

WARRNAMBOOL
CITY COUNCIL

REVENUE AND RATING PLAN

2021-22



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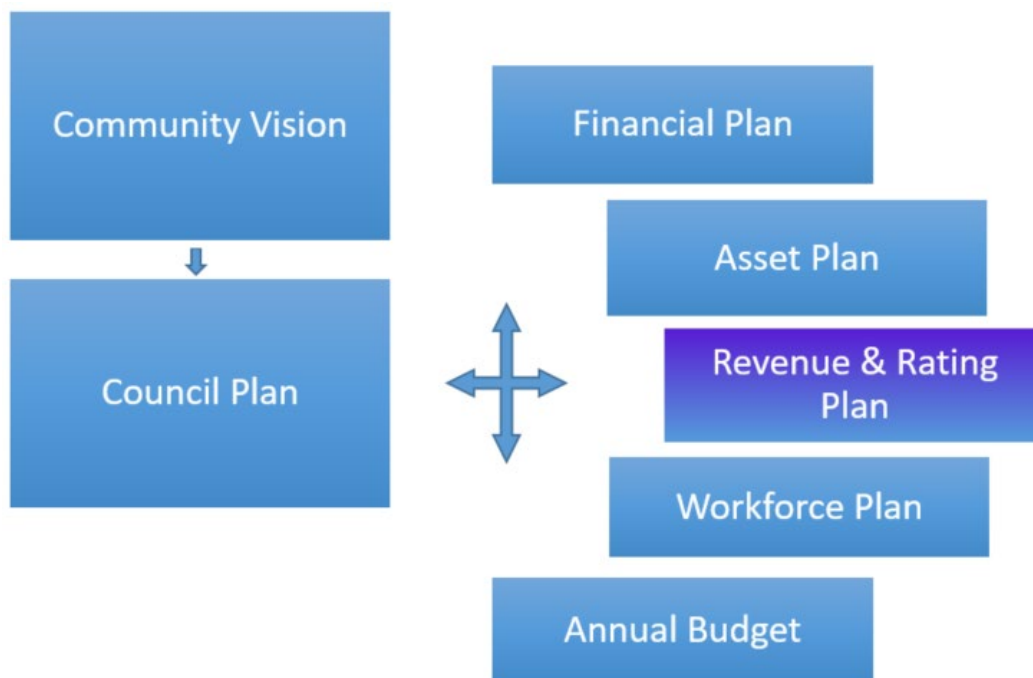
1.1 Purpose

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires each council to prepare a Revenue and Rating Plan to cover a minimum period of four years following each Council election. The Revenue and Rating Plan establishes the revenue raising framework within which the Council proposes to work.

The purpose of the Revenue and Rating Plan is to determine the most appropriate and affordable revenue and rating approach for Warrnambool City Council which in conjunction with other income sources will adequately finance the objectives in the council plan.

This plan is an important part of Council's integrated planning framework, all of which is created to help Council achieve its vision of *"a thriving city in the heart of coast and the country"*

Strategies outlined in this plan align with the objectives contained in the Council Plan and will feed into our budgeting and long-term financial planning documents, as well as other strategic planning documents under our Council's strategic planning framework.



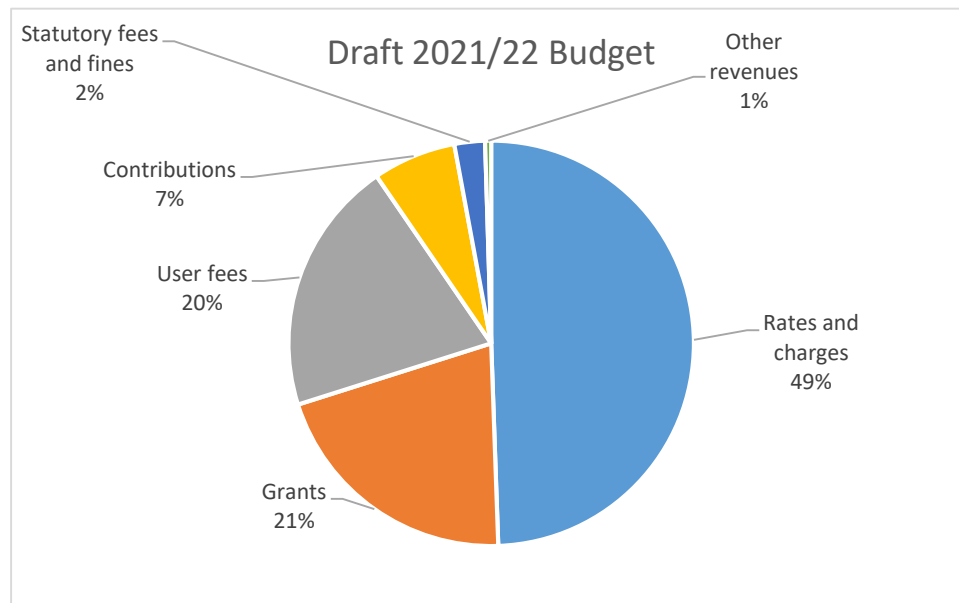
This plan will explain how Council calculates the revenue needed to fund its activities, and how the funding burden will be apportioned between ratepayers and other users of Council facilities and services.

In particular, this plan will set out decisions that Council has made in relation to rating options available to it under the *Local Government Act 2020* to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of rates across property owners. It will also set out principles that are used in decision making for other revenue sources such as fees and charges.

It is also important to note that this plan does not set revenue targets for Council, it outlines the strategic framework and decisions that inform how Council will go about calculating and collecting its revenue.

1.2 Introduction

Council provides a number of services and facilities to our local community, and in doing so, must collect revenue to cover the cost of providing these services and facilities.



Council's revenue sources include:

- Rates and Charges
- Waste and garbage charges
- Grants from other levels of Government
- Statutory Fees and Fines
- User Fees
- Cash and non-cash contributions from other parties (ie developers, community groups)
- Interest from investments
- Sale of Assets

Rates are the most significant revenue source for Council and make up approximately 50% of its annual income.

The introduction of rate capping under the Victorian Government's Fair Go Rates System (FGRS) has brought a renewed focus to Council's long-term financial sustainability. The FGRS continues to restrict Council's ability to raise revenue above the rate cap unless application is made to the Essential Services Commission for a variation. Maintaining service delivery levels and investing in community assets remain key priorities for Council. This strategy will address Council's reliance on rate income and provide options to actively reduce that reliance.

Council provides a wide range of services to the community, often for a fee or charge. The nature of these fees and charges generally depends on whether they relate to statutory or discretionary services. Some of these, such as statutory planning fees are set by State Government statute and are commonly known as regulatory fees. In these cases, councils usually have no control over service pricing. However, in relation to other services, Council has the ability to set a fee or charge and will set that fee based on the principles outlined in this Revenue and Rating Plan.

Council revenue can also be adversely affected by changes to funding from other levels of government. Some grants are tied to the delivery of council services, whilst many are tied directly to the delivery of new community assets, such as roads or sports pavilions. It is important for Council to be clear about what grants it intends to apply for, and the obligations that grants create in the delivery of services or infrastructure.

