

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday 21 October 2026
6:00 pm

Glasshouse, Kerang

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**MINUTES OF GANNAWARRA SHIRE COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE GLASSHOUSE, KERANG
ON WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2026 AT 6:00 PM**

PRESENT:

- Cr Ross Stanton (Mayor)
- Cr Daniel Bolitho (Deputy Mayor)
- Cr Charlie Gillingham
- Cr Garner Smith
- Cr Lisa Farrant
- Cr Keith Link
- Cr Pat Quinn

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Director Corporate Services
- Governance Officer

GALLERY: Nil

MEDIA: Nil

1 WELCOME TO COUNTRY

The Welcome to Country video was played.

2 OPENING DECLARATION

Cr Daniel Bolitho read the Opening Declaration.

3 APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Nil.

4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Lisa Farrant

Seconded: Cr Garner Smith

That the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 16 September 2026 be confirmed.

CARRIED

5 DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nil.

6 BRIEFING SESSIONS

6.1 RECORD OF COUNCILLOR BRIEFING - 9 SEPTEMBER 2026 TO 6 OCTOBER 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents to Council written records of Councillor Briefings in accordance with clause 35 of the Gannawarra Shire Council Governance Rules.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Daniel Bolitho

Seconded: Cr Lisa Farrant

That Council note the Records of Councillor Briefings from 9 September 2026 to 6 October 2026.

CARRIED

7 BUSINESS REPORTS FOR DECISION

7.1 GROW GANNAWARRA CHILDREN AND YOUTH STRATEGY 2026-2030

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *GROW Gannawarra Children and Youth Strategy 2026–2030* outlines Council’s commitment to supporting children, young people and their families.

Informed by consultation with children, young people, community stakeholders, service providers and partner organisations, together with evidence from *The State of Gannawarra Children and Young People Report 2023*, the Strategy provides a coordinated framework to improve outcomes for young people aged 0–24 years across the municipality.

Children and young people comprise approximately one quarter of Gannawarra’s population, making their wellbeing, participation and development critical to the Shire’s long-term resilience, sustainability and prosperity. The Strategy recognises that investing in children and young people today contributes to stronger communities and better outcomes for future generations.

Guided by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) *Nest* framework, Australia’s first evidence-based wellbeing framework for children and young people, the Strategy focuses on six key wellbeing domains: Valued, Loved and Safe; Material Basics; Healthy; Learning; Participating; and Identity and Culture.

The Strategy positions Council as a leader, facilitator, partner and advocate, working collaboratively with community, government and service providers to strengthen systems, services and opportunities that support children, young people and families. Supported by a four-year Action Plan, the Strategy aligns with the guiding principles of the *Gannawarra Community Vision 2040* – connection, liveability, equity, wellbeing, resilience, and growth, and provides a roadmap to ensure that every child and young person in Gannawarra is connected, supported and empowered to thrive.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Charlie Gillingham

Seconded: Cr Daniel Bolitho

That Council adopt the *GROW Gannawarra Children and Youth Strategy 2026-2030*.

CARRIED

7.2 COUNCIL POLICY NO. 139 - HEALTHY FOOD AND DRINK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council Policy No. 139 - Healthy Food and Drink was first adopted by Council in March 2020 to support healthy eating and drinking environments across Council workplaces, facilities, meetings, functions and events. Since its adoption, the policy has assisted Council to demonstrate leadership in promoting healthy food and drink choices across the Gannawarra community.

A review of the policy has been undertaken to ensure it remains contemporary, aligns with current Victorian healthy eating guidelines and reflects Council's operational practices. The proposed amendments improve clarity and update references to relevant plans, policies and health promotion initiatives.

Preventable chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and poor oral health, continue to have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of Gannawarra residents. Local health data indicates that obesity rates are significantly higher than the Victorian average, while healthy eating behaviours such as vegetable consumption and physical activity remain below state averages. Supporting healthy eating and drinking environments is therefore an important preventative health strategy for Council.

