



Special Meeting of Council Minutes

Date: 19 June 2025
Time: 12:00 pm
Location: Dalby Corporate Office

Councillors:

- Cr. A. N. Smith
- Cr. K. A. Bourne
- Cr. O. G. Moore
- Cr. S. J. Condon
- Cr. P. T. Saxelby
- Cr. K. A. Maguire
- Cr. G. M. Olm
- Cr. M. J. James
- Cr. S. Bougoure

Officers:

- B. Bacon, Acting Chief Executive Officer
- S. Fitzgerald, Acting General Manager (Corporate Services)
- G. Cook, General Manager (Infrastructure Services)
- D. Fletcher, General Manager (Community & Liveability)
- B. Donald, Senior Executive Officer
- A. Lewis, Executive Services Administration officer
- B. Woodcock, Communications & Digital Marketing Officer
- J. Baker, Marketing Coordinator
- N. Collins, Communications and Marketing Manager
- K. Carroll, Senior Executive Communications Advisor
- T. Skillington, Chief Financial Officer
- C. Prain, Co-ordinator Financial Planning & Analysis

1. DECLARATION OF THE MEETING OPEN

The Chairperson declared the meeting open at 12:30pm.

2. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

3. CORPORATE SERVICES

3.1 Corporate Services Report Adoption Operational Plan 2025-26

The purpose of this report is to adopt the *Operational Plan 2025-26*.

Moved by: Cr. S. Bougoure

Seconded by: Cr. M. J. James

That Council resolves to adopt the *Operational Plan 2025-26*, as contained within Attachment One.

CARRIED

3.2 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Budget Policies 2025-26

The *Local Government Act 2009* requires Council to adopt policies related to the annual budget to ensure the effective and efficient financial governance of the organisation. Whilst the *Debt Policy* must be adopted annually, the *Investment Policy*, *Financial Management and Investment Strategy Policy*, and *Budget Policy* need only be reviewed annually to ensure they continue to meet Council's strategic and operational objectives.

Moved by: Cr. O. G. Moore

Seconded by: Cr. G. M. Olm

That Council resolves, in accordance with section 104 of the *Local Government Act 2009* and section 191 and 192 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, to adopt the:

1. *Budget Policy* (attachment one);
2. *Financial Management and Investment Strategy Policy* (attachment two);
3. *Investment Policy* (attachment three); and
4. *Debt Policy* (attachment four).

CARRIED

3.3 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Revenue Policy, and Procedures for Levying Rates and Charges 2025-26

The purpose of this report is to adopt the *Revenue Policy* for the Westerns Downs Regional Council's 2025-2026 budget and the procedures for the levying of rates and charges for the 2025-2026 financial year.

Moved by: Cr. P. T. Saxelby

Seconded by: Cr. K. A. Maguire

That Council resolves to:

1. rescind the *Debt Recovery Collection - Statutory Policy*;
2. adopt the *Revenue Policy* (Attachment One), in accordance with section 169(2) and section 193 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*; and
3. adopt the following procedures for the Levying of Rates and Charges for 2025-2026, in accordance with Chapter 4 Part 1 of the *Local Government Act 2009* and the provisions of the *Revenue Policy* and *2025-26 Revenue Statement*:

Description of Rates/Charges	Frequency	Basis
Differential General Rates	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Special Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Separate Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Waste and Recycling Collection Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Environmental Waste Levy Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Water and Recycled Water Access Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Water and Recycled Water Volumetric Charges	Half Yearly	Based on Consumption
Water and Recycled Water Volumetric Charges (High Water Consumers as determined by Council)	No more than Bi-Monthly and no less than Half Yearly	Based on Consumption
Sewerage Charges	Half Yearly	50% of total for year
Gas – commercial connections	Monthly	Based on Gas Consumption and periodic access charges
Gas – domestic connections	Quarterly	Based on Gas Consumption and periodic access charges

CARRIED

3.4 Corporate Services Report Adoption of 2025-26 Revenue Statement

The purpose of this report is to adopt of the *2025-26 Revenue Statement* as part of the 2025-2026 Budget. Section 169(2)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* requires Council to include a revenue statement in its annual budget.