1.3 Community Engagement

The Revenue and Rating Plan outlines Council's decision-making process on how revenues are calculated and collected. The following public consultation process will be/was followed to ensure due consideration and feedback is received from relevant stakeholders.

Revenue and Rating Plan community engagement process:

- Draft Revenue and Rating Plan prepared by officers;
- Draft Revenue and Rating Plan placed on public exhibition at May Council meeting for a period of 28 days and calling for public submissions;
- Community engagement through local news outlets and social media;
- Hearing of public submissions at a Council meeting in June; and
- Draft Revenue and Rating Plan (with any revisions) presented to June Council meeting for adoption.

Following community engagement, Council's Revenue and Rating Plan was updated to exclude the following items:

- Short-term accommodation has been removed from the definition of the Commercial property rating differential.

1.4 Rates and charges

Rates are property taxes that allow Council to raise revenue to fund essential public services to cater to their municipal population. Importantly, it is a taxation system that includes flexibility for councils to utilise different tools in its rating structure to accommodate issues of equity and to ensure fairness in rating for all ratepayers.

Council has established a rating structure comprised of three key elements. These are:

- **General Rates** – Based on property values (using the Capital Improved Valuation methodology), which are indicative of capacity to pay and form the central basis of rating under the *Local Government Act 1989*;
- **Service Charges** - A 'user pays' component for council services to reflect benefits provided by Council to ratepayers who benefit from a service; and
- **Municipal Charge** - A 'fixed rate' portion per property to cover some of the administrative costs of Council.

Striking a proper balance between these elements will help to improve equity in the distribution of the rate burden across residents.

Council makes a further distinction when applying general rates by applying rating differentials based on the purpose for which the property is used. That is, whether the property is used for residential, commercial/industrial, or farming purposes. This distinction is based on the concept that different property categories should pay a fair and equitable contribution, taking into account the benefits those properties derive from the local community.

The Warrnambool City Council rating structure comprises five differential rates (residential or general, commercial, industrial, vacant and farm). These rates are structured in accordance with the requirements of Section 161 'Differential Rates' of the *Local Government Act 1989*, and the Ministerial Guidelines for Differential Rating 2013.

As an example, the draft differential rates for 2021/22 are currently set as follows:

Type or class of land	No of Assessments	2020/21 cents/\$CIV*	% to Ad valorem Rate
Ad valorem Rate	0	0.004777	100.00%
General rates (other land)	15,565	0.003652	76.45%
Farm	161	0.002293	47.99%
Commercial	942	0.006699	140.23%
Industrial	440	0.006180	129.38%
Vacant Land	793	0.006306	132.00%
Cultural & Recreational Land Category 1	1	\$24,148.52	N/A
Cultural & Recreational Land Category 2	17	0.003583	75.00%

Type or class of land	No of Assessments	Total CIV \$'000	Total Rates Raised \$'000	% of Total Rates
General rates (other land)	15,565	6,033,812	22,035	71.26%
Farm	161	188,280	432	1.40%
Commercial	942	780,086	5,226	16.90%
Industrial	440	289,321	1,788	5.78%
Vacant Land	793	214,250	1,351	4.37%
Cultural & Recreational Land Category 1	1	2,670	24	0.08%
Cultural & Recreational Land Category 2	17	18,031	65	0.21%

The formula for calculating General Rates, excluding any additional charges, arrears or additional supplementary rates is:

- Valuation (Capital Improved Value) x Rate in the Dollar (Differential Rate Type)

The rate in the dollar for each rating differential category is included in Council's annual budget.

Rates and charges are an important source of revenue, accounting for approximately 50% of operating revenue received by Council. The collection of rates is an important factor in funding Council services.

Planning for future rate increases is therefore an essential component of the long-term financial planning process and plays a significant role in funding both additional service delivery and the increasing costs related to providing Council services.

Council is aware of the balance between rate revenue as an important income source and community sensitivity to rate increases. With the introduction of the State Government's Fair Go Rates System, all rate increases are capped to a rate declared by the Minister for Local Government, which is announced in December for the following financial year.

Council also levies a municipal charge. The municipal charge is a minimum rate per property and declared for the purpose of covering some of the administrative costs of Council. In applying the municipal charge, Council ensures that each ratable property in the municipality makes a contribution.

Council currently utilises a service charge to fully recover the cost of Council's waste services and provide for future landfill rehabilitation costs. The garbage service charge is not capped under the Fair Go Rates System, and Council will continue to allocate surplus funds from this charge towards the provision of waste services.

1.4.1 Rating legislation

The legislative framework set out in the *Local Government Act 1989* determines council's ability to develop a rating system. The framework provides significant flexibility for Council to tailor a system that suits its needs.

Section 155 of the *Local Government Act 1989* provides that a Council may declare the following rates and charges on rateable land:

- General rates under Section 158
- Municipal charges under Section 159
- Service rates and charges under Section 162
- Special rates and charges under Section 163

The recommended strategy in relation to municipal charges, service rates and charges and special rates and charges are discussed later in this document.

In raising Council rates, Council is required to primarily use the valuation of the rateable property to levy rates. Section 157 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1989* provides Council with three choices in terms of which valuation base to utilise. They are: Site Valuation, Capital Improved Valuation (CIV) and Net Annual Value (NAV).

The advantages and disadvantages of the respective valuation basis are discussed further in this document. Whilst this document outlines Council's strategy regarding rates revenue, rates data will be contained in the Council's Annual Budget as required by the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Section 94(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* states that Council must adopt a budget by 30 June each year (or at another time fixed by the Minister) to include:

- a) the total amount that the Council intends to raise by rates and charges;
- b) a statement as to whether the rates will be raised by the application of a uniform rate or a differential rate;
- c) a description of any fixed component of the rates, if applicable;
- d) if the Council proposes to declare a uniform rate, the matters specified in section 160 of the *Local Government Act 1989*;
- e) if the Council proposes to declare a differential rate for any land, the matters specified in section 161(2) of the *Local Government Act 1989*;

Section 94(3) of the *Local Government Act 2020* also states that Council must ensure that, if applicable, the budget also contains a statement –

- a) that the Council intends to apply for a special order to increase the Council's average rate cap for the financial year or any other financial year; or
- b) that the Council has made an application to the ESC for a special order and is waiting for the outcome of the application; or
- c) that a special Order has been made in respect of the Council and specifying the average rate cap that applies for the financial year or any other financial year.

This plan outlines the principles and strategic framework that Council will utilise in calculating and distributing the rating burden to property owners, however, the quantum of rate revenue and rating differential amounts will be determined in the annual Warrnambool City Council budget.

In 2019 the Victorian State Government conducted a Local Government Rating System Review. The Local Government Rating System Review Panel presented their final report and list of recommendations to the Victorian Government in March 2020. The Victorian Government subsequently published a response to the recommendations of the Panel's report. However, at the time of publication the recommended changes have not yet been implemented, and timelines to make these changes have not been announced.