The revised policy provides a practical and balanced approach to encouraging healthy eating and drinking across the community. It recognises that food choices are influenced by affordability, availability, education and individual circumstances, while supporting Council's role in creating environments where healthy choices are visible, accessible and easier to make.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Daniel Bolitho

Seconded: Cr Pat Quinn

That Council adopt Council Policy No. 139 – Healthy Food and Drink.

CARRIED

7.3 ANNUAL REPORT 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Gannawarra Shire Council Annual Report 2026*, covering the period from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026, has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act).

In accordance with Section 98 of the Act, the Annual Report contains a report on the operations of Council, the audited Financial Statements, and the audited Performance Statement.

NOTE: Attached with this report is the Draft Gannawarra Shire Council Annual Report 2026. The final version, which will include Local Government Performance Reporting Framework data and VAGO-approved Financial and Performance statements, will be presented at the October 2026 Council Meeting.

MOTION

Moved: Cr Charlie Gillingham

Seconded: Cr Garner Smith

That Council:

1. Receive the Gannawarra Shire Council Annual Report 2026, noting that the VAGO certificates for the Financial and Performance Statements be inserted once received.
2. Ensures a copy of the Gannawarra Shire Council Annual Report 2026 is available to view on Council's website once the VAGO certificates for the Financial and Performance Statements are inserted into the document.

CARRIED

7.4 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING - 8 SEPTEMBER 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) met on 8 September 2026. The agenda included reports related to financial, governance, compliance, and risk management matters.

This report provides a summary of the meeting, agenda items and outcomes.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Garner Smith

Seconded: Cr Charlie Gillingham

That Council receive and note the summary of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held 8 September 2026.

CARRIED

7.5 COUNCIL POLICY NO. 117 - COMPLAINT HANDLING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the revised Policy No. 117 – Complaints Handling for Council’s consideration and adoption. The Policy was last reviewed in December 2021 and has undergone a substantial review to reflect legislative requirements, Victorian Ombudsman guidance and Council’s current organisational arrangements.

The revised Policy establishes clearer responsibilities, strengthens complaint assessment and independent internal review processes, and improves accessibility, privacy and recordkeeping provisions. It also reduces the complaint acknowledgement period from 10 business days to five business days, while retaining a 28-calendar-day target for investigations.

Adoption of the revised Policy will support consistent, fair and timely complaint handling, strengthen accountability across Council and assist in identifying opportunities for service improvement.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Daniel Bolitho

Seconded: Cr Pat Quinn

That Council adopt Council Policy No. 117 Complaint Handling (including Unreasonable Complaint Conduct).

CARRIED

7.6 RISK APPETITE STATEMENT, RISK FRAMEWORK & RISK POLICY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the Risk Appetite Statement, Enterprise Risk Management Framework and revised Policy 003 Risk Management for Council adoption.

The documents establish an integrated approach to managing risks and opportunities across Council's strategic planning, service delivery, financial management and day-to-day operations. The Risk Appetite Statement defines the level and type of risk Council is willing to accept, the Framework establishes the methodology for assessing and managing risk, and the Policy sets Council's mandatory requirements and accountabilities.

The proposed arrangements strengthen risk ownership, assessment of control effectiveness, escalation, reporting and oversight. Adoption will provide the governance foundation for Council's broader risk management improvement program, including the risk management system, updated risk registers, staff training and ongoing assessment of organisational risk maturity.

The suite of documents have been endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee at their September meeting.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Garner Smith

Seconded: Cr Daniel Bolitho

That Council:

- 1. Adopt the Risk Appetite Statement;**
- 2. Adopt the Risk Management Framework; and**
- 3. Adopt Council Policy No. 003 - Risk Management.**

CARRIED

7.7 COUNCIL POLICY NO. 025 - REVENUE COLLECTION AND FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the review of the Revenue Collection and Financial Hardship Policy (the Policy).

This Policy proposes a rationalisation of these two existing documents into one concise policy:

- Council Policy 025 – Outstanding Debt
- Council Policy 034 – Rate Relief.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Daniel Bolitho

Seconded: Cr Charlie Gillingham

That Council:

- 1. Rescind Council Policy No. 034 Rate Relief.**
- 2. Adopt Council Policy No. 025 Revenue Collection and Financial Hardship.**

CARRIED

8 URGENT BUSINESS

PROCEDURAL MOTION

Moved: Cr Keith Link

Moved: Cr Charlie Gillingham

That Council admit Urgent Business into the Agenda as distributed.