Moved by: Cr. O. G. Moore

Seconded by: Cr. M. J. James

That Council resolves to:

1. adopt the *2025-26 Revenue Statement* (Attachment One), in accordance with Section 104(5) of the *Local Government Act 2009* and sections 169 and 172 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*;
2. levy the Differential General Rates and Minimum General Rates for 2025-26, as set out in the *2025-26 Revenue Statement*, pursuant to section 94 of the *Local Government Act 2009* and section 81 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* and in accordance with the provisions of the *Revenue Policy* and the *2025-26 Revenue Statement*;
3. levy the proposed 2025-2026 special charges and where applicable, adopt the overall plans and annual implementation plans, pursuant to the provisions of the *Revenue Policy* and *2025-26 Revenue Statement*
4. levy the 2025-26 Utility Charges as set out in the *2025-26 Revenue Statement*, pursuant to section 94 of the *Local Government Act 2009* and section 99 and 100 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* and in accordance with the provisions of the *Revenue Policy* and *2025-26 Revenue Statement*;
5. allow a discount of five (5) per cent on general rates and charges as stated in the *2025-26 Revenue Statement*, pursuant to section 130 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* and in accordance with the provisions of the *Revenue Policy* and *2025-26 Revenue Statement*; and
6. adopt the application of interest, from the day the rates or charges become overdue, at the maximum rate of 12.12 per cent per annum, to be applied from 1 July 2025 on all rates and charges (excluding overdue gas accounts) which remain unpaid thirty (30) days after the due date for payment, pursuant to sections 132 and 133 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* and in accordance with provisions of the *Revenue Policy* and *2025-26 Revenue Statement*.

CARRIED

3.5 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Rates and Charges and Special Charges Concessions 2025-2026

This report considers the proposed Rates and Charges and Special Charges Concessions to apply for the 2025-2026 financial year and the *Rates and Utility Charges Concession Policy* for the Western Downs Regional Council's 2025-2026 budget.

Moved by: Cr. P. T. Saxelby

Seconded by: Cr. K. A. Bourne

That Council resolves to:

1. Rescind the *Water Meters - Council Policy*
2. Adopt the following concessions in accordance with the provisions of the *Revenue Policy* and the *2025-26 Revenue Statement*:

1. Council Pensioner Rate Concession

- a. A Council Pensioner Rate Concession of twenty (20) per cent (up to a maximum of \$200 per annum) of gross rates and charges (except for Special Rates and Charges, Separate Rates and Charges, Emergency Management Levy Charges, Water Consumption Charges, Charges on the Land, and Miscellaneous Fees and Charges) be provided to eligible pensioners in accordance with the State Government Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme in 2025-26. This Concession is provided pursuant to sections 120(1)(a), 121(a), and 122(1)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*; and
- b. A Council Pensioner Rate Concession of twenty (20) per cent (up to a maximum of \$200 per annum) be provided to occupants of independent living units at aged care facilities and retirement villages and who are also pensioners under section 123(1) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*. The concession will be provided to eligible pensioners where:
 - i. part of the rates or charges that the Council considers is attributable to the part of the land where pensioners have a right to exclusive occupancy (section 123(2) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*), and
 - ii. the landowner agrees to pass the benefit of the rebate on to the pensioners.

2. Concealed Leaks

Pursuant to sections 120(1)(c), 121(a), and 122(1)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, Council resolves to grant a concession to a ratepayer who is a member of a stated class of ratepayers, as follows:

- a. Stated class of ratepayers

The concession is available to all categories/classes of ratepayers connected to Council's water supply schemes.

b. Type of concession

Council will allow relief by way of a maximum concession of twenty-five (25) per cent of the water consumption charge in accordance with the *Water Meter Guidelines*.

c. Conditions

The concession is granted subject to a ratepayer:

- i. incurring water consumption charges by reason of a 'concealed leak' (as defined in the *Water Meter Guidelines*); and
- ii. satisfying the criteria set down in the *Water Meter Guidelines*.

d. Criteria for granting concession

Council grants this concession on the basis that to require the ratepayer to pay full charges for consumption in circumstances where a concealed leak has occurred (through no fault of the ratepayer) would result in hardship.

3. Rates and Utilities Charges Concession for Community Organisations

Pursuant to sections 120(1)(c), 121(a), and 122(1)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, Council resolves to grant a concession to a ratepayer who is a member of a stated class of ratepayers, as follows:

a. Stated class of ratepayers

The concession is granted to not-for-profit (or non-profit) community organisations responsible for payment of rates and utility charges as the owner or lessee of the land as defined in the *Rates and Utilities Charges Concession Policy*.

b. Type of concession

Council will grant to each eligible organisation the nominated concessions (expressed as percentages against each concession category) for general rates, waste utility charges, sewerage charges, water access charges, and water consumption charges.

c. Conditions

The conditions for granting the concession are outlined in the *Rates and Utilities Charges Concession Policy*.

d. Criteria for granting concession

Community organisations will be granted this concession upon receiving approval of the concession as outlined in the *Rates and Utilities Charges Concession Policy*.