1.4.2 Rating principles

Taxation Principles:

When developing a rating strategy, in particular with reference to differential rates, a Council should give consideration to the following good practice taxation principles:

- Wealth Tax
- Equity
- Efficiency
- Simplicity
- Benefit
- Capacity to Pay
- Diversity.

Wealth Tax

The “wealth tax” principle implies that the rates paid are dependent upon the value of a ratepayer’s real property and have no correlation to the individual ratepayer’s consumption of services or the perceived benefits derived by individual ratepayers from the expenditures funded from rates.

Equity

Horizontal equity – ratepayers in similar situations should pay similar amounts of rates which is ensured mainly by accurate property valuations, undertaken in a consistent manner, their classification into homogenous property classes and the right of appeal against valuation.

Vertical equity – those who are better off should pay more rates than those worse off. This rationale applies for the use of progressive and proportional income taxation. It implies a “relativity” dimension to the fairness of the tax burden.

Efficiency

Economic efficiency is measured by the extent to which production and consumption decisions by people are affected by rates.

Simplicity

How easily a rates system can be understood by ratepayers and the practicality and ease of administration.

Benefit

The extent to which there is a nexus between consumption/benefit and the rate burden.

Capacity to Pay

The capacity of ratepayers or groups of ratepayers to pay rates.

Diversity

The capacity of ratepayers within a group to pay rates.

The rating challenge for Council therefore is to determine the appropriate balancing of competing considerations.

Rates and Charges Revenue Principles:

Property rates will:

- be reviewed annually;
- not change dramatically from one year to next; and
- be sufficient to fund current expenditure commitments and deliverables outlined in the Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

Differential rating should be applied as equitably as is practical and will comply with the Ministerial Guidelines for Differential Rating 2013.

1.4.3 Determining which valuation base to use

Under the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council has three options as to the valuation base it elects to use. They are:

- **Capital Improved Value (CIV)** – Value of land and improvements upon the land.
- **Site Value (SV)** – Value of land only.
- **Net Annual Value (NAV)** – Rental valuation based on CIV.

For residential and farm properties, NAV is calculated at 5 per cent of the Capital Improved Value. For commercial and industrial properties, NAV is calculated as the greater of the estimated annual rental value or 5 per cent of the CIV.

Capital Improved Value (CIV)

Capital Improved Value is the most commonly used valuation base by local government with over 90% of Victorian councils applying this methodology. Based on the value of both land and all improvements on the land, it is generally easily understood by ratepayers as it equates to the market value of the property.

Section 161 of the *Local Government Act 1989* provides that a Council may raise any general rates by the application of a differential rate if –

- a) It uses the capital improved value system of valuing land; and
- b) It considers that a differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of its functions.

Where a council does not utilise CIV, it may only apply limited differential rates in relation to farm land, urban farm land or residential use land.

Advantages of using Capital Improved Value (CIV)

- CIV includes all property improvements, and hence is often supported on the basis that it more closely reflects “capacity to pay”. The CIV rating method takes into account the full development value of the property, and hence better meets the equity criteria than Site Value and NAV.
- With the increased frequency of valuations (previously two year intervals, now annual intervals) the market values are more predictable and has reduced the level of objections resulting from valuations.
- The concept of the market value of property is more easily understood with CIV rather than NAV or SV.
- Most councils in Victoria have now adopted CIV which makes it easier to compare relative movements in rates and valuations across councils.
- The use of CIV allows council to apply differential rates which greatly adds to council's ability to equitably distribute the rating burden based on ability to afford council rates. CIV allows council to apply higher rating differentials to the commercial and industrial sector that offset residential rates.

Disadvantages of using CIV

- The main disadvantage with CIV is the fact that rates are based on the total property value which may not necessarily reflect the income level of the property owner as with pensioners and low-income earners.

Site value (SV)

There are currently no Victorian councils that use this valuation base. With valuations based simply on the valuation of land and with only very limited ability to apply differential rates, the implementation of Site Value in a Warrnambool City Council context would cause a shift in rate burden from the industrial/commercial sectors onto the residential sector, and would hinder council's objective of a fair and equitable rating system.

There would be further rating movements away from modern townhouse style developments on relatively small land parcels to older established homes on quarter acre residential blocks. In many ways, it is difficult to see an equity argument being served by the implementation of site valuation in the Warrnambool City Council.

Advantages of Site Value

- There is a perception that under site value, a uniform rate would promote development of land, particularly commercial and industrial developments. There is, however, little evidence to prove that this is the case.
- Scope for possible concessions for urban farm-land and residential use land.

Disadvantages of using Site Value

- Under SV, there will be a significant shift from the industrial/commercial sector onto the residential sector of council. The percentage increases in many cases would be in the extreme range.
- SV is a major burden on property owners that have large areas of land. Some of these owners may have much smaller/older dwellings compared to those who have smaller land areas but well developed dwellings - but will pay more in rates. A typical example is flats, units, or townhouses which will all pay low rates compared to traditional housing styles.
- The use of SV can place pressure on council to give concessions to categories of landowners on whom the rating burden is seen to fall disproportionately (eg. Farm land and residential use properties). Large landowners, such as farmers for example, are disadvantaged by the use of site value.
- SV will reduce Council's rating flexibility and options to deal with any rating inequities due to the removal of the ability to levy differential rates.
- The community may have greater difficulty in understanding the SV valuation on their rate notices, as indicated by many inquiries from ratepayers on this issue handled by council's customer service and property revenue staff each year.

Net annual value (NAV)

NAV, in concept, represents the annual rental value of a property. However, in practice, NAV is loosely linked to capital improved value for residential and farm properties. Valuers derive the NAV directly as 5 per cent of CIV.

In contrast to the treatment of residential and farm properties, NAV for commercial and industrial properties are assessed with regard to actual market rental. This differing treatment of commercial versus residential and farm properties has led to some suggestions that all properties should be valued on a rental basis.

Overall, the use of NAV is not largely supported. For residential and farm ratepayers, actual rental values pose some problems. The artificial rental estimate used may not represent actual market value, and means the base is the same as CIV but is harder to understand.

Recommended valuation base

In choosing a valuation base, councils must decide on whether they wish to adopt a differential rating system (different rates in the dollar for different property categories) or a uniform rating system (same rate in the dollar). If a council was to choose the former, under the *Local Government Act 1989* it must adopt either of the CIV or NAV methods of rating.

Warrnambool City Council applies Capital Improved Value (CIV) to all properties within the municipality to take into account the fully developed value of the property. This basis of valuation takes into account the total market value of the land plus buildings and other improvements.

Differential rating allows (under the CIV method) council to shift part of the rate burden from some groups of ratepayers to others, through different "rates in the dollar" for each class of property.