CARRIED

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Garner Smith

Seconded: Cr Daniel Bolitho

That Council approve a leave of absence for Cr Garner Smith from 1 November 2026 to 30 November 2026 inclusive.

CARRIED

9 NOTICES OF MOTION

Nil

10 QUESTION TIME

Name: Melinda Bronca

Address: Quambatook

Question:

What is Council's understanding of the current status of the Cannie Wind Farm EES and how the Cannie Energy Park is expected to be assessed, and what information can Council share with residents about its discussions with RES?

Answer:

Council understands that the proponents of the Cannie Wind Farm, RES, have withdrawn from the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process. While the project had entered the EES pathway through a self-referral by the proponent, an EES was not formally required by the State Government at that time.

Throughout the EES process, Council had a representative on the projects Technical Reference Group (TRG), which was established to provide technical input and oversight. As the EES process has now ceased, the TRG has been dissolved.

RES has advised Council that it intends to proceed by lodging a planning permit application directly with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). Council understands that, should an application be lodged, it will be publicly exhibited, and community members will have the opportunity to review the proposal and make submissions.

Council will also review the application in detail and provide a formal submission to DTP outlining Council's views and any matters of concern identified through the assessment process.

Council has consistently advocated to the Department of Transport and Planning, the Minister for Planning and the Premier that all large-scale renewable projects should be subject to a full Environmental Effects Statement process. Council believes an EES provides the most thorough and transparent assessment framework, ensuring potential impacts are independently examined by experts and that communities have the opportunity to fully understand and provide input into proposed developments.

Question:

What steps will Council take to ask the Department of Transport and Planning whether an Environmental Effects Statement is still required for the Cannie projects before any planning permit application is lodged, and how will Council report the outcome to residents?

Answer:

Council has already made its position clear to the Department of Transport and Planning that it believes a full Environment Effects Statement should be required for major renewable energy projects, include the proposed Cannie development.

The determination of whether an EES is required rests with the Victorian Government and is not a decision that Council can make. However, Council will continue to engage with DTP and advocate for robust assessment processes that provide transparency and confidence for local communities.

Should a planning permit application be lodged directly with DTP, Council will review the documentation and participate in the assessment process through a formal submission. Any information received from DTP regarding assessment requirements for the project, including matters relating to an EES, will be communicated to the community through Council's usual communication channels where appropriate.

Council remains committed to keeping residents informed as information becomes available and to representing community interests throughout the assessment of the proposal.

11 DELEGATES REPORTS

11.1 DELEGATES REPORTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has memberships with peak Local Government associations, local and regional forums, along with statutory committees. Some memberships require that a Councillor be appointed to act as a delegate to formally represent Council, typically in a voting capacity.

This Agenda item provides an opportunity for Council appointed delegates to present a verbal update on any pertinent matters arising from Council's membership with the following associations.

COUNCILLOR COMMITTEES 2025/2026	
COMMITTEE	COUNCILLOR
Murray River Group of Councillors (MRGC)	Cr Garner Smith, Mayor
Loddon Campaspe Group of Councils (LCGC)	Cr Garner Smith, Mayor
Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance (CVGA)	Cr Daniel Bolitho
Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee (MFMPC)	Cr Lisa Farrant
Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)	Cr Ross Stanton
Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC)	Cr Keith Link
Community Halls Community Asset Committee	Cr Keith Link
Community Resilience Committee	Cr Keith Link
Rural Councils Victoria (RCV)	Cr Charlie Gillingham
Transport Connections	Cr Pat Quinn
Timber Towns Victoria (TTV)	Cr Pat Quinn

12 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Nil.

The Meeting closed at 6:47pm.

The Minutes of this Meeting were confirmed at the Meeting of the Gannawarra Shire Council held on 18 November 2026.

**Mayor Ross Stanton
CHAIR**

UNCONFIRMED