4. Haemodialysis Water Allowance

Pursuant to sections 120(1)(c), 121(a), and 122(1)(b) of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, Council resolves to grant a concession to a ratepayer who is a member of a stated class of ratepayers, as follows:

a. Stated class of ratepayers

Council resolves to grant the allowance to a haemodialysis patient who receives haemodialysis treatment at home under the *Rates and Utility Charges Concession Policy*.

b. Type of concession

Types of conditions are outlined in the *Rates and Utility Charges Concession Policy*.

c. Conditions

Conditions for granting the concession are outlined in the *Rates and Utility Charges Concession Policy*.

CARRIED

3.6 Corporate Services Report Adoption of the Register of Cost Recovery Fees and Commercial Charges for 2025-26

The purpose of this report is to adopt the Register of Cost Recovery Fees and Commercial Charges for 2025-26. The Fees and Charges listed in the register will take effect from 1 July 2025.

Moved by: Cr. S. J. Condon

Seconded by: Cr. K. A. Bourne

That Council resolves to adopt the 2025-26 Register of Cost Recovery Fees and Commercial Charges, as contained in Attachment One, to be effective from 1 July 2025.

CARRIED

3.7 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Application of National Competition Reform 2025-26

This report considers Council's 2025-2026 Community Services Obligations (CSO) and amending Council's business activities. Each financial year, Council must decide whether to implement National Competition Policy (NCP) reforms for its business activities. These reforms enhance transparency, reduce anti-competitive behaviour, and are intended to optimise the allocation of Council resources.

Moved by: Cr. K. A. Bourne

Seconded by: Cr. K. A. Maguire

That Council resolves to:

1. continue to apply the full cost pricing reform option to the Water and Sewerage business activity for the 2025-2026 financial year in accordance with section 44(1) of the *Local Government Act 2009*;
2. continue to apply the Code of Competitive Conduct to the Waste and Gas Supply business activities for the 2025-2026 financial year in accordance with section 47 of the *Local Government Act 2009*;
3. discontinue application of the Code of Competitive Conduct for the Quarry, Commercial Works, Washdown Bay, and Saleyard business activities;
4. apply a Community Service Obligation Payment to the following businesses during the 2025-2026 financial year:
 - a. Water;
 - b. Sewerage; and
 - c. Waste; and
5. receive Dividend Payments from the following businesses during the 2025-2026 financial year:
 - a. Gas; and
 - b. Sewerage.

CARRIED

3.8 Corporate Services Report Adoption of Estimated Position 30 June 2025 and Financial Analysis

The purpose of this report is to adopt the Statement of Estimated Financial Position as part of the 2025-2026 budget and provide an analysis of variations between the 2025-2026 Budget and the 2024-2025 Estimated Position.

Moved by: Cr. K. A. Maguire

Seconded by: Cr. S. J. Condon

That Council resolves to receive the Statement of Estimated Financial Position, which includes the Financial Operations (attachment one) and Financial Position (attachment two) of Council for the 2024-2025 financial year.

CARRIED

3.9 Corporate Services Report Adoption of 2025-26 Budget including the Long-Term Financial Plan

This report presents the 2025-2026 Budget and the 2025-2026 Long-Term Financial Plan for adoption.

Moved by: Cr. O. G. Moore

Seconded by: Cr. G. M. Olm

That Council resolves to:

1. adopt the 2025-2026 Budget, prepared in accordance with the requirements of section 169 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*; and
2. adopt the 2025-2026 Long-Term Financial Plan, prepared in accordance with the requirements of sections 169 and 171 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

CARRIED

4. MAYORAL BUDGET STATEMENT

Thank you everyone, on behalf of the 35,000 people who call our region home, it is my pleasure to present the 2025-26 Western Downs Regional Council Budget.

I'm proud to stand with my fellow Councillors today, to present a Budget that keeps our thriving region moving forward.

We don't get to where we are today, a strong, visionary Council leading a thriving, diverse and passionate region, just by clicking our fingers.

I'd like to pause for a moment or two and pay respect to the Councillors who have come before us, whose courage in making the tough calls, the right calls, the smart calls allows us to today present a budget that is forward thinking and sets us up for a strong year ahead.

This Budget acknowledges the hope, faith and trust placed in our ability to lead and guide the communities of the Western Downs into the future.

This Budget is a responsible financial plan that delivers great liveability, quality infrastructure and improved services.

This Budget is proof of our Council's continued commitment to operating within our means and sustainable planning for the future.

This Budget keeps in mind cost-of-living pressures. This is a carefully considered plan that ensures Council spends only what it can afford.

This \$269 million Budget demonstrates Council's healthy financial position and we have already acquired \$32.2 million in State and Federal grant funding and other contributions to help lower the cost of delivering essential services, new projects and reliable infrastructure.