Section 161(1) of the *Local Government Act 1989* outlines the requirements relating to differential rates, which include:

1. A Council may raise any general rates by the application of a differential rate, if Council considers that the differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of its functions.
2. If a Council declares a differential rate for any land, the Council must specify the objectives of the differential rate, which must be consistent with the equitable and efficient carrying out of the Councils functions and must include the following:
 - i. A definition of the types or classes of land which are subject to the rate and a statement of the reasons for the use and level of that rate.
 - ii. An identification of the type or classes of land which are subject to the rate in respect of the uses, geographic location (other than location on the basis of whether or not the land is within a specific ward in Council's district).
 - iii. Specify the characteristics of the land, which are the criteria for declaring the differential rate.

Once the Council has declared a differential rate for any land, the Council must:

- a) Specify the objectives of the differential rates;
- b) Specify the characteristics of the land which are the criteria for declaring the differential rate.

The purpose is to ensure that Council has a sound basis on which to develop the various charging features when determining its revenue strategies and ensure that these are consistent with the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

The general objectives of each of the differential rates are to ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council. There is no limit on the number or types of differential rates that can be levied, but the highest differential rate can be no more than four times the lowest differential rate.

Property Valuations

The *Valuation of Land Act 1960* is the principle legislation in determining property valuations. Under the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*, the Victorian Valuer-General conducts property valuations on an annual basis. Warrnambool City Council applies a Capital Improved Value (CIV) to all properties within the municipality to take into account the full development value of the property. This basis of valuation takes into account the total market value of the land including buildings and other improvements.

The value of land is always derived by the principal of valuing land for its highest and best use at the relevant time of valuation.

Council needs to be mindful of the impacts of revaluations on the various property types in implementing the differential rating strategy outlined in the previous section to ensure that rises and falls in council rates remain affordable and that rating 'shocks' are mitigated to some degree.

Supplementary Valuations

Supplementary valuations are carried out for a variety of reasons including rezoning, subdivisions, amalgamations, renovations, new constructions, extensions, occupancy changes and corrections. The Victorian Valuer-General is tasked with undertaking supplementary valuations and advises council on a monthly basis of valuation and Australian Valuation Property Classification Code (AVPCC) changes.

Supplementary valuations bring the value of the affected property into line with the general valuation of other properties within the municipality. Objections to supplementary valuations can be lodged in accordance with Part 3 of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*. Any objections must be lodged with Council within two months of the issue of the supplementary rate notice.

Objections to property valuations

Part 3 of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960* provides that a property owner may lodge an objection against the valuation of a property or the Australian Valuation Property Classification Code (AVPCC) within two months of the issue of the original or amended (supplementary) Rates and Valuation Charges Notice (Rates Notice), or within four months if the notice was not originally issued to the occupier of the land.

A property owner must lodge their objection to the valuation or the AVPCC in writing to the Warrnambool City Council. Property owners also have the ability to object to the site valuations on receipt of their Land Tax Assessment. Property owners can appeal their land valuation within two months of receipt of their Council Rate Notice (via Council) or within two months of receipt of their Land Tax Assessment (via the State Revenue Office).

1.4.4 Rating differentials

Council believes each differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of council functions. Subject to Ministerial Guidelines (April 2013), there is no limit on the number, or type of differential rates that can be levied, but the highest differential rate can be no more than four times the lowest differential rate.

Warrnambool City Council adopted the Capital Improved Valuation (CIV) system in 1996 for rating purposes. CIV represents the market value of a property as at a specific date, including the value of the land and any improvements on that land. Utilising CIV as the basis for levying rates allows Council to adopt Differential Rating. The vast majority of Victorian Councils use CIV as the basis for levying rates and charges.

Differential rating was introduced by Council when it moved to CIV rating and the differential rating categories have remained unchanged since. Differential Rating allows council to recover rates from each of the major property categories giving support to the equity principle in the distribution of the rate burden. Its origins and the established levels can be summarised as follows.

When shifting from Site Value (SV) rating to CIV the Council was conscious of the impact on all ratepayers and made a decision that each Major Property Category (M.P.C.) should continue to contribute a similar proportion of rate income as it previously had (a segmented rating policy). The M.P.C's are Residential, Farm, Industrial, Commercial and Vacant Land and these groups are clearly distinguishable by property type/use and by the nature and extent of council services each needs/wants, (the user benefits principle).

In adopting a segmented rating plan based on the user benefits principle, Council has been able to remove the impact of valuation swings across the M.P.C's. This has resulted in cushioning the impact of the swings so that any effects are confined within the M.P.C's during any general revaluation. For example, when the valuations within the commercial sector increase/decrease markedly to other M.P.C. there is no great shift or additional rate burden placed on either sector, Council continues to collect the same percentage of rate income and any rate burden is only redistributed within the sector.

Details of the objectives of each differential rate, the classes of land which are subject to each differential rate and the uses of each differential rate are set out below.

Other Land Rate

Definition:

Other land is any land, which is:

- a) occupied for the principal purpose of human habitation including dwellings, flats and units
- b) "residential use land" as described in of Section 2 (1) of the Valuation of Land Act 1960.
- c) "urban farm land" as described in of Section 2 (1) of the Valuation of Land Act 1960.

Objectives:

The objective of this differential rate is to ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council, including (but not limited to) the:

- a) Construction and maintenance of infrastructure assets
- b) Development and provision of health and community services
- c) Provision of general support services.

Characteristics:

The types and classes of rateable land within this differential rate are those having the relevant characteristics of a property which is used for human habitation including dwellings, flats and units, or is residential use land or urban farm land as described in of Section 2 (1) of the Valuation of Land Act 1960. The land affected by this rate is that which is zoned residential under the Warrnambool City Council Planning Scheme. The classification of the land will be determined by the occupation of that land for its best use and have reference to the planning scheme zoning.

Types and Classes:

Rateable land having the relevant characteristics described below:

- a) used primarily for residential purposes; or
- b) any land that is not defined as Farm Land or Commercial/Industrial Land.

Use of Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council. The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Level of Rate:

Lower than 100% of the ad valorem rate and set as part of the budget process.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Warrnambool City Council Planning Scheme.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the relevant Warrnambool City Council Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings:

All buildings which are already constructed on the land or which are constructed prior to the end of the financial year.

Farm Rate

Definition:

Any land which is "Farm Land" within the meaning of Section 2(1) of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*.

- a) Farm Land means any rateable land that is 2 or more hectares in area;
- b) used primarily for primary producing purposes from its activities on the land; used primarily for grazing (including agistment), dairying, pig-farming, poultry farming, fish farming, tree farming, bee keeping, viticulture, horticulture, fruit growing or the growing of crops of any kind or for any combination of those activities; and

That is used by a business –

- That has a significant and substantial commercial purpose of character;
- That seeks to make a profit on a continuous or repetitive basis from its activities on the land; and
- That is making a profit from its activities on the land, or that has a reasonable prospect of making a profit from its activities on the land if it continues to operate in the way that it is operating.

