- \$15,000 Mount Compass tennis court resurfacing.

- \$72,000 Langhorne Creek Hall carpark seal.

- \$5000 Heritage Awards.

- \$1760 Heritage interpretive signage at Mrs Lush's Corner.

- \$130,000 Housing Strategy.

- \$40,000 Township greening biodiversity plantings in public reserves.

- \$57,500 Township greening streetscape plantings.

- \$20,000 Stormwater management planning.

- \$40,000 Wastewater Utility Business Governance Model.

- \$150,000 (subject to grant funding) Murray Estuary Settlements Long-Term Adaptation Plan.

- Community members can have their say on the draft budget via email at alex@alexandrina.sa.gov.au, mail and online methods from 5pm today until 5pm on June 6 or at budget roadshow information sessions scheduled across the wards.

- A workshop to consider community feedback is planned for June 23, and the amended draft plans will be considered for adoption on July 7.

- Roadshow dates:

- Wednesday, May 21 from 10am-11am at the Goolwa Council Chambers.

- Monday, May 26 from 6.30pm-7.30pm at the Port Elliot RSL.

- Wednesday, May 28 from 6.30pm-7.30pm at the Strath Neighbourhood Centre.

- Wednesday, June 4 from 6.30pm-7.30pm at the Mount Compass War Memorial Hall.

- North Ward councillor Sue Miller looked forward to hearing the community's feedback.

- "I really like how it's presented and I congratulate everyone for all their hard work," she said.

- "It has been a lot of hours and hours devoted to this, and I'm really appreciative of everything that has gone into preparing this."



Alexandrina Mayor Keith Parkes and Chief Executive Officer Andrew MacDonald encourage people to provide feedback on the draft 2025/26 Annual Community Plan currently out for consultation. Photo: Georgina McKay

'Positive' budget talks in Strathalbyn



By Georgina McKay

More funding for the arts and the town's beloved Christmas event, housing issues, and the benefits and disadvantages of aquatic centres dominated the conversation at last Wednesday night's budget roadshow in Strathalbyn.

As previously reported in *The Southern Argus*, Alexandrina councillors endorsed the draft 2025/26 Annual Community Plan for public consultation inclusive of a proposed 3.05 per cent average rate rise plus 1.8 per cent for rates growth at a special meeting in May.

As part of the consultation process, council decided to bring back the budget roadshows, with the first held at the Goolwa Council Chambers on May 21 and the last at Port Elliot's RSL Hall tonight.

It was Strathalbyn's turn last Wednesday night, with approximately 30 people gathering at the Strath Neighbourhood Centre to hear from Alexandrina Mayor Keith Parkes, Chief Executive Officer Andrew MacDonald, and other council staff about the recent Essential Services Commission of SA (ESCOMSA) review, the draft Long-Term Financial Plan 2025-2035, the draft Annual Community Plan, and plans for continuous improvement, before the floor was opened

up for questions and feedback.

One of the points of contention was the costs spent to keep the Fleurieu Aquatic Centre afloat, despite it being located outside the council's borders, while on the flip side, residents praised the trialled extension of the Strathalbyn Pool season which brought in many social benefits for local swimmers.

Another hot topic was housing, with opposition being voiced on development of farming land, while a call was made for an extension of the town caravan park to be considered to accommodate people needing emergency housing, and concerns raised about potential bottle-necking in new suburban areas.

Funding requests were also made for arts programs such as Drawing on Country, waste transfer vouchers, and for Christmas Where the Angus Flows, which will need a budget increase to accommodate costs.

The Christmas Where the Angus Flows Committee also asked for lights to be installed in the garden beds and along the stairs, for additional electrical outlets, and water barriers.

Mayor Parkes was happy with the turn-out and people's feedback.

"In previous years we used to do just do a session in the Goolwa Council Chambers, and if people turned up that was fine and if they didn't they just had to read what was in the paper, but with the work we've done,

by going out to the community with these sessions and explaining to them in simple terms what we've done and how we've got to where we are, and being able to answer questions, it's really good," he told *The Southern Argus*.

"It was also good that everyone could hear from people in the community that, while we are wanting to take a deep breath and hold back, people in the community still want these extra things done."

"It's not people saying don't do anything and keep the rates to nothing, what they're saying is 'we appreciate you keeping them down, and keep working on it but we want you to consider these are the things we still want'."

"Obviously, the extended hours at the swimming pool and a bit more money for the Christmas Where the Angus Flows, they're little asks we can incorporate into the budget we're doing without making it blow out."

"We just have to wait and see what comes back from the feedback from the community on it, and what they see in there they don't think we should do and what we should do, but I think so far it's been a good process."

Community members can still provide feedback before 5pm tomorrow by completing a survey via MySay or mail, or emailing council at alex@alexandrina.sa.gov.au.

A workshop to consider community feedback is planned for June 23.

Upgrade considered for Milang jetty

By Tara Nash

Locals hopes for repairs to Milang's heritage-listed jetty could be fulfilled, as \$300,000 of funding has been allocated towards the move in Alexandrina Council's draft Annual Community Plan.