Our region is growing, thanks to our strong, diverse economy, and Council is planning for future growth in the year ahead by investing in quality essential services and the delivery of modern infrastructure.

We have budgeted to deliver a humble surplus of \$1.58 million this year with total operating expenditure of \$186 million and a total capital investment of \$83 million to deliver 150 projects across the region.

Keeping cost-of-living pressures front and centre, we've kept rate increases to the absolute minimum needed to deliver key services, capital projects and essential new infrastructure.

Rural, commercial and industrial businesses, and residential households will see only a 3.5% rates increase.

Rates for renewable energy, resource and intensive agricultural industries will increase by 5%.

Council will continue to offer a 5% discount on rates paid by their due date.

We will continue to match the State Rates Subsidy Scheme, offering pensioners a 20% rebate on rates and charges, excluding water consumption - up to a maximum of \$200 per year.

With our strong economy, favourable climate, and reputation for being a great place to live and do business, the Western Downs will continue to grow.

Regional growth is both a challenge and opportunity and that's why we will continue to invest in our roads and fight for better road funding from the State and Federal governments.

Our roads keep us connected and drive our productivity, so we have allocated \$53 million for maintenance and capital improvements to our local roads, bridges, footpaths and stormwater infrastructure.

Council will also continue to aggressively advocate to the State and Federal Governments to improve the condition and safety of the more than 1,800 kilometres of national highway and state-controlled roads in our region.

Water remains our most single important resource on the Western Downs, so we're investing more than \$24.7 million into capital water supply, water treatment and wastewater infrastructure this year.

This includes the continuation of the Dalby water supply project and the commencement of the reconstruction of the Jandowae Dam Spillway.

Long-term water security and supply are critical for the growth of our region and economy and Council will continue to aggressively advocate for and explore new opportunities for the provision of bulk water.

Our community will also see a \$1.68 million in capital improvements to our waste transfer stations and landfills at Wandoan, Tara, Jandowae, Moonie and Miles.

Activating our communities and creating new places to gather, play, reflect and celebrate is another important priority for Council in the year ahead.

We want to encourage our community members and visitors to explore our backyard and enjoy our facilities, so Council has allocated \$6.74 million in new capital projects and improvements to our sport, recreation and civic facilities.

Detailed design for a new cultural facility for Dalby continues, as we work towards kicking off construction for this exciting landmark project.

We are also in the detailed design phase for the construction of a new Chinchilla Aquatic Precinct.

We continue our 10-year plan for upgrading our regional pools and aquatic infrastructure and this budget supports \$3.5 million in capital improvements.

Council recognises the importance of our community parks, greenspace and cemeteries, and we are investing \$5.2 million in capital upgrades to improve our parklands and open spaces.

This includes a new adventure playground for Thomas Jack Park at Dalby and new ashes interment gardens at the Tara and Miles cemeteries.

In the year ahead, we will support some of Queensland's most exciting and unique destination events like Dalby's Delicious and DeLIGHTful Festival, Miles Back to the Bush Festival, and our annual Words Out West Readers and Writers Festival.

Events like these showcase our culture and give our communities the opportunity to shine, bringing visitors and tourists to the region in droves and boosting our tourism revenue.

That's why Council has allocated \$446,000 in events funding and community grants to empower local community groups to deliver new and exciting initiatives in our region.

Council has also invested \$2.8 million to strengthen our region's economic diversity and tourism attraction through the delivery of our new regional signage program.

We will continue to support our local businesses and industries in their planning for the future through the delivery of a new Regional Workforce Plan to address workforce shortages and skills gaps.

We also look forward to the return of our Youth Entrepreneur Summit and Manufacturing Conference.

It's been my privilege today, to share with you some insight into the exciting new infrastructure, services and liveability projects we will be delivering for the region in the year ahead.

I'd like to acknowledge the dedication and effort of our Council team in preparing this Budget for the Western Downs community.

I really want to thank my fellow Councillors. The respect you show and the heart you bring into the boardroom to achieve the best possible outcomes for our communities epitomises strong leadership. Thank you.

Thank-you for trusting in our collective ability to deliver exciting outcomes and continue this time of economic growth, prosperity and advancement for the Western Downs.

Together, we've forged a responsible financial plan that has been carefully prepared with community needs front and centre.

We are financially strong and our track record for delivering great economic and liveability outcomes is widely respected.

This Budget sets us up to sustain future regional growth while investing in wonderful new capital projects to drive economic growth and elevate the liveability of the Western Downs for generations to come.

5. MEETING CLOSURE

The Meeting concluded at 12:52pm.