Objectives:

To ensure that Council has adequate funding to undertake its strategic, statutory, service provision and community services obligations and to ensure that the differential rate in the dollar declared for defined Farm Rate land properties is fair and equitable, having regard to the cost and the level of benefits derived from provision of Council services with considerations to maintain agriculture as a major industry in the municipal district, to facilitate the longevity of the farm sector and achieve a balance between providing for municipal growth and retaining the important agricultural economic base.

Characteristics:

The types and classes of rateable land within this differential rate are those having the relevant characteristics of "farm land" as described in of Section 2 (1) of the Valuation of Land Act 1960. The classification of the land will be determined by the occupation of that land for its best use and have reference to the planning scheme zoning.

Types and Classes:

Farm Land having the relevant characteristics described below:

- a) used primarily for primary production purposes; or
- b) any land that is not defined as General Land or Commercial/Industrial Land.

Use of Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council. The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Level of Rate:

Lower than 100% of the ad valorem rate and set as part of the budget process.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Warrnambool City Council Planning Scheme.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the relevant Warrnambool City Council Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings:

All buildings which are already constructed on the land or which are constructed prior to the end of the financial year.

Commercial**Definition:**

Commercial land is any land, which is

- a) Occupied for the principal purpose of carrying out the manufacture or production of, or trade in, goods or services; or
- b) Unoccupied but zoned commercial under the Warrnambool City Planning Scheme.

Objectives:

The objective of this differential rate is to ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council, including (but not limited to) the:

- a) Construction and maintenance of infrastructure assets
- b) Development and provision of health and community services
- c) Economic development and planning services, having direct benefit to the use of Commercial Land.
- d) Provision of general support services.

To ensure that Council has adequate funding to undertake its strategic, statutory, service provision and community services obligations and to ensure that the differential rate in the dollar declared for defined Commercial/Industrial Rate land properties is fair and equitable, having regard to the cost and the level of benefits derived from provision of Council services.

The commercial businesses of Warrnambool City Council benefit from ongoing significant investment by Council in services and infrastructure. Council also notes the tax deductibility of Council rates for commercial properties which is not available to the residential sector, and also the income generating capability of commercial based properties.

The Commercial differential rate is applied to promote the economic development objectives for the Warrnambool City Council as outlined in the Council Plan. These objectives include an ongoing significant investment to create a vibrant economy and includes the maintenance and improvement of tourism infrastructure. Construction and maintenance of public infrastructure, development and provision of health and community services and the general provision of support services and promotion of business in the municipality.

Characteristics:

The characteristics of the planning scheme zoning are applicable to the determination of vacant land which will be subject to the rate applicable to Commercial Land. The classification of the land will be determined by the occupation of that land for its best use and have reference to the planning scheme zoning.

The types and classes of rateable land within this differential rate are those having the relevant characteristics described but not limited to those below.

1. Rateable property used for business and administrative purposes, including, but not limited to, properties used for:
 - (a) The sale or hire of goods by retail or trade sales, e.g. shops, auction rooms, milk bars, newsagents;
 - (b) The manufacture of goods where the goods are sold on the property;
 - (c) The provision of entertainment, e.g. theatres, cinemas, amusement parlours;
 - (d) Media establishments, e.g. radio stations, newspaper offices, television stations;
 - (e) The provision of accommodation other than residential, e.g. motels, caravan parks, camping grounds, camps, accommodation houses, hostels, boarding houses;
 - (f) The provision of hospitality, e.g. hotels, bottle shops, restaurants, cafes, takeaway food establishments, tearooms;
 - (g) Tourist and leisure industry, e.g. flora and fauna parks, gymnasiums, boatsheds, indoor sports stadiums, gaming establishments;
 - (h) The provision of education, e.g. schools, museums, art galleries;
 - (i) Showrooms, e.g. display of goods;
 - (j) Religious purposes;
 - (k) Public offices and halls.

Types and Classes:

Commercial/Industrial having the relevant characteristics described below:

- a) used primarily for commercial purposes; or
- b) any land that is not defined as General Land or Farm Land.

Use of Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council. The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Level of Rate:

Higher than 100% of the ad valorem rate and set as part of the budget process.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Warrnambool City Council Planning Scheme.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the relevant Warrnambool City Council Shire Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings:

All buildings which are already constructed on the land or which are constructed prior to the end of the financial year.

Industrial Rate**Definition:**

Industrial land is any land, which is:

- a) Occupied for the principal purpose of carrying out the manufacture or production of, or trade in, goods or services; or
- b) Unoccupied but zoned Industrial under the Warrnambool City Planning Scheme.

Objectives:

The objective of this differential rate is to ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to the cost of carrying out the functions of Council, including (but not limited to) the:

- a) Construction and maintenance of infrastructure assets
- b) Development and provision of health and community services
- c) Economic development and planning services, having direct benefit to the use of Industrial Land.
- d) Provision of general support services.

The Industrial businesses of Warrnambool City Council benefit from ongoing significant investment by Council in services and infrastructure. Council also notes the tax deductibility of Council rates for commercial properties which is not available to the residential sector, and also the income generating capability of commercial based properties.

The Industrial differential rate is applied to promote the economic development objectives for the Warrnambool City Council as outlined in the Council Plan. These objectives include an ongoing significant investment to create a vibrant economy and includes the maintenance and improvement of tourism infrastructure. Construction and maintenance of public infrastructure, development and provision of health and community services and the general provision of support services and promotion of business in the municipality.

Characteristics:

The characteristics of the planning scheme zoning are applicable to the determination of vacant land which will be subject to the rate applicable to Industrial Land. The classification of the land will be determined by the occupation of that land for its best use and have reference to the planning scheme zoning.

Types and Classes:

Industrial having the relevant characteristics described below:

- a) used primarily for commercial purposes; or
- b) any land that is not defined as General Land or Farm Land.

Use of Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council. The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Level of Rate:

Higher than 100% of the ad valorem rate and set as part of the budget process.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Warrnambool City Council Planning Scheme.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the relevant Warrnambool City Council Shire Planning Scheme.

Types of Buildings:

All buildings which are already constructed on the land or which are constructed prior to the end of the financial year.

Vacant Land

Definition:

Vacant unoccupied land. Land on which no building designed or adapted for human occupation is erected.

Objective:

To ensure that Council has adequate funding to undertake its strategic, statutory, service provision and community services obligations and to ensure that the differential rate in the dollar declared for defined Vacant Land properties is fair and equitable, having regard to the cost and the level of benefits derived from provision of Council services.

Characteristics:

The characteristics of the planning scheme zoning are applicable to the determination of vacant land which will be subject to the rate applicable to Vacant Land. The classification of the land will be determined by the occupation of that land for its best use and have reference to the planning scheme zoning.

Types and Classes:

Vacant Land having the relevant characteristics described below:

- a) Industrial/Commercial or Residential use land
- b) Undeveloped land

Use of Rate:

The differential rate will be used to fund items of expenditure described in the Budget adopted by Council. The level of the differential rate is the level which Council considers is necessary to achieve the objectives specified above.

Level of Rate:

Higher than 100% of the ad valorem rate and set as part of the budget process.