The proposed funding would be for the renewal of five jetties along the town's main foreshore area, with the majority of work for the main jetty.

Works would address various components that have been identified in a recent condition assessment as needing renewal, such as piles, the superstructure which includes stringers and crossheads and deck boards.

Renewal may involve either complete replacement of the entire structural component, or remediation to extend its useful life.

As reported in *The Argus* earlier this year, Milang local Alby Fyfe was calling for its renewal of the main jetty, including its wonky railing and weathered and spaced-out planks, and to enhance tourism appeal and honour its key role in the town's history.

Because of its long associations with the early river trade, the jetty is a state-heritage listed place and is among some of the oldest surviving examples of this type of jetty and hand crane in South Australia, built in the 1800s.

The Annual Community Plan is currently open for community consultation until June 6.

While there is a potential for the funding to be removed, it is considered unlikely.

Final plans for the Annual Community Plan will be presented to a council meeting on July 7.

Budget time

The 2025/26 State Budget will be handed down today by South Australian Labor Government.

So far funding has been announced for a mental health program expansion and new security taskforce to combat antisocial and violent behaviour across Adelaide Metro, a bigger budget for volunteer firefighters, and the waiving of fodder inspection fees.

Read next week's *Southern Argus* for a full rundown.

Fleurieu Sun Articles

1. 29 May
2. 5 June

Community Plan shows restraint

JACK CHURCH

Alexandrina Council has held its first Community Plan Public Meeting to discuss and gain feedback on the Draft 2025/26 Community Plan and the draft Long Term Financial Plan (LTFF) at the Goolwa Council Chambers on Wednesday, May 21.

With a proposed total rate increase of 4.8 per cent for 2025/26, a revised LTFF has provided much needed relief for residents, who were anticipating another heavy hike of rates this year.

Under the new Long Term Financial Plan, Alexandrina council residents can expect rate increases of CPI plus 3.4 per cent (0.85 per cent per year) over the next five years, reduced from CPI plus 11 per cent (three per cent per year) in the old LTFF.

Alexandrina Council CEO Andrew MacDonald says due to lots of restraint with spending, this LTFF will see council in a better position than the previous LTFF, despite the drop in rate increases.

"Council is able to achieve what could be seen as a better position by only increasing rates above CPI by about 0.85 per cent, whereas previously we were at three per cent above CPI," Mr MacDonald said.

"By showing restraint and pulling back on expenditure council was able to achieve essentially the same result if not better with a reduced amount above CPI.

"I think this is a really good position for council to be in."

In the proposed 2025/26 Community Plan, a \$750,000 property in Alexandrina would expect to see an \$133 increase in their rates over the next financial year.

There are three more Public Meetings scheduled for Alexandrina's Community

Plan and LTFF consultation period after weather delayed the Port Elliot Meeting, which was scheduled for Monday, May 26.

The remaining and revised meetings are as follows:

- Wednesday June 4, 6.30 pm at the Mount Compass War Memorial Hall, 5 Peters Terrace, Mount Compass.
- Thursday, June 5, 6.30 at the Port Elliot RSL Hall.



Alexandrina Council CEO Andrew MacDonald addresses the crowd at the Goolwa Community Plan Public Meeting. (Jack Church)

Fleurieu Sun, Thursday, 29 May, 2025

Expenditure savings in Alexandrina

JACK CHURCH

Alexandrina Council's Strathalbyn public meeting for their draft 2025/26 Community Plan and Long Term Financial Plan (LTFF) produced a significant community interest, with about 30 people from all over the region coming to ask questions about the plans.

With an average 3.05 per cent rate increase for residents, and a total rate increase of 4.8 per cent, Alexandrina residents will be paying significantly less under the new draft LTFF.

This year's increase will be based upon CPI + 0.85 per cent, much lower than the projected CPI + three per cent under the old LTFF.

Alexandrina Council CEO Andrew MacDonald said that his team had found savings in the new LTFF, including:

- Reduced employee related budgets of \$16.1 million
- Reduced strategy fund by \$6 million

- Other savings of \$7.5 million
- Reduced new capital expenditure by \$50 million
- Increased asset renewal

These savings have been taken from projected budgets over until 2035, with Mr MacDonald aiming at significantly reducing council's debts - which currently sits at about \$39 million - down to \$9 million.

At the public meeting, many residents had questions about the future of council and its services, with many wanting increased pool hours for the Strathalbyn pool.

"I believe the pool should remain open for as long as possible," one resident said.

This sentiment was agreed upon by many of the attendees.

Other questions included further arts support, a potential Air BnB levy, and further support for the Christmas Where the Angus Flows event held in Strathalbyn each year.



Alexandrina Councillor Peter Oliver, Mayor Keith Parkes, and Councillor Michael Scott at the Strathalbyn session. (Jack Church)

With the Mount Compass public meeting happening last night on June 4, there is one final meeting session being held before consultation closes on Friday, June 6, 5pm.

The final meeting session will be held at the

Port Elliot RSL Hall on the Strand tonight, June 5, at 6.30pm.

Further details about the draft Plans are available at <https://mysay.alexandrina.sa.gov.au/acp2025-26>