Use of Land:

Any use permitted under the Warrnambool City Council Planning Scheme.

Geographic Location:

Wherever located within the municipal district.

Planning Scheme Zoning:

The zoning applicable to each rateable land within this category, as determined by consulting maps referred to in the relevant Warrnambool City Council Shire Planning Scheme.

Advantages of a differential rating system

The advantages of utilising a differential rating system summarised below are:

- There is greater flexibility to distribute the rate burden between all classes of property, and therefore link rates with the ability to pay and reflecting the tax deductibility of rates for commercial and industrial premises.
- Differential rating allows Council to better reflect the investment required by Council to establish infrastructure to meet the needs of the commercial and industrial sector.
- Allows Council to reflect the unique circumstances of some rating categories where the application of a uniform rate may create an inequitable outcome (eg. Farming enterprises).
- Allows Council discretion in the imposition of rates to facilitate and encourage appropriate development of its municipal district in the best interest of the community. (ie. Vacant Commercial properties still attract the commercial differential rate)

Disadvantages of a differential rating system

The disadvantages in applying differential rating summarised below are:

- The justification of the differential rate can at times be difficult for the various groups to accept giving rise to queries and complaints where the differentials may seem to be excessive.
- Differential rates can be confusing to ratepayers, as they may have difficulty understanding the system. Some rating categories may feel they are unfavourably treated because they are paying a higher level of rates than other ratepayer groups.
- Differential rating involves a degree of administrative complexity as properties continually shift from one type to another (e.g. residential to commercial,) requiring Council to update its records. Ensuring the accuracy/integrity of Council's data base is critical to ensure that properties are correctly classified into their right category.
- Council may not achieve the objectives it aims for through differential rating. For example, Council may set its differential rate objectives to levy a higher rate on land not developed, however it may be difficult to prove whether the rate achieves those objectives.

Cultural and Recreational Lands

The Cultural and Recreation Lands Act 1963 is relatively small and the main provisions of the Act are;

The definition of "recreational land" must be satisfied ie; such lands must be vested in or occupied by a not-for-profit body "which exists for the purpose of providing or promoting cultural or sporting recreational or similar facilities or objectives....." and which uses such lands "for out-door sporting recreational or cultural purposes or similar out-door activities".

Other types of land (including specific sites) are included the definition of "recreational land" within the Act, however the only one which has relevance for this municipality is "lands which are used primarily as agricultural showgrounds".

The amount of rates payable in respect of such recreational lands shall be an amount as the "council thinks reasonable having regard to the services provided by the municipal council in relation to such lands and having regard to the benefit derived from such recreational lands".

In other words, Council has the discretion of granting a concession which could range from 0% to 100% of the normal rates and charges which would apply to such rateable land.

Under Sections 4.(3) and 4.(4) of the this Act, once the Council has determined the degree of concession for each item of recreational land, this concession must be operative until the commencement of each new general revaluation, except that rates payable may be adjusted in proportion to shifts in the level of general rates.

Part 5 of this Act also enables a Council to "impose and collect a reasonable charge for any service provided or available to any recreational lands". In the absence of any local law to this effect, the amount of such charge is "as is agreed between the occupier of the lands and the body imposing the charge".

Anybody which is aggrieved by the amount of rate determined may appeal to the Minister, who then has the prerogative of determining the amount of rates actually paid.

(It would appear that a right of appeal exists even in the situation where the Council chose to not utilise the provisions of the Cultural and Recreation Lands Act ie; the right of appeal would appear to exist providing any land satisfies the definition of “recreational land”).)

This Act also provides for 10 years “back rates” ie; difference between normal rates and concessionary levels of rates over 10 years, when lands cease to be recreational lands, and on the basis of the valuation applicable after cessation.

There are no known guidelines relating to the application of this Act to promote a consistent approach from municipality to municipality. However, it is important for a council to approach the determination of any concession of this nature on a systematic and consistent basis, bearing in mind the normal principles of accountability and procedural fairness.

In summary, the concession under this Act is by reason of net services benefit to the general community derived from certain out-door sporting, recreational or cultural purposes or activities for a particular parcel of “recreational land”.

The following categories for concessions under the Cultural and Recreation Lands Act currently apply within the Warrnambool City Council –

Category 1 minor concession.

- Notwithstanding cultural sporting/recreational activities and objectives relating to the property, properties in this category would have established gaming and commercial bar facilities. These are considered as substantial income-generating elements of a commercial nature, albeit that such element is located within a contiguous area of a property, which is not eligible to be defined as “recreational land” under this Act.
- The turnover and scale of operations on these properties would usually be sub-regional in nature, and sometimes with off-site effects to which general ratepayers meet the cost of upgrading or ameliorative treatment.
- For land owned or managed by Council, the degree to which these payments are below market value will also be a relevant consideration.
- In establishing any amount payable the following assessment is to be made
 1. The area of the site, which is used for gaming and associated activities must be valued and treated as commercial thus attracting an amount equivalent to the differential rate established for commercial properties within the municipality.
 2. The balance of the site that is devoted to cultural sporting/recreational activities shall be valued as such and an amount equivalent to the advalorem rate that would apply within the municipality less a 25% discount calculated.

Having determined the above 2 amounts the charge levied shall be the sum total of these 2 amounts in addition to all service charges and any municipal charge that may be levied in accordance with Councils rating policy

Category 2- moderate concession

- Properties in this category would normally have significant membership and substantial clubrooms, sometimes with liquor a license but no gaming facilities.
- Normally well-established with demonstrated ability to meet normal recurrent operating costs.
- For land owned or managed by Council, any concession from market-value lease would also be a relevant consideration.
- Scale of operation essentially district or neighbourhood in nature.

The amount payable following assessment being made shall be 75% of the advalorem rate that would apply within the municipality in addition to all service charges and any municipal charge that may be levied in accordance with Councils rating policy.

Category 3 – significant concession.

- Small to moderate membership, or with significant junior component.
- Would typically not have a full service liquor licence.
- Clubrooms would be typically small scale and modest without major social areas.
- Concession from market rent in any Council lease would also be relevant consideration.
- Relatively limited income generating capacity, apart from members' dues and small scale fund raising efforts.
- Distinctly local/neighborhood in character.

The amount payable following assessment being made shall be 50% of the advalorem rate that would apply within the municipality in addition to all service charges and any municipal charge that may be levied in accordance with Councils rating policy.

Council currently has 1 property that is classified as cultural and recreational land category 1 and has 15 properties that are classified as cultural and recreational land category 2.

As indicated, Council is required to consider a rating discount for these properties under the Cultural and Recreational Lands Act based on considered benefits to the community and the services provided by Council. These properties are reviewed every two years in line with general revaluations.

1.4.5 Municipal charge

Another principle rating option available to Councils is the application of a municipal charge. Under Section 159 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, Warrnambool City Council has declared a municipal charge to cover some of the administrative costs of the Council. The legislation is not definitive on what comprises administrative costs and does not require Council to specify what is covered by the charge.

The application of a municipal charge represents a choice to raise a portion of the rates by a flat fee for all properties, rather than sole use of the CIV valuation method.

Under the *Local Government Act 1989*, a council's total revenue from a municipal charge in a financial year must not exceed 20 per cent of the combined sum total of the Council's total revenue from the municipal charge and the revenue from general rates (total rates).

The municipal charge applies equally to all properties and is based upon the recovery of a fixed cost of providing administrative services irrespective of valuation. The same contribution amount per assessment to cover a portion of councils administrative costs can be seen as an equitable method of recovering these costs.

1.4.6 Special charge schemes

The *Local Government Act 1989* recognises that councils need help to provide improved infrastructure for their local communities. Legislation allows councils to pass on the cost of capital infrastructure to the owner of a property that generally receives a unique benefit from the construction works. The technical explanation of a Special Charge comes from legislation (under the *Local Government Act 1989*) that allows councils to recover the cost of works from property owners who will gain special benefit from that work.

The purposes for which special rates and special charges may be used include road construction, kerb and channelling, footpath provision, drainage, and other capital improvement projects.

The special rate or special charges may be declared on the basis of any criteria specified by the council in the rate (Section 163 (2)). In accordance with Section 163 (3), council must specify:

- a. the wards, groups, uses or areas for which the special rate or charge is declared; and
- b. the land in relation to which the special rate or special charge is declared;
- c. the manner in which the special rate or special charge will be assessed and levied; and
- d. details of the period for which the special rate or special charge remains in force.

The special rates and charges provisions are flexible and can be used to achieve a wide range of community objectives. The fundamental principle of special rates and charges is that "special benefit" applies to those being levied. For example, they could be used to fund co-operative fire prevention schemes. This would ensure that there were no 'free-riders' reaping the benefits but not contributing to fire prevention.

Landscaping and environmental improvement programs that benefit small or localised areas could also be funded using special rates or charges.

Warrnambool City Council has developed a Special Charge Scheme policy and this can be found on council's website.

1.4.7 Service rates and charges

Section 162 of the *Local Government Act 1989* provides council with the opportunity to raise service rates and charges for any of the following services:

- a. The provision of a water supply;
- b. The collection and disposal of refuse;
- c. The provision of sewage services;
- d. Any other prescribed service.

Warrnambool City Council currently applies a service charge for the collection and disposal of refuse and providing waste services for the municipality (street litter bins for instance). Council retains the objective of setting the service charge for waste at a level that fully recovers the cost of the waste services, including providing for the cost of rehabilitation of the council's landfill once it reaches the end of its useful life.

It is recommended that council retain the existing waste service charge – should council elect not to have a waste service charge, this same amount would be required to be raised by way of an increased general rate – meaning that residents in higher valued properties would substantially pay for the waste service of lower valued properties.

Whilst this same principle applies for rates in general, the mix of having a single fixed charge combined with valuation driven rates for the remainder of the rate invoice provides a balanced and equitable outcome.

1.4.8 Collection and administration of rates and charges

The purpose of this section is to outline the rate payment options, processes, and the support provided to ratepayers facing financial hardship.

Payment options

In accordance with section 167(1) of the *Local Government Act 1989* ratepayers have the option of paying rates and charges by way of four instalments. Payments are due on the prescribed dates below:

- 1st Instalment: 30 September
- 2nd Instalment: 30 November
- 3rd Instalment: 28 February
- 4th Instalment: 31 May

Council offers a range of payment options including:

- in person at Council offices (cheques, money orders, EFTPOS, credit/debit cards and cash),
- online via Council's ratepayer portal, direct debit (on prescribed instalment due dates or monthly),
- BPAY,
- Australia Post (over the counter, over the phone via credit card and on the internet),
- by mail (cheques and money orders only).

Interest on arrears and overdue rates

Interest is charged on all overdue rates in accordance with Section 172 of the *Local Government Act 1989*. The interest rate applied is fixed under Section 2 of the *Penalty Interest Rates Act 1983*, which is determined by the Minister and published by notice in the Government Gazette.

Pensioner rebates

Holders of a Centrelink or Veteran Affairs Pension Concession card or a Veteran Affairs Gold card which stipulates TPI or War Widow may claim a rebate on their sole or principal place of residence. Upon initial application, ongoing eligibility is maintained, unless rejected by Centrelink or the Department of Veteran Affairs during the annual verification procedure. Upon confirmation of an eligible pensioner concession status, the pensioner rebate is deducted from the rate account before payment is required by the ratepayer.

With regards to new applicants, after being granted a Pensioner Concession Card (PCC), pensioners can then apply for the rebate at any time throughout the rating year. Retrospective claims up to a maximum of one previous financial year can be approved by Council on verification of eligibility criteria, for periods prior to this claims may be approved by the relevant government department.

Deferred payments

Under Section 170 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council may defer the payment of any rate or charge for an eligible ratepayer whose property is their sole place of residency, allowing ratepayers an extended period of time to make payments or alternatively to forestall payments on an indefinite basis until the ratepayer ceases to own or occupy the land in respect of which rates and charges are to be levied.

Deferral of rates and charges are available to all ratepayers who satisfy the eligibility criteria and have proven financial difficulties. Where Council approves an application for deferral of rates or charges, interest will continue to be levied on the outstanding balance of rates and charges but at an interest rate fixed annually by Council.

Ratepayers seeking to apply for such provision will be required to submit a Rates Deferment Application form which is available at the council offices, on the Council website or which can be posted upon request.

Hardship Policy

It is acknowledged at the outset that various ratepayers may experience financial hardship for a whole range of issues and that meeting rate obligations constitutes just one element of a number of difficulties that may be faced. The purpose of the Hardship Policy is to provide options for ratepayers facing such situations to deal with the situation positively and reduce the strain imposed by financial hardship.

Ratepayers may elect to either negotiate a rate payment plan or apply for a rate deferral. Ratepayers seeking to apply for such provision will be required to submit a Rates Deferment Application form or an Application for Rate Relief which is available at the council offices, website or can be posted upon request.

Debt recovery

Council makes every effort to contact ratepayers at their correct address but it is the ratepayers' responsibility to properly advise Council of their contact details. The *Local Government Act 1989* Section 230 and 231 requires both the vendor and buyer of property, or their agents (e.g. solicitors and or conveyancers), to notify Council by way of notice of disposition or acquisition of an interest in land.

In the event that an account becomes overdue, Council will issue an overdue reminder notice which will include accrued penalty interest. In the event that the account remains unpaid, Council may take legal action without further notice to recover the overdue amount. All fees and court costs incurred will be recoverable from the ratepayer.

If an amount payable by way of rates in respect to land has been in arrears for three years or more, Council may take action to sell the property in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989* Section 181.

Fire Services Property Levy

In 2016 the Victorian State Government passed legislation requiring the Fire Services Property Levy to be collected from ratepayers. Previously this was collected through building and property insurance premiums. The Fire Services Property Levy helps fund the services provided by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and Country Fire Authority (CFA), and all levies collected by Council are passed through to the State Government.

The Fire Services Property Levy is based on two components, a fixed charge, and a variable charge which is linked to the Capital Improved Value of the property. This levy is not included in the rate cap and increases in the levy are at the discretion of the State Government.

1.5 Other revenue items

1.5.1 User fees and charges

User fees and charges are those that Council will charge for the delivery of services and use of community infrastructure.

Examples of user fees and charges include:

- Kindergarten and Childcare fees
- Leisure Centre, Gym, and Pool visitation and membership fees

- Holiday Park fees
- Parking Fees
- Livestock Exchange fees
- Flagstaff Hill entrance fees
- Aged and Health Care service fees
- Leases and facility hire fees

The provision of services and infrastructure form a key part of council's role in supporting the local community. In providing these, council must consider a range of 'Best Value' principles including service cost and quality standards, value-for-money, and community expectations and values. Council must also balance the affordability and accessibility of services and infrastructure with its financial capacity and in the interests of long-term financial sustainability.

Councils must also comply with the government's Competitive Neutrality Policy for significant business activities they provide and adjust their service prices to neutralise any competitive advantages when competing with the private sector.

In providing services to the community, council must determine the extent of cost recovery for particular services consistent with the level of both individual and collective benefit that the services provide and in line with the community's expectations.

Services are provided on the basis of one of the following pricing methods:

- a. Market Price**
- b. Full Cost Recovery Price**
- c. Subsidised Price**

Market pricing (A) is where council sets prices based on the benchmarked competitive prices of alternate suppliers. In general market price represents full cost recovery plus an allowance for profit. Market prices will be used when other providers exist in the given market, and council needs to meet its obligations under the government's Competitive Neutrality Policy.

It should be noted that if a market price is lower than council's full cost price, then the market price would represent council subsidising that service. If this situation exists, and there are other suppliers existing in the market at the same price, this may mean that council is not the most efficient supplier in the marketplace. In this situation, council will consider whether there is a community service obligation and whether council should be providing this service at all.

Full cost recovery price (B) aims to recover all direct and indirect costs incurred by council. This pricing should be used in particular where a service provided by council benefits individual customers specifically, rather than the community as a whole. In principle, fees and charges should be set at a level that recovers the full cost of providing the services unless there is an overriding policy or imperative in favour of subsidisation.

Subsidised pricing (C) is where council subsidises a service by not passing the full cost of that service onto the customer. Subsidies may range from full subsidies (ie council provides the service free of charge) to partial subsidies, where council provides the service to the user with a discount. The subsidy can be funded from council's rate revenue or other sources such as Commonwealth and state funding programs. Full council subsidy pricing and partial cost pricing should always be based on knowledge of the full cost of providing a service.

In line with the Victorian Auditor General's Office report "*Fees and charges – cost recovery by local government*", council aims to fairly and equitably set prices and in doing so, considers the following principles:

- Both direct and indirect costs to be taken into account when setting prices;
- Accessibility, affordability and efficient delivery of services must be taken into account; and
- Competitive neutrality with commercial providers.

Council will develop a table of fees and charges as part of its annual budget each year. Proposed pricing changes will be included in this table and will be communicated to stakeholders before the budget is adopted, giving them the chance to review and provide valuable feedback before the fees are locked in.

1.5.2 Statutory fees and charges

Statutory fees and fines are those which council collects under the direction of legislation or other government directives. The rates used for statutory fees and fines are generally advised by the state government department responsible for the corresponding services or legislation, and generally councils will have limited discretion in applying these fees.

Examples of statutory fees and fines include:

- Planning and subdivision fees
- Building and Inspection fees
- Infringements and fines
- Land Information Certificate fees

Penalty and fee units are used in Victoria's Acts and Regulations to describe the amount of a fine or a fee.

Penalty units

Penalty units are used to define the amount payable for fines for many offences. For example, the fine for selling a tobacco product to a person aged under 18 is four penalty units.

One penalty unit is currently \$165.22, from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

The rate for penalty units is indexed each financial year so that it is raised in line with inflation. Any change to the value of a penalty unit will happen on 1 July each year.

Fee units

Fee units are used to calculate the cost of a certificate, registration or licence that is set out in an Act or Regulation. For example, the cost of depositing a Will with the supreme court registrar of probates is 1.6 fee units.

The value of one fee unit is currently \$14.81. This value may increase at the beginning of a financial year, at the same time as penalty units.

The cost of fees and penalties is calculated by multiplying the number of units by the current value of the fee or unit. The exact cost may be rounded up or down.

1.5.3 Grants

Grant revenue represents income usually received from other levels of government. Some grants are singular and attached to the delivery of specific projects, whilst others can be of a recurrent nature and may or may not be linked to the delivery of projects.

Council will pro-actively advocate to other levels of government for grant funding support to deliver important infrastructure and service outcomes for the community. Council may use its own funds to leverage higher grant funding and maximise external funding opportunities.

When preparing its financial plan, council considers its project proposal pipeline, advocacy priorities, upcoming grant program opportunities, and co-funding options to determine what grants to apply for. Council will only apply for and accept external funding if it is consistent with the Community Vision and does not lead to the distortion of Council Plan priorities.

Grant assumptions are then clearly detailed in council's budget document. No project that is reliant on grant funding will proceed until a signed funding agreement is in place.

1.5.4 Contributions

Contributions represent funds received by council, usually from non-government sources, and are usually linked to projects.

Contributions can be made to council in the form of either cash payments or asset hand-overs.

Examples of contributions include:

- Monies collected from developers under planning and development agreements
- Monies collected under developer contribution plans and infrastructure contribution plans
- Contributions from user groups towards upgrade of facilities
- Assets handed over to council from developers at the completion of a subdivision, such as roads, drainage, and streetlights.

Contributions should always be linked to a planning or funding agreement. Council will not undertake any work on a contribution-funded project until a signed agreement outlining the contribution details is in place.

Contributions linked to developments can be received well before any council expenditure occurs. In this situation, the funds will be identified and held separately for the specific works identified in the agreements.

1.5.5 Interest on investments

Council receives interest on funds managed as part of its investment portfolio, where funds are held in advance of expenditure, or for special purposes. The investment portfolio is managed per council's investment policy, which seeks to earn the best return on funds, whilst minimising risk.

1.5.6 Borrowings

Whilst not a source of income, borrowings can be an important cash management tool in appropriate circumstances. Loans can only be approved by council resolution. The following financial sustainability principles must be adhered to with new borrowings:

- Borrowings must only be applied for where it can be proven that repayments can be met in the Long Term Financial Plan
- Borrowings must not be used to fund ongoing operations
- Borrowings are appropriate for funding large capital works where the benefits are provided to future generations.
- Borrowings that will provide an appropriate payback on the loan funds through the generation on new income streams or reduced cash outflows.
- Council will maintain its debt at levels which are sustainable, with:
 - indebtedness <50% of rate and charges revenue, and
 - debt servicing cost <8% of total revenue (excluding capital revenue).